Digital Literacy and Cyber Security

Class 6- 8

Understanding Digital Footprints

In today's digital age, almost everything we do is online — from social media posts to online shopping, we leave traces of our activities behind. These traces, or "digital footprints," are pieces of information that reflect our online presence and behaviour. This chapter will help students understand what digital footprints are, how they are created, and the impact they can have on an individual's personal and professional life. It also emphasises on the importance of managing digital footprint responsibly. By the end of this chapter, students will be equipped with the knowledge to make mindful decisions about what they share online and understand the potential risks of leaving a digital trail.

Objectives of the Chapter

1. **Understand the concept of digital footprints** — Learn what digital footprints are and how they are formed through our online activities.

2. **Identify types of digital footprints** — Differentiate between active and passive digital footprints and understand how they are created.

3. **Recognize the impact of digital footprints** — Understand how your online actions can affect your reputation, relationships, and career.

4. **Learn about privacy and security** — Know the importance of protecting your personal information and managing your online presence.

5. **Develop strategies to maintain a positive digital footprint** — Discover ways to ensure your online behavior is responsible, respectful, and safe.

Module 1: Digital Footprints

Story of Shally and her Dog

Shally is a kind-hearted little girl who shares a special bond with her pet dog, Muffy. She adores him and enjoys spending time together, whether it's going on walks, feeding him his favourite treats, or playing games in the yard. Muffy is a loyal companion, always by her side during these fun moments. Although he lives in a cozy kennel outside the house, Shally ensures he is well cared for, making sure Muffy is comfortable and happy in his little space. Their friendship is filled with love and joy, and Shally takes pride in looking after her furry friend.

One fine morning, Shally eagerly went outside to take Muffy for his daily walk, only to discover that he was missing from his kennel. She searched the entire yard and the surrounding area, but Muffy was nowhere to be found. Overwhelmed with worry, Shally began to cry. Hearing her sobs, her father, Mr. Mathur, quickly rushed out of the house to see what was wrong. He could see how upset Shally was and immediately joined in the search, determined to help her find Muffy.

Shally's father is a detective. He is a very smart man. After hearing what Shally told him about Muffy, he told Shally not to worry. He also explained to Shally about animal prints. "Every animal leaves a unique trail of footprints when it walks . By searching and following that trail, we can find him", said Mr. Mathur.

So he asked Shally to join him as he searched for Muffy by following the footprints on the mud in the garden.

And just in a short while, Shally's father found Muffy by following his *trail.*

For students with special needs, here is a video of the story: https://youtu.be/PYGUpZRrB9E

What is a Trail?

A path or track that someone can follow.

If someone is trained to study a *trail,* he or she can evaluate it carefully and *identify* the person to whom it belongs to!!

Reflection: Can you guess the animal from the prints given below?

What is a Digital Footprint?

A *Digital Footprint* is a *Digital trail* that is left behind when we go online and surf the Internet.

Every action you take online leaves behind a digital trail, commonly referred to as a **Digital Footprint**, which can potentially be traced back to you by cybercriminals.
This trail can include a wide range of online activities such as sharing posts on social media, blogging, leaving comments on websites, or even engaging in video calls on platforms like Skype.

Cybercriminals may exploit this information in various harmful ways. For instance:

- **Financial harm**: They could steal your personal or banking information to commit fraud or theft.

- **Physical threats**: If sensitive details like your location or habits are revealed, it could jeopardize your personal safety.

Understanding the risks associated with your digital footprint is essential to protect yourself from such malicious activities.
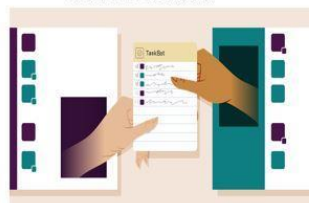
Digital Footprints:

Can be Copied

Can be Shared

Can be Broadcast

Are Permanent

Module 2: What Information is Ok to share?

"A Stranger offline, is a stranger online"

When meeting a stranger in person, would you share details like your date of birth, phone number, address, or email?

Most likely, no.
This is because we've been taught to avoid sharing personal information with strangers. The reason is simple: such details could be used to identify or track us, potentially leading to safety concerns.

The same is true when we go online. When we post information on our social media, we do not know who all can access that information. Therefore, it is crucial to avoid *sharing private information online under any circumstances*.

What is Private Information?

Private information refers to personal details about an individual that can uniquely identify them or be used to access sensitive aspects of their life. This includes data such as full name, date of birth, home address, phone number, email address, passwords, financial information like bank account details or credit card numbers, government-issued IDs, and biometric data like fingerprints or facial recognition. It also extends to personal content like photos, videos, medical records, and even certain online activity data, such as browsing history or location tracking.

What happens if we share Private information online?

