



Secret Sharer

Essential Question

How do you respect the privacy of others online?

Lesson Overview

Students look beyond protecting their own privacy to respecting the privacy of others online.

Students read and analyze case studies about students who have compromised the privacy of someone else online by tagging, copying, and distributing that person's photos or video, or by sharing the person's personal information. Students then debate some of the thornier ethical questions that have bubbled up in the case studies, and then generate ways to protect other people's privacy online.

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to ...

- learn that it is the responsibility of digital media users to respect the personal information and privacy of others.
- understand how putting information about others online could compromise their own reputation or their relationships with others.
- generate ideas about how to respect the privacy of others.

Materials and Preparation

- Blank paper
- Copy the **Privacy of Others Student Handout**, one for each student.
- Review the **Privacy of Others Student Handout – Teacher Version**.

Family Resources

- Send home the **Protecting and Respecting Privacy Family Tip Sheet (Middle School)**.

Estimated time: 45 minutes

Standards Alignment –

Common Core:

grade 6: RI.2, RI.3, RI.7, RI.8, RI.10, SL.1a, SL.1b, SL.1c, SL.1d, SL.2, SL.4, SL.6, L.6

grade 7: RI.2, RI.3, RI.7, RI.8, RI.10, W.7, SL.1a, SL.1b, SL.1c, SL.1d, SL.2, SL.4, SL.6, L.6

grade 8: RI.2, RI.3, RI.8, RI.10, W.7, SL.1a, SL.1b, SL.1c, SL.1d, SL.2, SL.4, SL.6, L.6

NETS•S: 1a-b, 2a-d

Key Vocabulary –

phishing: the illegal practice of gathering information such as user names, passwords, and financial information through dishonest means

blog: a Web journal or log that can be either private or public and is often posted regularly with text entries, video, and more

introduction

Warm-up (10 minutes)

WRITE a (fictional) name, address, and phone number on the blackboard.

ASK:

Do you think it's right that I put this information about someone else on the board? Why or why not?

Sample responses:

- Yes, that person is not here, so who cares?
- No, that's private information; it's not yours to reveal.
- Depends. If they said it was okay, then it's fine.

Does your answer change if this person's information were displayed in an even more public place, like on a social network site?

Sample responses:

- Yes, if it's on a publicly accessible profile, anyone around the world could see it.
- No, it's not like you're saying something embarrassing about this person.
- No, private information is private no matter where it's displayed, and the information can put this person's safety at risk.

EXPLAIN that there seems to be a lot more clarity in the offline world about what is okay and what is not to share about others. Say that it is generally agreed that it is not acceptable to share someone else's photos with strangers, for instance. Provide a bit of historical context about how the Internet is still pretty new (i.e., it only started to become more widespread in the 1990s), and that our definition of ethical online behavior is still developing.

teach 1

Debate Privacy Case Studies (15 minutes)

EXPLAIN that people generally worry about protecting their own privacy, but that it is also important to think about how to respect the privacy of others, such as family and friends.

DISTRIBUTE the **Privacy of Others Student Handout**.

TELL students that they will be analyzing case studies of students who have compromised the online privacy of someone else by tagging, copying, and distributing that person's photos or videos, or sharing the person's personal information. They will debate some of the thornier ethical questions that bubble up in the case studies and then brainstorm how to respect other people's privacy online.

DIVIDE students into small groups and assign the groups to read and debate different case studies. Ask each group to designate a scribe. Refer to the **Privacy of Others Student Handout – Teacher Version** for guidance on how to teach the case studies.

DEFINE the Key Vocabulary terms **phishing** and **blog**, if needed.

POINT OUT that the case studies are designed to help students understand the thornier ethical issues related to respecting other people's privacy online. Even though the case study questions are framed in terms of "right" and

“wrong,” explain that there are a lot of gray areas in the real world. When students are finished reading and debating the case studies, a representative from each group should report to the entire class about the dilemma they read about and the most important questions that arose in the case study about respecting other people’s privacy. (See the last question for each case study.)

teach 2

Web of Contacts (15 minutes)

HAVE students draw their “web of contacts” on a sheet of paper, which should consist of their name in the center with spokes out to friends, family, acquaintances, and people whom they interact with online but might not know.

