



BEING TECH-SMART

A PLUG AND PLAY
ACTIVITY FOR YOUTH

FACILITATOR GUIDE

July 2023

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Overview

This module will engage youth in pondering questions about digital technology and encourage them to think twice before deciding to use such technology (e.g., posting something on social media, accepting or declining a new friend request, or giving out personal information online). The module will guide youth through questions about whether a social media post or other online behavior could create danger for themselves or others, whether by harming their reputation or someone else's, divulging personal or private information, or creating legal repercussions. It will also encourage youth to reflect on how their digital technology use impacts their and others' mental and emotional health and physical safety.



KEY TOPICS

Cyberbullying, vetting multimedia sources, digital decision-making, sexting, legal consequences, mental health, online safety, accuracy, scam protection



AUDIENCE

Youth
(middle and high school-aged)



LENGTH

80 minutes



GOALS

- Youth will be more attentive to their use of digital technology and will understand the impact their actions can have on their own lives and the lives of others.
- Youth will engage in fewer incidents of unhealthy digital technology use (e.g., cyberbullying, sexting).
- Youth will use digital technology in constructive pursuits, displaying healthy behaviors (e.g., volunteer work, academic achievements, extracurricular accomplishments) in their online footprints.
- Youth will seek the help of a trusted adult if they are cyberbullied, stalked, or threatened.



KEY MESSAGES FOR YOUTH

- There are significant benefits to healthy digital technology use.
- There are substantial, lifelong consequences of unhealthy digital technology use.
- People will form opinions about me based on what I post online.
- I recognize in myself the ability to develop a positive digital footprint and steer clear of unhealthy digital technology use.
- I know practical steps to take and tools to use to critically analyze potential online actions before taking them.
- It can be nearly impossible to delete digital content completely once it is shared. Even content that is eventually deleted from a social media platform might exist as screenshots.

Before You Start

To get ready for this classroom activity, read this facilitator guide to familiarize yourself with each section and then review the checklist below and gather all the materials and technology you will need. Some activities will require advance preparation.

Resource	How to Prepare	Where You Will Use this Resource
 Laptop or tablet device		Entire lesson
 Projector or shared screen using videoconferencing platform (e.g., Zoom, Google Meet, Microsoft Teams, Blackboard)		Entire lesson
 Students' school or personal laptops, tablets, or mobile phones (optional)		Entire lesson
 Chalkboard or whiteboard, flip chart, or means to display results of brainstorming activity (e.g., shared Google Doc, Google Slides, Zoom's whiteboard feature)		Section 1, Section 4
 Optional brainstorming method: Poll Everywhere free basic account	Poll Everywhere can be used to engage students in brainstorming activities. Poll Everywhere shows results in real time, which increases student engagement. Before the class discussion, sign up for a free Poll Everywhere account, which will allow you to create a question and have participants type in responses in real time via the web or SMS text messages. If you choose to use Poll Everywhere for brainstorming, read the instructions to learn how to set up a poll first. Choose the poll type called "open-ended question."	Section 1, Section 2

OVERVIEW

Resource	How to Prepare	Where You Will Use this Resource
 Tech-Smart Checklist (blank template for students)	Hand one out to each small group.	Section 2
 Tech-Smart Checklist—facilitator version	Use this as a resource for class discussion.	Section 2
 Fact Sheet— Dangers of Sexting	Students will use this as a resource to add questions to the Tech-Smart Checklist .	Section 2
 Fact Sheet— <u>How to Recognize and Avoid Scams</u>	Students will use this as a resource to add questions to the Tech-Smart Checklist .	Section 2
 Fact Sheet— Verifying Online Information	Students will use this as a resource to add questions to the Tech-Smart Checklist .	Section 2
 Fact Sheet— Online Safety Tips	Students will use this as a resource to add questions to the Tech-Smart Checklist .	Section 2
 Digital Technology Decision Scenarios	Students will use the Tech-Smart Checklist created by the class to evaluate these scenarios.	Section 3
 Digital Technology Decision Scenarios—facilitator version	Use this as a key to which behaviors are healthy vs. unhealthy.	Section 3

SECTION 1

How Does Our Generation Use Technology? (15 minutes)



OBJECTIVES

Youth will reflect on healthy and unhealthy ways they or others they know have used technology.



