



Digital Footprint Information for Parents



At school your child has taken part in a Be Strong Online session, a new peer-to-peer learning programme from The Diana Award charity and Vodafone. This session was all about the digital footprint which is left by your online activity and things to bear in mind to protect your privacy and reputation. Visit our website to find out more about Be Strong Online: bestrongonline.antibullyingpro.com

With the help of Parent Zone, we've compiled some top tips for how to encourage your child to protect their online reputation and privacy.

What is a Digital Footprint?

Every time you do anything online, whether it's visiting a website, making an online purchase, having a conversation on an online game, using a search engine or posting on social media, it leaves a digital trail or 'footprint'. The internet is a public place, meaning that the things your child does online can be seen by anyone and can be difficult to get rid of altogether.

A lot of young people see the online world as a natural extension of their offline world, meaning they might not be as cautious as they should be when it comes to expressing themselves and posting things online. This can have implications for their privacy but also on their reputation in real life. Remind your child that anything you do online can be shared, copied or saved by others – once it's out there, you can't take it back.

Should I be concerned?

Research from Microsoft found that almost half of recruiters across Europe look for information about potential candidates on social networking sites. So you do need to make sure that they understand the long-term impact their digital footprint could have.

It is possible for your child to use their digital footprint to their advantage and cultivate an online presence which will be an asset to them in the future. They can share information about clubs, volunteering or extra-curricular activities they're involved in, for example, which future school or college admissions tutors, or future employers would be interested in.

What can I do to help my child?

You can take action to help your child protect their privacy and minimise the risk of embarrassment or harm to their reputation:

-  Encourage them to check the privacy settings on their social media and blogs so that they're only sharing information with their friends
-  Remind them that the internet is a public place and that anyone could see what they post. They probably know that already but teenagers can forget in the heat of the moment. They should use the 'billboard rule' – if they wouldn't want that photo, comment or post put up on a billboard for everyone to see, they shouldn't post it
-  Make putting their name into Google to check their digital footprint a regular part of your routine. It's worth doing it together so that they get into the habit of checking their profile as well
-  Talk to them about the consequences of sharing intimate or naked images online or via their mobile or device (called "sexting") – you can find out more information about this on the Digital Parenting [website](#)
-  It's a good idea to tell them that you want to check their social media profile and ask if you can do it together

More Information

The pages below offer lots of useful advice about digital footprint, privacy and more:

www.vodafone.com/content/parents/advice.html.html

www.parentinfo.org/

www.antibullyingpro.com/

www.commonsensemedia.org/

www.internetmatters.org/

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