

Using Resources Responsibly

Textbook

Using Resources Responsibly



In our digital world, every online action has consequences. Understanding legal and ethical rules is crucial for responsible digital citizenship. This section covers tech laws, safe communication, misusing information, and software rules.

Legal Ramifications of Technology Use

Technology use involves legal duties. It's vital to distinguish between what's **legal** (allowed by law) and **ethical** (morally right). Sometimes something might be legal but not ethical.

Laws change quickly with technology, so **staying current with legal changes** is important to avoid issues with privacy, data, and online content, as what was acceptable last year might be illegal today.

Legal Use of Modern Communication Media and Devices

Using communication tools like social media, messaging apps, and email requires responsible and safe practices for both yourself and others.

Responsible Use

Being responsible means respecting others by not posting or sending anything harassing, threatening, or hateful; cyberbullying is illegal and harmful. It also means thinking before you post, as online content is very hard to remove. Always consider how your words or images might be interpreted.

Protecting privacy is key; never share personal information about yourself or others without permission. Finally, avoid illegal activities, meaning you should not use communication tools to plan or engage in unlawful acts.

Personal Safety

Your safety online is paramount. Be cautious with strangers by limiting how much personal information you share with people you only know online, as not everyone is who they say they are.

Learn to recognize scams by being wary of messages asking for money or personal details, or promising things that seem too good to be true. If you feel unsafe or see something suspicious, always report it to a trusted adult, the platform itself, or law enforcement.

Impact of Irresponsible Use of Information on Collaborative Projects

Misusing information in collaborative projects harms both the project's success and your reputation.

- **Plagiarism** is a significant issue, involving presenting someone else's work (like text, images, code, or ideas) as your own without giving them proper credit. Similarly, while AI tools are helpful,
- **Artificial Intelligence (AI) chat usage** to generate entire assignments and submit them as your own original work without acknowledgment is a form of plagiarism, misrepresenting your effort.
- **Falsification of data** means intentionally altering or making up information to support a point, which ruins the project's integrity and leads to false conclusions, making the entire team's work unreliable. These actions can result in failing grades, loss of trust, and serious academic or professional penalties.

Software Licenses: Sharing and Protecting Intellectual Property

Software isn't free to use however you want; it's protected by **intellectual property** rights, meaning the creator owns it. **Software licenses** are legal agreements that define how you can use, distribute, and modify software, controlling how the creator's intellectual property is shared and protected.

- **Proprietary Software** is owned by an individual or company, and its use is strictly controlled by the license. You typically buy a license to *use* it, but you don't own the software itself, and you usually cannot modify or redistribute its code (e.g., Microsoft Windows, Adobe Photoshop).
- **Freeware** is software that is available to use for free, but it is still proprietary; you can use it without paying, but the creator still owns the code, and you generally cannot modify or redistribute it (e.g., many free mobile apps).
- **Open Source Software** comes with a license that makes its source code publicly available, allowing users to freely use, modify, and distribute the software, which encourages collaboration and innovation (e.g., Linux, Firefox web browser).

Access vs. Distribution Rights

It's crucial to understand that simply having **access to information may not include the right to distribute it**. Just because you can view something online doesn't mean you can share it freely. For instance, if you stream a movie online, you have the right to watch it, but you don't "own" it in a way that allows you to make copies and share them.

Digital content often comes with specific licenses that grant certain usage rights but explicitly limit others, such as copying or distributing. Violating these terms is a legal offense, often called **infringement** (e.g., copyright infringement), which can have legal consequences.

Consequences of Misrepresenting Digital Work as Your Own

Presenting someone else's digital work as your own has serious consequences. This includes **plagiarism**, which, as discussed, is using someone else's ideas or work without proper credit, leading to academic penalties like failing grades or expulsion.

Infringement means violating the rights of a copyright or trademark holder; for example, illegally copying and distributing copyrighted software, music, or movies can lead to legal action, fines, and even jail time.

Digital theft is a broader term encompassing stealing digital assets like software, data, or online accounts, often involving hacking, piracy, or other illegal activities. These actions not only have legal repercussions but also significantly damage your reputation and integrity.

Utilizing Citation Tools When Using Digital Information

To avoid misrepresenting digital work and to give credit where it's due, it's essential to use **citation tools** and practices. When you use information, images, or ideas from the internet in your projects, you must always cite your sources. A **citation** is a reference to the source of information you used, telling your reader where you found the material and giving credit to the original creator. Citing sources helps you avoid plagiarism, builds your credibility by showing your work is well-researched, and allows others to verify your information.