KEY WORDS AND PHRASES

Social media, cyberbullying, legal consequences, chat rooms, sexting



MATERIALS

N/A



TECHNOLOGY/TOOLS

- Laptop or tablet device
- Projector or shared screen using videoconferencing platform (e.g., Zoom, Google Meet, Microsoft Teams, or Blackboard)
- Chalkboard or whiteboard, flip chart, or means to display results of brainstorming activity (e.g., shared Google Doc, Google Slides, Zoom's whiteboard feature)
- Students' school or personal laptops, tablets, or mobile phones (optional)
- Poll Everywhere free account (optional)

1. Guide students in brainstorming healthy and unhealthy uses of technology.



SAY: The purpose of today's lesson is to discuss the various ways we use technology and its impact on us! Raise your hand if you think technology has more of a positive than negative effect on you. Why do you think so? Now, raise your hand if you think technology has more of a negative than positive effect on you. Why do you think so?

Invite students to further explain why they voted the way they did. Invite them to share what they believe are the specific consequences of digital technology, whether positive or negative. You may record their responses or choose a student recorder.



SAY: Now, we are going to discuss ways in which **we** personally use digital technology.



ASK: What are some positive things you've done or seen others do with digital technology? These are behaviors that have positive consequences.

2. Have students brainstorm positive uses of digital technology for 5 minutes.

To prompt as many ideas as possible, encourage students to say whatever comes to mind. Record their ideas on a whiteboard, flip chart, or virtual whiteboard, or use Poll Everywhere to gather ideas. Repeat or restate ideas to clarify them as needed. Record exact words and phrases provided and allow repetition; mark repetitions with a checkmark or star to note ideas generated by multiple participants. If using a virtual whiteboard, use the “annotate” feature to allow students to write their ideas.



ASK: What are some negative things you've done or seen others do with digital technology? These are behaviors that have negative consequences.

3. Have students brainstorm negative uses of digital technology for 5 minutes.

Record students' answers as you did for positive consequences.



FACILITATOR TIP

Use Poll Everywhere as an optional brainstorming method to ask students about positive and negative uses of digital technology use. See **Before You Start** on page 2 for instructions.

If the session is conducted in person, you might also use a brainstorming game to facilitate the discussion. For example, you can time this activity so students must come up with as many ideas as possible within a certain time frame. You might also incorporate a soft object that students can toss to each other, sharing an idea as the object is passed to them.

4. Summarize main takeaway points of the activity.



SAY: Let's summarize all the things we've discussed up to this point.

Review what students have shared thus far.



