

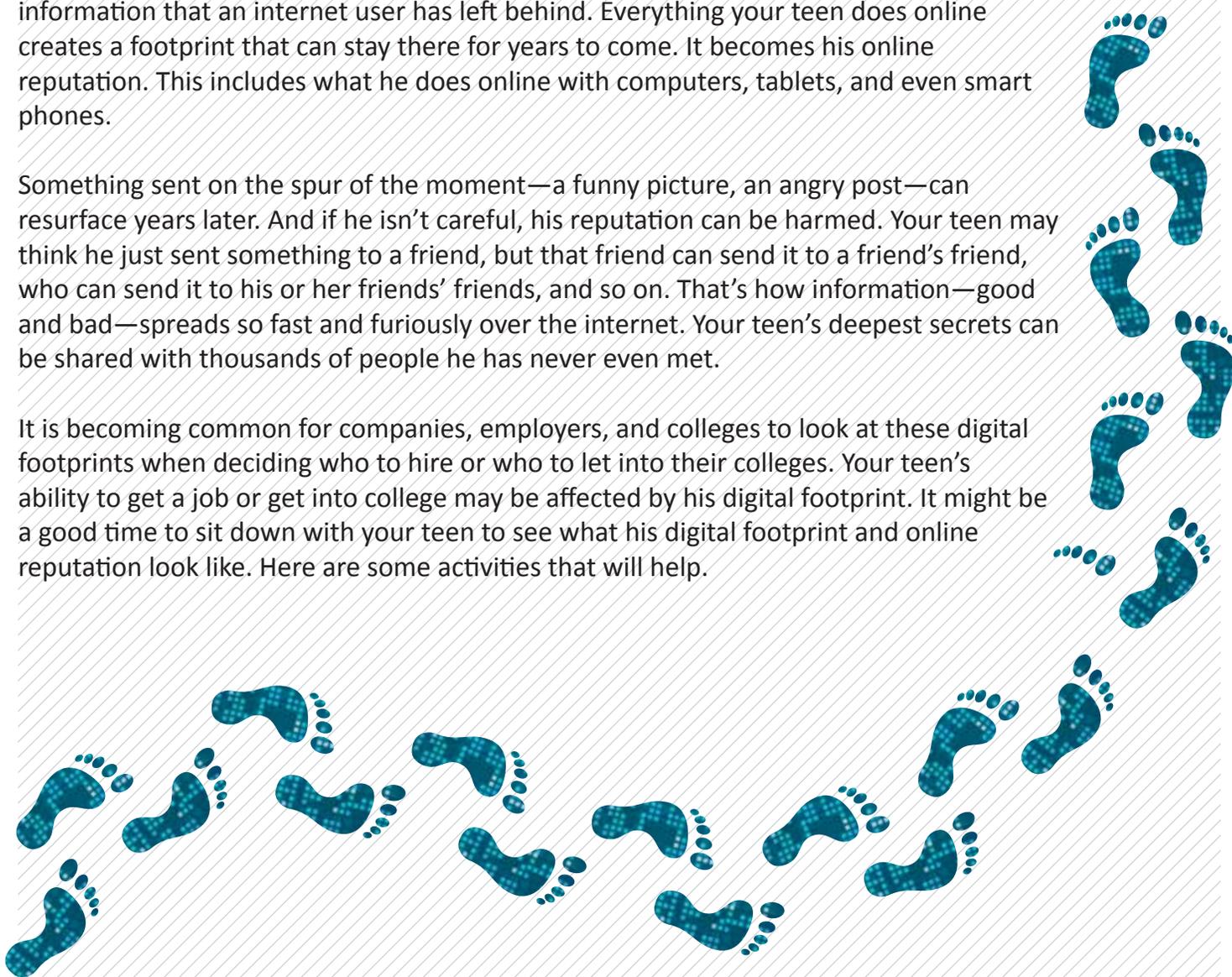
Digital Footprints

Helping High School Students Manage their Online Reputations

What is a digital footprint? A digital footprint is the expression used to describe the trail or traces ("footprints") that people leave as a result of their online activities and communications. It is the information that an internet user has left behind. Everything your teen does online creates a footprint that can stay there for years to come. It becomes his online reputation. This includes what he does online with computers, tablets, and even smart phones.

Something sent on the spur of the moment—a funny picture, an angry post—can resurface years later. And if he isn't careful, his reputation can be harmed. Your teen may think he just sent something to a friend, but that friend can send it to a friend's friend, who can send it to his or her friends' friends, and so on. That's how information—good and bad—spreads so fast and furiously over the internet. Your teen's deepest secrets can be shared with thousands of people he has never even met.

