



Empower students to thrive online with this turnkey, teacher-led curriculum. Three progressive levels, delivered over three years, help students build essential skills in digital citizenship, information literacy, and media literacy, with AI literacy integrated throughout. Every 50-minute lesson includes a lesson plan, slides with entertaining videos, an engaging activity, student handouts, and send-home family activities. Cyber Civics is fun and easy to teach, and designed to build students' social-emotional, ethical, and critical thinking skills.



LEVEL 1: DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP

This foundational level (ideal for 6th grade and building on our 4th/5th grade [Digital On-Ramps curriculum](#)) centers on Digital Citizenship—the safe and responsible use of technology. Through hands-on projects, discussion, role-play, and problem-solving, students learn to navigate the challenges of online life. No devices are needed for this level, and no tech expertise is required from teachers—just your guidance, insight, and willingness to engage in meaningful conversations.

Introductory Lesson: Becoming a De-“Tech”-Tive

This lesson lays the groundwork for all future Cyber Civics lessons. It challenges students to investigate the impact “technology” has had on humankind through the ages, placing digital tools—past and present—in a broader social and historical context.

Unit 1: Citizenship (3 Lessons)

Becoming a 'digital citizen' begins with an understanding of 'citizenship' itself. In this unit, students learn what it means to be a citizen today, both online and off—setting them on the path to becoming wise, safe members of their online communities.

Unit 2: The Tools We Use (3 Lessons)

Before students can think critically about their digital lives, they need a working knowledge of the tools that shape them. This unit gives students a foundation in how digital and AI-powered tools work, equipping them with the vocabulary and context to engage thoughtfully with the lessons that follow.

Unit 3: Your Digital Reputation (3 Lessons)

Students discover that everything they post online—and everything others post about them—forms their “digital reputation.” Through role-play and hands-on activities, they learn how and why to take a proactive role in managing their online presence.

LEVEL 1, cont.

Unit 4: Ethical Thinking (4 Lessons)

Nearly every online activity poses an ethical choice. Should I upload an unflattering photo of my friend? Post information that might hurt someone's feelings? Use an AI tool to finish my homework without saying so? This unit helps students think through the ethical implications of their online actions, and also covers guidelines for communicating respectfully online.

Unit 5: Cyberbullying and Digital Drama (6 Lessons)

Cyberbullying is an unfortunate byproduct of digital communication. This unit kicks off by helping students understand that behind every screen is a real person with real feelings. They learn about cyberbullying, "digital drama," offline bullying, and other cruel behaviors. Most importantly, they are empowered with effective strategies to protect themselves and their peers, and learn how to report cruelty of any kind.

Unit 6: Identity and Privacy (7 Lessons)

'Who am I?' is an age-old question of the preteen and teenage years, and today many young people turn to the digital world to find the answer. While the Internet can be a good place to explore different personas or identity characteristics, students discover in this unit that sharing too much personal information online carries real risk. They also explore questions of authenticity—including what it means to present an honest version of themselves in an age of AI-generated images and curated online personas.

LEVEL 2: INFORMATION LITERACY

While youth today seem incredibly tech-savvy, research shows that few know the core concepts of "information literacy," or how to find, retrieve, analyze, and use online information, especially information generated by AI. This level (recommended for 7th grade) teaches these skills. Like Level 1, lessons and activities emphasize ethical and critical thinking skills through collaboration, discussion, decision-making, and hands-on projects. Some lessons work best if students can practice skills on devices.



Introductory Lesson: Device Care and Responsibility

Although students won't need devices for many lessons in this level, some do offer this option. Additionally, as many students are issued 1:1 devices in school, this lesson teaches them how to care for and use them safely and responsibly.

LEVEL 2, cont.

Unit 1: Learning Balance (2 Lessons)

Before diving into lessons on research, students carefully examine how they spend their time, both online and off. The purpose of these lessons is to help them become more mindful of how they allocate their precious time and be inspired to seek balance between online and offline pursuits.

Unit 2: Online Safety and Security (2 Lessons)

Today's youth have unparalleled access to online information, but with that access comes real risk. In these two lessons, students are introduced to common online threats and scams—many of them now more convincing because of AI—and learn practical strategies for keeping themselves safe.

Unit 3: Searching the Web (5 Lessons)

Even as AI changes what a results page looks like, knowing how to search the Internet effectively remains an essential information literacy skill. In these lessons, students learn how search engines find and rank information, how to build a strong search query, and how to evaluate what they find—including AI-generated overviews—and cite it properly.