INVITE students to discuss what information is appropriate to share online about each of the different people or groups they have listed.

ENCOURAGE students to think about what might happen if information they are considering posting about the person or group went public. What if personal information about a close friend intended only for another friend was passed on to friends of friends? Tell students that it is a good rule of thumb to not share information about others that would hurt those people’s reputations or feelings if it went public.

HELP students evaluate the gray areas when they are unsure if they should share something about a friend. Sometimes what a student thinks is not embarrassing or private is very much so to someone else. Tell students to first ask the person whose information they’re posting if it is okay to share. It is especially important to ask if the topic could be sensitive.

closing

Wrap-up (5 minutes)

ASK:

What are some options you have if you post something about a friend and later realize that it was inappropriate?

Options include telling the friend, taking down or deleting the post (though it might already have been passed on), or contacting the website (if they can’t take it down).

GUIDE students in developing a list of “I” commitments about what they will do to respect their friends’ privacy. *I will respect my friends’ privacy online by...*

Sample responses:

- *making sure their private messages stay that way.*
- *asking permission to post a friend’s photo if I think it might be embarrassing to that person.*
- *not posting personal information or stories about others without asking first.*

Extension Activity

Students review select guidelines below from CyberJournalist.net’s “Bloggers’ Code of Ethics” (www.cyberjournalist.net/news/000215.php) about how to blog ethically. Ask students if they know what blogging is and what

bloggers do. (Bloggers write about their opinions online, regarding either personal matters or a topic of interest to them.) For each guideline below, ask students to offer examples illustrating what might happen to the subject of a blog (i.e., the person who is being written about) if the guideline were broken. When finished, encourage students to think about their responsibilities online to others.

- **Be Honest and Fair:** Make certain that weblog entries, quotations, headlines, photos, and all other content do not misrepresent.
- **Minimize Harm:** Be sensitive when seeking or using interviews or photographs of those affected by tragedy or grief.
- **Be Accountable:** Admit mistakes and correct them promptly.

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Directions

Read the following case studies and debate the associated questions.

case study 1

Model Mix-up

On the first long weekend of the summer, 9th-grade students Amy, Maxine, and Alejandra head to the beach. They have fun striking poses and taking pictures of each other with Maxine's new camera phone. When the day ends and the friends head home, Maxine promises to email the photos to Amy and Alejandra so they can all have a laugh about them. Amy soon forgets about the photos, but at lunch a week later a boy waves at her and says, "You look better in a bikini!" Feeling embarrassed, Amy asks around and finds out that there are pictures of her in her bathing suit on a website called ModelZone, and a girl at school has sent the link to all of her friends. When she gets home, Amy checks out ModelZone and finds that the photos Maxine took at the beach are on the website. The caption of the photos gives her full name, her grade, and her hometown. It also asks viewers to rate her photos from "hot" to "not." Amy was just clowning around when Maxine took the photos, but people who see the site don't know that! Amy calls Maxine and asks her why she uploaded the pictures. Maxine says that she went to the So You Wanna Be a Model? website to get a photo of the set of the TV show and followed a link that said you could upload photos for the show's producers to view. She uploaded pictures of all three of them from her phone. What Maxine didn't realize was that the link was really an ad, and that the ModelZone website has nothing to do with the TV show. But the damage was already done. Amy, furious, decided to get back at Maxine by circulating a picture from one of their sleepovers, where Maxine had on a facial mask that made her look like a zombie.

Debate Questions

- *Do you think Amy was entitled to send around an equally embarrassing photo of Maxine? What makes it okay or not?*
- *What responsibility do you feel you have when you post a photo of a friend?*
- *What do you think are the most important questions that come up about responsibility and privacy in this case study? Make a list of at least three.*

case study 2

Profile Problems

At the end of a long day, 10th-grade student Aaron settles in front of his computer and checks out his MyFace page. As he scrolls down he sees his girlfriend, Jillian, has changed her relationship status to