FACILITATOR TIP

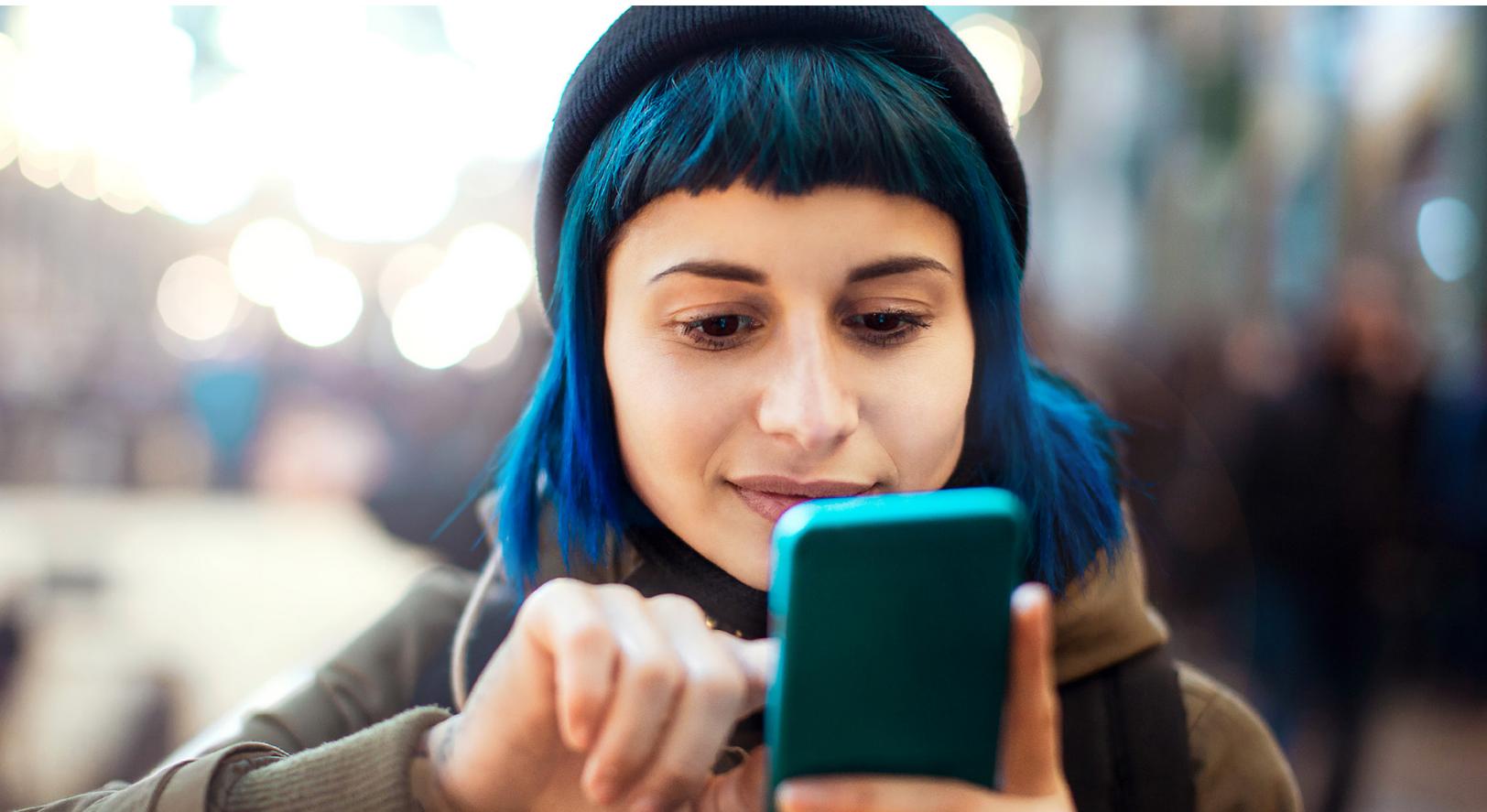
Supplement what the students said about positive and negative uses of digital technology with the following observations, if needed:

Positive Uses of Digital Technology

- Feeling connected to others in an online community
- Getting support from others in your social circle
- Being inspired by what others are doing in the community
- Being entertained (e.g., funny memes, online videos, creative Instagram reels)
- Becoming involved in groups with others who have similar interests (e.g., sports, hobbies, art, causes)
- Sharing ideas
- Gathering information about a topic

Negative Uses of Digital Technology

- Developing an intimate relationship with someone you met in a chat room
- Engaging in cyberbullying
- Engaging in sexting or sharing photos of someone without their permission
- Sharing or reposting an online article without knowing the source or whether it was reliable
- Spending excessive amounts of time on a device, to the point of regularly neglecting relationships and responsibilities
- Using a device at an inappropriate or even dangerous time (e.g., while driving)
- Sharing or posting something personal that later causes regret



SECTION 2

Think Before You Post: Creating Your Own Tech-Smart Guide for Healthy Digital Technology Use (30 minutes)



OBJECTIVES

- Students will develop questions to help guide their future decision-making around how they use digital technology.