Unit 4: AI Literacy (6 Lessons)

Today's students are growing up in a world where artificial intelligence is embedded in nearly everything they do, including how they search for and create information. In this unit, they build the foundations of AI literacy—learning how algorithms work, what artificial intelligence and generative AI actually are, and how to use these tools responsibly.

Unit 5: Your Personal Information (7 Lessons)

Understanding how and why personal information is gathered and shared online is essential knowledge for anyone who uses the Internet, and especially for young people just starting to navigate websites and social networks on their own. In these seven lessons, students learn what's really happening behind the screen—how apps and sites collect and use their data, what they're agreeing to in a Terms of Use, how algorithms create filter bubbles, and how to protect their own accounts—so they understand that the choices they make today shape the information they'll receive tomorrow.

Unit 6: Copyright, Public Domain, and Fair Use (6 Lessons)

Because digital tools make it so easy—and fun!—to make and share creative work online, understanding copyright is essential knowledge for today's young creators, especially as generative AI raises new questions about who owns what. In this engaging unit, students learn the basics of copyright law and its limits, including fair use, Creative Commons, and public domain, so they can legally and ethically use, remix, and share the work of others—and feel inspired to create and share their own. Don't miss teaching this unit, it's always a student favorite!

LEVEL 3: MEDIA LITERACY FOR POSITIVE PARTICIPATION

This final level of Cyber Civics (for 8th grade) finds students eager and equipped to engage with media in positive and productive ways. The focus is on media literacy—the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, create, and act using all forms of communication. Lessons teach students how to critically evaluate increasingly sophisticated media messages, due in part to new AI technologies.



This level also includes an all-new “Digital Health and Wellbeing” unit that addresses some of today’s most pressing digital challenges. Upon completion of this level, students are ready to navigate our media-rich world with confidence and discernment.

Introductory Lesson: Creating an AI Code of Conduct

Before diving into media literacy, students lay essential groundwork: agreeing, as a class, on how AI tools should and shouldn't be used in their learning community. If your school does not already have an AI Use Policy in place, students work collaboratively to draft their own Code of Conduct—establishing shared norms around honesty, attribution, and responsible use that carry through every unit that follows.

Unit 1: A Participatory Culture (3 Lessons)

Students discover there are lots of ways to use media—and that sometimes media even uses them! They also begin to consider their place in today's "participatory culture," including how AI-powered recommendation systems now shape some of what they see, share, and create.

Unit 2: Calling on Critical Thinking (2 Lessons)

The ability to use critical thinking to assess online information is perhaps one of the most important skills for a young digital citizen to master, especially today! Grounded in research from the Stanford History Education Group (SHEG), this unit teaches students the same essential questions professional fact-checkers use to evaluate the reliability of articles, websites, and AI-generated content.

Unit 3: News and Information Literacy (6 Lessons)

One of the wonderful things about living in a "participatory culture" is that anyone and everyone can be a purveyor of news and information. This is one of the great downsides, too. This unit teaches students how to be critical consumers of news media, how misinformation spreads online, and the concerning role AI plays in amplifying it—along with the emerging tools, like Content Credentials, that help verify what's real.

Unit 4: Media, Bias, and AI (4 Lessons)

Television, videos, movies, commercials, online games, and more often depict people in overly simplified ways, and AI-powered tools make it easier than ever to create, target, and spread these depictions at scale. In this unit, students explore media representations, the data fueling personalized advertising, and how the biometric information they generate—from their face to their voice—can be used to identify and categorize them.

LEVEL 3, cont.

Unit 5: Visual Literacy (4 Lessons)

Using everything from YouTube to TikTok, young people consume and create all sorts of visual media, including photos, videos, images, memes, and more. This unit helps students learn how to “read” visual media so that they become less susceptible to visual manipulations, especially AI-generated ones.

Unit 6: Digital Health and Wellbeing (6 Lessons)

With students increasingly navigating social relationships through technology, this unit provides crucial guidance on maintaining safe digital boundaries, recognizing when interactions become inappropriate or harmful, and building confidence to seek support when needed.

Unit 7: The Power is in Your Hands (4 Lessons)

The overall objective of Cyber Civics has been to help students discover how to use technology positively and productively—to learn, to inspire, be inspired, and to make and share useful, truthful, and uplifting content in ethical ways—and to show others by example how to do the same. This final unit challenges students to consider their place in the digital world, now and in the future.