



CYBER CIVICS

Digital Health and Wellbeing

This series of lessons addresses one of the most critical challenges facing today's young people: navigating healthy relationships and protecting themselves in an increasingly complex digital landscape. As teens form connections through texting, social media, gaming platforms, and emerging technologies, they face unprecedented risks alongside new opportunities for meaningful connection.



These lessons provide students with essential knowledge, practical strategies, and ethical frameworks for digital health and wellbeing. Each one includes an interactive activity and opportunities for discussion and ethical reflection. Lessons are designed to be both preventive and responsive, acknowledging that while most teens will never experience serious digital threats, all students deserve the tools to recognize, respond to, and prevent harmful situations.

Lesson 1: Healthy Relationships, Online & Off

This foundational lesson establishes a framework for healthy interactions, online and off. In an era where adolescents increasingly form relationships through digital means, understanding the characteristics of healthy relationships—mutual respect, positive interactions, and clear boundaries—is critical. The lesson also helps students understand the importance of quality over quantity in their digital connections. Students will:

- ✓ Identify and understand the key characteristics of healthy relationships.
- ✓ Recognize the warning signs of unhealthy relationships, online and off.
- ✓ Practice setting, respecting, and communicating boundaries in all of their relationships.

Lesson 2: Sexting and Online Boundaries

Students learn that sexting, "the sending or receiving of sexually suggestive, nude, or semi-nude images," is a serious digital age issue and discover the consequences they might face if they send (or are sent!) a sext. Students will:

- ✓ Learn and understand the definition of sexting.
- ✓ Become aware of the possible serious legal consequences of sending or receiving a sexual image, message, or video.
- ✓ Be empowered with actionable strategies to protect themselves from becoming involved in a sexting incident.

Lesson 3: Revenge Porn: When Private Becomes Public

“Revenge porn” is the act of sending or posting another person’s intimate photos or videos without that person’s consent, as a way to get revenge, to coerce, or just to be cruel. In this lesson, students learn how to protect themselves from this serious digital threat. Students will:

- ✓ Discover what “revenge porn” is and understand its serious social and legal consequences.
- ✓ Gain strategies to protect themselves online.
- ✓ Learn what to do should they ever become involved in a revenge porn incident.

Lesson 4: Spotting and Stopping Sextortion

The FBI recently issued a warning about the serious problem of sextortion, particularly targeting teen boys. This is a crime in which an offender coerces a minor into creating and sending sexually explicit images or video to them, often using threats, blackmail, or emotional pressure. This lesson addresses this sensitive, yet important, topic. Students will:

- ✓ Learn and understand what “sextortion” is.
- ✓ Gain insight into how to identify a sextortion scheme.
- ✓ Know what to do should anyone ever try to coerce, pressure, or blackmail them online.

Lesson 5: AI-Manipulated Images and You

In this lesson, students explore how generative AI can be used to manipulate photos of people—including classmates, celebrities, or themselves—and even make it appear as though they are entirely nude. They discover the real-world harm this can cause, even when the image looks fake or is meant as a joke. Students will:

- ✓ Explore how generative AI can be used in the creation of “deepnudes.”
- ✓ Consider the ethical and emotional impact of sharing altered or AI-generated images.
- ✓ Learn appropriate actions to take if they or someone they know becomes the victim of image-based abuse.

Lesson 6: AI Chatbots vs. Real Relationships

Students explore the growing use of AI chatbots—computer programs that use artificial intelligence (AI) to simulate human conversation, either through text or voice. They consider when it’s appropriate to use a chatbot and when it’s better to seek out a real person, especially for emotional support or complex issues. Students will:

- ✓ Identify common uses of chatbots and discover why they are designed to simulate human conversation.
- ✓ Understand the benefits and risks of using chatbots for different purposes.
- ✓ Evaluate when it is appropriate to use a chatbot and when it is important to seek help or connection from a real person.

Lesson 7: Hooked: How Technology Hijacks Attention

One of the biggest concerns surrounding teens and tech is the amount of time they spend online. This is hardly their fault, as technology is usually designed to capture and hold users' attention. In this lesson, students learn about "persuasive technology"—technology specifically designed to change users' opinions, attitudes, or behaviors in order to meet its goals—and examine the AI systems, including recommendation algorithms and AI chatbots, that power many of today's most persuasive features. Students will:

- ✓ Define persuasive technology and distinguish clinical addiction from problematic or compulsive technology use.
- ✓ Identify common persuasive design features—including AI-driven recommendation systems and AI companion chatbots—and explain how they are engineered to hold attention.
- ✓ Evaluate their own technology habits and develop practical strategies for exercising agency over persuasive design.

Lesson 8: Playing to Lose: What is Gambling?

A 2026 study found that 36% of US boys ages 11 to 17 had gambled in the past year, and that 64% of those who gambled did so inside video games. For this generation, games are the most common first introduction to gambling. Many students open "loot boxes" or make "gacha pulls" without realizing these features share the core characteristic of gambling. In this lesson, students will:

- ✓ Define gambling using a four-part framework and apply it to real examples.
- ✓ Distinguish among three types of gambling-related experiences in gaming by applying the four-part framework.
- ✓ Analyze their own decisions during a simulated loot box activity and identify design mechanisms that influenced them.

Lesson 9: Is It Gambling In Disguise?

Gambling no longer looks the way it used to. Sports betting, prediction markets, and cryptocurrency are often presented as investing, forecasting, entertainment, or skill, and that framing is working: a 2026 report found that two in five Gen Z Americans view sports betting as an investment. In this lesson, students apply the four-part framework beyond gaming and analyze real advertising to see how gambling gets reframed. Students will:

- ✓ Apply the four-part gambling framework to real-world activities beyond gaming, including sports betting, prediction markets, and cryptocurrency.
- ✓ Explain how legalization, advertising, algorithmic exposure, and peer influence have normalized gambling in youth culture.
- ✓ Recognize the warning signs of problem gambling and describe how to get help for themselves or a friend.