Sharing private information without caution can lead to privacy breaches, identity theft, financial fraud, and other security risks. Hence, safeguarding private information is crucial to ensure personal and digital safety.

You may become a victim of :

o   **Identity Theft:** It happens when cybercriminals steal your personal information and pretend to be you. They can use this stolen information to do harmful things, like making purchases, transferring money, or opening accounts in your name. They might also post inappropriate content online, damaging your reputation.

Sometimes, they could even commit crimes using your identity, which might cause you legal trouble. For example, they could access your email or social media to spread harmful messages or scam others. Protecting

your personal information and being careful about what you share online is important to avoid such problems.

o **Cyber Stalking:** is when someone uses the internet or digital tools to track, monitor, or harass you repeatedly. Cyber predators may follow your online activities, such as the posts you share, the places you check into, or the personal details you reveal, to gather information about you. They might then use this information to invade your privacy by sending unwanted messages, making threats, or trying to control or manipulate you.

Cyber Stalking

In severe cases, cyber stalkers might go beyond the virtual world, using the details they've collected to approach you in real life, which could lead to serious safety concerns. To protect yourself, it's important to limit the amount of personal information you share online, use strong privacy settings on social media, and report or block suspicious activity immediately. Always be cautious about who you interact with online, and ensure your digital footprint does not expose too much about your personal life.

Online Harassment
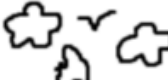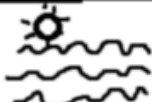
o **Online harassment**: Cyber harassment involves receiving threatening, offensive, or harmful messages, often aimed at intimidating or humiliating you. Cyberbullying typically includes repeated aggressive behaviour, such as hurtful comments, spreading rumours, or sharing private information without consent, intended to damage your self-esteem or reputation. Discrimination in the digital space occurs when individuals target you based on characteristics like race, gender, religion, or beliefs, often leading to unfair treatment or hateful remarks.

Such experiences can have serious emotional and psychological impacts, including anxiety, depression, or feelings of isolation. To protect yourself, avoid sharing sensitive information publicly, be cautious about interacting with strangers, and familiarize yourself with reporting tools available on social platforms. Remember, it's essential to seek help and support if you encounter such behaviour, as no one should tolerate harassment, bullying, or discrimination in any form.

What information can/ cannot be shared online?

NOT Ok to share	Ok to share
1. Address	• Hobbies
2. Full Name	• Favorites like place, Celebrity etc.
3. Phone Number	• Interests
4. Age	
5. Date Of Birth	
6. School Name	

Reflection: **Based on the Digital Footprints of the animals given below, which animal is the most unsafe online?**

	Fannny the fish	Binu the bird	Chinu the cat
Hobbies	Swimming	Flying	Going to Gold's Gym
Address	The Sea	The Nest	B-89, Sapna Vihar
Others	I love Seaweed	I love Seeds	My email : Ch@gmail.com

Module 3: Can you control your Digital Footprints?

Active Digital Footprints

Have you ever filled an online application form which asks for your details? Or have you posted pictures of your recent vacation mentioning the place and number of days?

If yes, then you have created *Active digital footprints* by sharing information on purpose.

Active Digital Footprints are created when we give information on the Internet which we are aware of.

We can control of our active digital footprints.
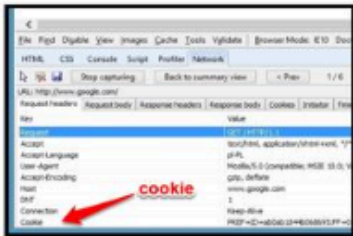

Active Digital Footprints Examples

Posting on social media, sending emails etc.

Filling online forms requiring your details

Agreeing to install cookies on your computer when prompted by the browser on visiting websites

Consider the following scenarios:

Scenario 1:

Preeti is checking her social media posts. She checks some posts and likes the new shoes bought by her friend Prerna who posted the picture of the shoes.

Next day as she checks her social media again, suddenly an advertisement of ladies footwear pops up. It is offering huge discounts too!

Scenario 2:

Mridul visits a website offering free examination practice exercises in various subjects. He is required to fill a simple form with his name and mail id as free registration.

A couple of days later, he receives a mail informing him about some new worksheets that have been added to that site. But he is required to buy a plan to be able to access those. He keeps on receiving such mails and his mail inbox is now full of such spam.

In both of the above scenarios Preeti and Mridul are victims of targeted marketing due to the *passive digital footprints* they leave behind.

How does this happen?

This happens due to the passive Digital Footprints we leave behind.

Passive Digital Footprints

A passive digital footprint is data one leaves behind unintentionally when using the internet. The concerned person may not even be aware of this.

For example, a website collects our data to evaluate how many times we have visited it recently, is adding to the digital footprint passively. They collect it when a device at the our IP address connects with their website. We do not choose to share data with them.