KEYWORDS AND PHRASES

Decisions/decision tree, healthy and unhealthy digital technology use



MATERIALS

- **Tech-Smart Checklist** (blank template for students)
- **Tech-Smart Checklist - facilitator version**
- **Fact Sheet - Dangers of Sexting**
- **Fact Sheet - How to Recognize and Avoid Scams**
- **Fact Sheet - Verifying Online Information**
- **Fact Sheet - Online Safety Tips**



TECHNOLOGY/TOOLS

- Laptop or tablet
- Projector or shared screen using videoconferencing platform (e.g., Zoom, Google Meet, Microsoft Teams, or Blackboard)
- Students' school or personal laptops, tablets, or mobile phones (optional)
- Poll Everywhere free account (optional)

1. Introduce the activity.



SAY: Now that we've talked about the positive and negative ways we might be using digital technology, together we'll create a checklist to help you and others make the best decisions around your use of digital technology. The checklist will include yes/no questions that can serve as a guide for your online behavior. You'll need to think of a set of questions that can be answered "yes" or "no," with the idea of only posting or doing something with digital technology if all of your answers to the checklist are "yes." You can use this tool to navigate through difficult scenarios relating to digital technology use!

Hand out the **Tech-Smart Checklist**. Assign students to small groups so that there is a group for each topic area on the **Tech-Smart Checklist**. If you are holding the class virtually, you will likely need an adult facilitator for each breakout group. If you do not have additional facilitators, you can do this exercise with the whole class together.



SAY: Before we go into our groups, the topic areas are "Effects on your reputation," "Emotional consequences," "Accuracy of information," "Scam protection," "Online safety," and "Legal consequences."

Briefly introduce each of the topic areas on the checklist with the following prompts:

Effects on my reputation:

- What kinds of questions might you ask yourself to determine how a post will affect your reputation?
- Think about who all is involved in the scenario (family or friends whose reputation might also be damaged).
- Why do you want to maintain a good reputation (e.g., to make a positive impression for college admissions or employers)?

Emotional consequences:

- What are some questions that would help you figure out the potential emotional consequences of your decision? How would you feel? How would others feel?

Accuracy:

- What questions would help you decide whether something is accurate?
- Think about how you might check the accuracy of a news article you find online.

Scam protection:

- What questions should you ask yourself to test whether you are protecting yourself from scammers?
- How do people scam others online?

Safety:

- What questions would help you decide whether something you do online is safe?
- What kinds of ways might you become unsafe due to digital technology use?

Legal consequences:

- What questions would help you decide whether legal consequences come into play when using technology?
- Why might there be legal consequences to the way you use technology?



SAY:

Let's come up with one question together for the first topic for practice. The first topic on the checklist is "Reputation." There are a lot of things you can do with digital technology that can harm your reputation for years to come. Any image or post you share with someone can then be shared with others: your family, your friends, people at your school, or future employers. It can end up practically anywhere and can be impossible to remove. One possible question that could help you decide whether or not something you post will harm your reputation is "Would my grandmother or another family member I respect like the post I am about to make?" If the answer is "No," then you might want to think twice before you post. Let's see if we can come up with one other question for this topic.

Guide students in coming up with one more question for the "Reputation" topic area.

2. Divide the class into small groups to create their own checklist questions (or do the activity as a class).

Next, have students break into small groups to come up with questions for the other topic areas.



SAY:

I'll hand out four fact sheets with background information and tips relating to these topics that will help you come up with your questions. Read these before you do the activity, as the information will help you think of questions.

Distribute **Dangers of Sexting**, **How to Recognize and Avoid Scams**, **Verifying Online Information**, and **Online Safety Tips** fact sheets to students.

 **SAY:** You'll have 15 minutes to work together to create your checklist. When we return to the larger group, we'll combine our ideas into one checklist.

3. Bring students back together and guide them in creating a checklist that combines the questions generated in small groups.

 **SAY:** We'll now ask each group to share their questions. Let's start with the first category, "Effects on your reputation." Which group would like to share what you have?

