

5. What your digital footprint says about you

Video summary

A short classroom film for secondary schools explaining what a 'digital footprint' is, and how everything we do online (be that a like, search, comment or post), contributes to it. In the film, presenter and documentary filmmaker James Blake encourages students to think about the consequences of their online actions and the traces these leave and ultimately, the digital profile this builds. James states at the end of the film, 'Your digital footprint is your story. Make sure it's one you're proud to tell.'

In introducing 'digital footprints' the film also touches on sharing images online, for which advice for teachers is provided below. Please read this and view the film before showing it to your class.

Before watching

Establish a safe learning environment. Remind students not to mock or shame others for believing false information online; anyone can be vulnerable to it. Encourage students to focus on general online behaviour rather than sharing sensitive personal experiences.

In preparation for watching the film in class, ask students:

- What do you think a digital footprint is?
- Can online actions affect you now or in the future? How?
- Have they ever posted something online they later regretted?
- Do they consider who might see what they post?

Please note that the video touches on the sensitive issue of sharing images online and we advise watching it before sharing it with your class. Teachers should approach these topics carefully to ensure students feel safe, supported, and informed, rather than fearful or silenced.

If discussing nude or sexual images, it is important to explain the law clearly and calmly, without using threatening language.

It is important to make clear to your students that:

- In the UK, it is illegal for anyone under the age of 18 to create, possess, or share a nude or sexual image of themselves or another minor, even if it was shared consensually.

- The law exists to protect young people, not to punish them.
- Young people who ask for help will not get into trouble for speaking up.

In line with *Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)*, you should:

- Use hypothetical examples only and avoid inviting personal disclosures in class.
- Remind students that they can speak privately to a trusted adult if anything discussed causes concern.
- Be clear that the law exists to protect children, and that students will not be in trouble for asking for help.
- Reassure students that any worries about online content, image-sharing, or pressure from others should be reported.

If a student makes a disclosure, teachers must:

- Not promise confidentiality
- Listen and reassure
- Follow the school's safeguarding procedures and pass concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) without delay.

Across Bitesize, we advise young people that they should always tell someone about the things they're worried about. They could tell a friend, parent, guardian, teacher, or another adult they trust. If they're struggling with their mental health, going to a GP can be a good place to find help. A GP can outline the support available, suggest different types of treatment and offer regular check-ups

If young people are in need of urgent support there are links to helpful organisations on [BBC Bitesize Action Line](#).

While watching

There are 'pause points' in the video for students to engage in tasks. You can either pause at these suggested points (you will need to manually pause the video to give your students enough time to complete these tasks) or watch the film through and try the activities afterwards.

Activity 1

The first task requires students to become 'digital detectives'. On screen, they will see Misha's online day mapped out like a timetable.

Their task is to discuss in groups:

- Which actions leaves a digital trace?
- Which of these moments becomes a permanent part of their digital footprint?
- And which, if any, do not?

Give students a maximum of five minutes for discussion followed up with whole class feedback.

The answer – perhaps surprisingly – is that every action in the timetable leaves an online trace, contributing to Misha’s digital footprint.

Activity 2

The second task requires students to work in groups to create a fictional digital persona. Students are challenged to detail their online habits, what social media apps they use, sites they visit and any other digital activities they do, such as uploading videos and pictures, commenting or posting on sites.

They then need to swap their digital persona with another group and explore their digital footprint and what it makes you think about them as a person.

After watching

Students review their own online presence (posts, profiles, comments) and create a “footprint map” showing what information is visible to others. They identify content that is positive, neutral, or potentially risky, and reflect on how it contributes to their online identity.

Students create a plan for managing their online presence responsibly. This could include:

- Privacy settings they will review
- Types of content they will think twice about posting
- Strategies to maintain a positive, authentic digital identity.

Where next?

BBC Bitesize’s [Other Side of the Story](#) resources are designed to help students navigate fake news and misinformation and be more critical and curious about what they see and share online.

This page relating to echo chambers could be a good onward journey to set students for independent study or explore as a class: [What are echo chambers?](#)

Curriculum notes

This film will be relevant for several curriculum areas:

Citizenship and PSHE Key Stage 3 and 4: supports teaching on online safety, responsible behaviour, and wellbeing; encourages students to reflect on how their actions affect themselves and others online; links to understanding digital relationships, self-image, and the consequences of online behaviour; supports discussions on rights, responsibilities, and participation in digital communities; links to understanding the impact of online behaviour on personal reputation and society.

Computing Key Stage 3 and 4: develops digital literacy, including managing online identities and privacy settings; promotes critical thinking about online content and the permanence of digital actions; encourages safe, responsible, and ethical use of technology.

English Key Stage 3 and 4: develops media literacy skills as students analyse how language, images, and posts create impressions online; encourages critical evaluation of digital communication and how audiences interpret content.