We have *NO control* over our passive footprints.

Passive Digital Footprints Examples

Websites that install cookies without your permission.

Apps and websites that use your geolocation

Social media sites that use your likes, shares, Comments etc. on to profile you to share targeted advertisements

Reflection Questions: Choose the correct answer from the following. Give explanation for the chosen answer.

Scenario 1:

Sunendu is a football player. He wants to participate in a State football tournament. He is required to fill an online form for this. So, Sunendu fills the form and provides his information such as name , school name , address, phone number etc. This is an example of:

a. Active Digital Footprint

b. Passive Digital Footprint

Scenario 2:

Priyanshi is looking for a science project online. She comes across a website which she finds interesting. She clicks on it to read more. Suddenly a text pops up asking informing that the website uses cookies and asks her if she would accept that. Priyanshi is quite interested in the site and she clicks *"I accept"*. What type of Digital Footprint is Priyanshi generating?

a. Active Digital Footprint

b. Passive Digital Footprint

Scenario 3:

During a Facebook session, Dinesh comes across a post that shows tips on how to cope with stress. Dinesh rewards the post and likes it very much so he presses the like button.

A few hours later Dinesh starts receiving popup ads on various Psychologists who treat stress and other stress relieving products. This is a classic example of:

a. Active Digital Footprint

b. Passive Digital Footprint

Scenario 4:

Meenakshi is surfing the net. She visits her Instagram. A friend has posted a picture of a nice dress. She presses the lie button. Next day she starts getting ads of dresses on her phone when she uses the Internet. This is an example of:

a. Active Digital Footprint

b. Passive Digital Footprint

Module 4: We Define who we are

The story of Ritwik

Ritwik is a graduate from a prestigious university in Kolkata, India. He has just cleared his interview for a job in a multinational company. The HR department of the company has now started completing the formalities including a background check on Ritwik.

The background check involves verifying various aspects of Ritwik's personal and professional history, including his educational qualifications, work experience, and any criminal records, if applicable. It may also include checking his social media presence, references, and other publicly available information to assess his character and suitability for the role.

This process is important for companies to ensure that the candidate aligns with their values, meets the qualifications for the job, and does not pose any risks to the organization.

Meanwhile, Ritwik is thrilled about clearing his interview and eagerly awaits the official appointment letter for his new job at a multinational company. He's excited to share the news with his friends and family, and as he anticipates the next steps, he begins preparing for the role. Ritwik is researching the company, brushing up on relevant skills, and mentally gearing up for the job, determined to make a positive impression once he starts. This period of excitement is filled with both celebration and preparation for the new chapter in his career.

Just a few days after his interview, Ritwik receives a call from the company, informing him that he has been rejected for the job.

Ritwik is surprised and very upset . After some thought he decides to visit the company and meet the HR personnel.

Upon enquiring about his rejection, Ritwik comes to know that during a background check, the HR department came across some abusive and objectionable comments that he had posted about a classmate while in first year of college.

This came as a rude shock to Ritwik. He could not believe his ears!! In college first year he had a fight with one of his classmates. In order to teach him a lesson , Ritwik had posted objectionable comments regarding this classmate. But after a few months they had become friends again.

Ritwik had been denied a job for which he had qualified technically due to some comments he had passed for a classmate in a moment of fury, quite a few years ago.

Ritwik's job rejection highlights the lasting impact of negative digital footprints, emphasizing the importance of maintaining a respectful and positive online presence. What we post online, even in moments of anger, can have long-term consequences on our personal and professional lives.

*For students with special needs, here is a video of the story:*https://youtu.be/xpKdpcjf7RU

You Define who you are

In the digital world, we are defined by what we post online not only about ourselves, but also about others; the comments we give, what we like and dislike or promote. These are our digital footprints which can impact our future. What others find about us online shapes how they see us or feel about us.

Therefore, it is very important that we create a *positive digital footprint.*

Importance of a positive Digital Footprint

- o Whatever you post online is permanent
- o Colleges and universities regularly check social media accounts of new applicants.
- o Prospective employers make sure that the applicant has no negative history including social media posts and comments.
- o In extreme cases, Digital Footprints of people have been used in court.

Reflection Questions: Based on the given scenarios, answer the questions.

Scenario 1:

Q. Is Shruti posting something that could harm her future prospects in getting admission to a good college?

Scenario 2:

Q. Do you think Piyush has done the right thing to repost as he has suffered a lot due to Greekesh.?

Scenario 3:

Q. Which kind of Digital Footprints do you think this post of Kartik has created for himself?

Scenario 4:

One day, as Annie is going through her social media account, she finds some comments her new friend Alia has written about her.

"Annie is such a hardworking girl."

"She is also helpful, smart and great company"

Q. How do think Annie feels after reading the comments? Did Alia do the right thing?