Compile unique questions on a blank version of the **Tech-Smart Checklist** as you hear from each group.

Use the **facilitator version of the Tech-Smart Checklist** to add ideas the class did not yet consider and explain the reason for adding each question.



SECTION 3

Testing Out Your Tech-Smart Checklist (25 minutes)



OBJECTIVES

- Students will use the **Tech-Smart Checklist** generated by the class to guide them through pre-written scenarios in which they have to make healthy decisions around using technology.



KEY WORDS AND PHRASES

Decisions/decision tree, healthy and unhealthy digital technology use, consequences (positive and negative)



MATERIALS

- Student-generated checklists from Section 2
- **Digital Technology Decision Scenarios**
- **Digital Technology Decision Scenarios - facilitator version**



TECHNOLOGY/TOOLS

- Laptop or tablet device (if virtual)
- Projector or shared screen using videoconferencing platform (e.g., Zoom, Google Meet, Microsoft Teams, or Blackboard)
- Students' school or personal laptops, tablets, or mobile phones (optional)



SAY: Now that you've developed important questions to ask yourselves about your technology use, we are going to put your decision-making skills to the test! I'm going to give everyone a copy of the checklist that includes all of the class's questions.

Hand out the **Digital Technology Decision Scenarios**. Once again, have students break into small groups (three to four students maximum, if possible) and have them go through a subset of the scenarios in their groups, using the combined **Tech-Smart Checklist** created by the class to guide their decision-making.



SAY: In your small groups, go through each question on the checklist for your assigned scenarios and mark "Yes," "No," or "Not Applicable."

Assign about five scenarios per group, allowing students about 3 minutes per scenario, depending on how much time you have. Once the class has finished, ask students the reflection questions related to each scenario as a class.



SAY: Now, let's go through each scenario as a class and see whether you marked "No" for any of the questions on any of these scenarios. Remember, a "no" on any question means it's not a good idea to post or do what you were thinking with digital technology.

Guide students through the scenarios, ensuring that students have correctly identified the ones that describe unhealthy technology use. Use the **Digital Technology Decision Scenarios—facilitator version** to identify which behaviors are okay and which are not. Green-shaded scenarios are okay and red-shaded behaviors should be avoided.



SECTION 4

Wrap-up: My Digital Footprint (10 minutes)



OBJECTIVES

Students will reflect on how they want to be perceived online.



KEY WORDS AND PHRASES

Digital footprint, perceptions



MATERIALS

N/A



TECHNOLOGY/TOOLS

- Laptop or tablet device (if virtual)
- Chalkboard or whiteboard, flip chart, or means to display results of brainstorming activity (e.g., shared Google Doc, Google Slides, Zoom's whiteboard feature)
- Students' school or personal laptops, tablets, or mobile phones (optional)

Have students reflect on what they would like their online image to be.



SAY: As we wrap up, let's come up with a list of words that show how you'd like to be perceived. Think about how you want the world to see you and what you want to be known for. What kinds of personality or character traits do you want people to associate with you? What about talents or skills?

Record students' ideas on a whiteboard, flip chart, or virtual whiteboard or use Poll Everywhere to gather ideas. Repeat or restate ideas to clarify them as needed. Record exact words and phrases provided and allow repetition; mark repetitions with a checkmark or star to note ideas generated by multiple participants. If using a virtual whiteboard, use the "annotate" feature to allow students to write their ideas.



SAY: **In this lesson, you've had a chance** to think about all the benefits of using technology in a healthy way. You've also seen that there can be lifelong consequences from using it in unhealthy ways. We've talked about how it can be difficult or impossible to delete content completely once it is shared (even content that is eventually deleted from a social media platform might exist in the form of screenshots). You've had a chance to think about how people will form opinions of you based on what you post online or share using digital technology, and you know that you have the ability to develop an impressive digital footprint and steer clear of unhealthy technology use. When you are not sure whether or not to post, use the fact sheets and the **Tech-Smart Checklist** we created to help you decide what to do.