It is becoming common for companies, employers, and colleges to look at these digital footprints when deciding who to hire or who to let into their colleges. Your teen's ability to get a job or get into college may be affected by his digital footprint. It might be a good time to sit down with your teen to see what his digital footprint and online reputation look like. Here are some activities that will help.



My Digital Footprint

A good place to start is to see what your teen's current digital footprint looks like. Sit down together and run a search on her name and see what appears.

1. Open your computer internet browser and choose a search engine such as Google.
2. Type her first and last name in the search box, and maybe the town you live in.
3. Read the first page of results from the search engine.
4. Don't forget to search for photos and images, as they can link to websites or accounts you've forgotten about.

Here are some possible questions to talk about with your teen.

- What does she like about her footprint and online reputation?
- Is there anything she is proud of?
- Is there anything she is embarrassed about?
- What might she want to change?
- What might she do to more effectively represent how she wants to be viewed by others?

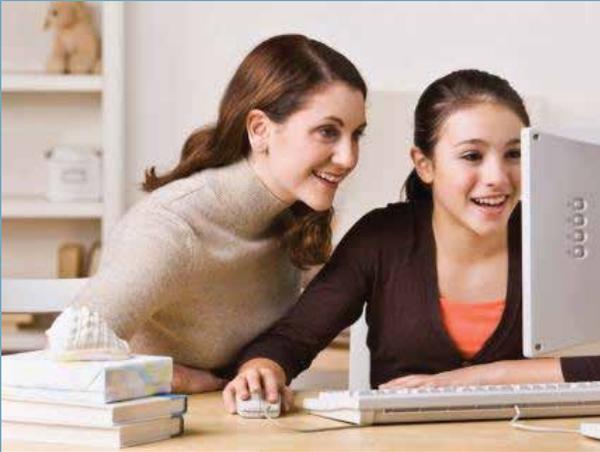


You may want to try this for yourself and see what your digital footprint looks like. Is it what you would like it to be? More specific sites for finding people include zabasearch.com or pipl.com.

The Do's and Don'ts

This exercise helps teens protect their digital footprints. Cut out the Do and Don't words and place them on a table in front of you and your teenager. Then cut out the Do's and Don'ts cards and shuffle them. Place them face down on the table. Have your teenager pick one card at a time and read it out loud. For example, the card might read, "Use privacy settings and password protected sites for any sensitive information you want to share online." Have him decide if it is a good thing or bad thing to do to protect his online reputation. Have him put the card under the Do or Don't words. In this case, using privacy settings and password protected sites can sometimes help protect sensitive information (but not always) and would go in the Do pile. Keep going until all the cards are used. Check the parent answer sheet to see if your teen was able to get the Do and Don't cards in the right stacks.

How to Manage Your Online Reputation



Sit down with your teenager and look at the Managing Your Online Reputation worksheet together. Talk about each step and ask her what she thinks of the advice. Have her choose three of the steps that she will do in the next two weeks. Mark the date on a calendar. After two weeks, come back together and see how she did with the steps she chose. Then have her choose another three steps to do. Continue until she has had an opportunity to try each step.

General Common Sense tips:

Here are some common sense tips to talk about with your teen.

- Help him think long term. What he posts today could be there years from now.
- Teach him to keep personal information private. We recommend not to share addresses, phone numbers, or birth dates online.
- Make sure he uses privacy settings on his social network pages. Have him think carefully about the nature of his relationships (friends, family, classmates, strangers) and adjust his privacy settings accordingly.
- Remind him to protect his friends' privacy. Passing along a rumor or identifying someone in a picture (called "tagging") affects other people's privacy.
- Remind him that the Golden Rule applies online. Treat others on the internet the way you want to be treated. Whatever negative things he says or does online can come back to haunt him.

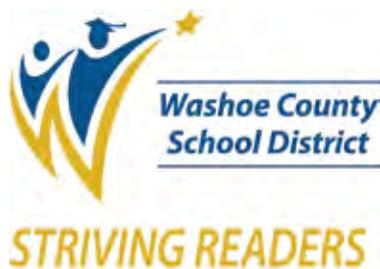
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Watch Families Doing Activities

To watch families doing these activities, please go to: www.schoolsuccesslibrary.com and click on the “Parents” link at the top of the page. Next, click on “Literacy Resources”. Then, click on the button that matches your child’s age group. Scroll down the page and click on the video that goes with this tip sheet. Other tip sheets and videos are there as well.

More Ideas

If you and your teen enjoy these activities, tell your teen’s teacher or counselor. The teacher or counselor may have more ideas to share for learning fun at home. If your teen is having a hard time with these activities, you can also talk to your teens’s teacher or counselor. There may be other activities to help.



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