Many tools and websites, like EasyBib or Purdue OWL's citation guides, can help you create citations in various styles (e.g., MLA, APA) by simply entering the source details. Proper citation is a fundamental skill for responsible digital citizenship and academic integrity.

Critical Thinking Questions:

1. How do legal and ethical responsibilities differ when creating your own online content versus sharing someone else's?
2. If "freeware" is free to use, can you legally change its code and sell your version? Why or why not, compared to open-source?
3. What are the negative impacts and consequences if a group project uses AI to write a report without proper credit?

Questions (5)

1. When using social media, what is a key part of being a "responsible user" regarding what you post or send?

MULTIPLE CHOICE

Choose the correct answer:

- A. Posting anything you want without thinking.
- B. Only posting on the weekend.
- C. Not posting anything harassing, threatening, or hateful.
- D. Sharing personal information about others without permission.

2. You receive a message online from a stranger promising you a large sum of money if you just send them your bank details. What "personal safety" rule should you follow here?

MULTIPLE CHOICE

Choose the correct answer:

- A. Immediately send them the details to get the money.
- B. Ask your friends if they think it's real.
- C. Be wary of messages asking for money or promising things too good to be true.
- D. Share the message with everyone you know.

3. In a group project, a student changes some of the research data to make their findings look better, even though the original data didn't support it. What is this action called?

MULTIPLE CHOICE

Choose the correct answer:

- A. Plagiarism
- B. Falsification of data
- C. Digital theft
- D. Copyright infringement

4. You download a popular free app on your phone. Can you legally change its code and sell your modified version?

MULTIPLE CHOICE

Choose the correct answer:

- A. Yes, because it's free, you can do anything with it.
- B. Yes, if you don't make much money.
- C. No, because the app is still proprietary, and the creator owns the code.
- D. Only if you ask your friends for permission.

5. You find an image online that perfectly fits your school presentation. To avoid plagiarism, what must you do before using it?

MULTIPLE CHOICE

Choose the correct answer:

- A. Just save the image to your computer.
- B. Change the image slightly so it looks different.
- C. Hope your teacher doesn't notice where it came from.
- D. Cite the source of the image to give proper credit.

Answer Keys & Solutions

Questions

1. When using social media, what is a key part of being a "responsible user" regarding what you post or send?

MULTIPLE CHOICE

Correct Answer:

- A. Posting anything you want without thinking. ✗ Incorrect
- B. Only posting on the weekend. ✗ Incorrect
- C. Not posting anything harassing, threatening, or hateful. ✓ Correct
- D. Sharing personal information about others without permission. ✗ Incorrect

Explanation:

Consider how your actions online affect others.

2. You receive a message online from a stranger promising you a large sum of money if you just send them your bank details. What "personal safety" rule should you follow here?

MULTIPLE CHOICE

Correct Answer:

- A. Immediately send them the details to get the money. ✗ Incorrect
- B. Ask your friends if they think it's real. ✗ Incorrect
- C. Be wary of messages asking for money or promising things too good to be true. ✓ Correct
- D. Share the message with everyone you know. ✗ Incorrect

Explanation:

Think about recognizing online scams.

3. In a group project, a student changes some of the research data to make their findings look better, even though the original data didn't support it. What is this action called?

MULTIPLE CHOICE

Correct Answer:

- A. Plagiarism ✗ Incorrect
- B. Falsification of data ✓ Correct
- C. Digital theft ✗ Incorrect
- D. Copyright infringement ✗ Incorrect

Explanation:

Think about intentionally altering information to mislead.

4. You download a popular free app on your phone. Can you legally change its code and sell your modified version?

MULTIPLE CHOICE

Correct Answer:

- A. Yes, because it's free, you can do anything with it. ✗ Incorrect
- B. Yes, if you don't make much money. ✗ Incorrect
- C. No, because the app is still proprietary, and the creator owns the code. ✓ Correct
- D. Only if you ask your friends for permission. ✗ Incorrect

Explanation:

Remember that "free to use" doesn't mean "free to own or modify."

5. You find an image online that perfectly fits your school presentation. To avoid plagiarism, what must you do before using it?

MULTIPLE CHOICE

Correct Answer:

- A. Just save the image to your computer. ✗ Incorrect
- B. Change the image slightly so it looks different. ✗ Incorrect

C. Hope your teacher doesn't notice where it came from.

✗ Incorrect

D. Cite the source of the image to give proper credit.

✓ Correct

Explanation:

Think about the practice that gives credit to original creators.