single. Aaron is surprised to see this, but not really shocked. He knows they've been having problems lately. But he's still hurt, because she didn't let him know that she was breaking up with him before telling every one of her MyFace contacts. Then he sees another update: Jillian is cleaning up her profile by throwing out old garbage. Below the message are links to several emails and texts that Aaron sent Jillian when they first started going out. Some of them are very private and embarrassing, including a poem he wrote to her by changing the lyrics to her favorite song. Aaron feels really angry and isn't sure what to do next. First, he writes Jillian a private message letting her know how he feels about what she has done. Then he remembers that when they were going out, they told each other their MyFace passwords. When he sees Jillian log out of MyFace, he logs on as her and starts messing around with her profile, changing her profile picture to a photo of a monkey and sending mean messages to all her best friends, impersonating her. The next day at school, Aaron is a little nervous about seeing Jillian. He doesn't see Jillian anywhere, and later he finds out that she stayed home because she was so upset about what Aaron had done.

Debate Questions

- *Was breaking up with Aaron on MyFace okay? If you think so, explain why. If not, why not?*
- *Was Aaron entitled to do what he did? Which actions were okay? Which weren't? Why?*
- *What do you think are the most important questions that come up in this case study? Make a list of at least three.*

case study 3

Money for Nothing

Alison, an 8th-grade student, spends a lot of online time at Virtual Runway, a website that lets her pick different outfits for her paper doll avatar. The basic section of the site is free, but sometimes she needs to use "virtubucks," the site's virtual currency, to buy items. One day when Alison logs on, she sees that a new item has been introduced, a complete virtual outfit by her favorite designer. It costs more virtubucks than she has, but she soon finds a contest to win lots of virtubucks. The contest announcement reads: "Are all your friends already on Virtual Runway? If not, sign them up and earn 100 virtubucks apiece. Sign up five friends and get 1,000 virtubucks. Plus, the person who signs up the most friends by the end of this week will get a grand prize of 10,000 virtubucks!" Alison decides to register her three best friends. The site asks for information such as name, age, email address, and hobbies. Alison wants to win more virtubucks, so she logs on to her social networking site, MyFace, where a lot of her friends have public profiles. She easily finds enough information to register 13 more people for Virtual Runway. Just by registering her friends, she earned at least 30,000 virtubucks.

Debate Questions

- *Was what Alison did okay? Why or why not?*
- *Do you think Alison should tell her friends what she did? Why or why not?*
- *What do you think are the most important questions about what Alison did that come up in this case study? Make a list of at least three.*

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Directions

Divide the class into small groups and assign the groups to read and debate different case studies from below. Ask each group to designate a scribe. Tell students that the case studies are designed to help students understand the thornier ethical issues about how to respect other people’s privacy online. Give any group help that needs it as they read through and try to understand the case studies. Even though the case-study questions are framed in terms of “right” and “wrong,” explain that there are a lot of gray areas in the real world. Guidance about how to debrief on the case studies is embedded below.

case study 1

Model Mix-up

On the first long weekend of the summer, 9th-grade students Amy, Maxine, and Alejandra head to the beach. They have fun striking poses and taking pictures of each other with Maxine’s new camera phone. When the day ends and the friends head home, Maxine promises to email the photos to Amy and Alejandra so they can all have a laugh about them. Amy soon forgets about the photos, but at lunch a week later a boy waves at her and says, “You look better in a bikini!” Feeling embarrassed, Amy asks around and finds out that there are pictures of her in her bathing suit on a website called ModelZone, and a girl at school has sent the link to all of her friends. When she gets home, Amy checks out ModelZone and finds that the photos Maxine took at the beach are on the website. The caption of the photos gives her full name, her grade, and her hometown. It also asks viewers to rate her photos from “hot” to “not.” Amy was just clowning around when Maxine took the photos, but people who see the site don’t know that! Amy calls Maxine and asks her why she uploaded the pictures. Maxine says that she went to the So You Wanna Be a Model? website to get a photo of the set of the TV show and followed a link that said you could upload photos for the show’s producers to view. She uploaded pictures of all three of them from her phone. What Maxine didn’t realize was that the link was really an ad, and that the ModelZone website has nothing to do with the TV show. But the damage was already done. Amy, furious, decided to get back at Maxine by circulating a picture from one of their sleepovers, where Maxine had on a facial mask that made her look like a zombie.

Debate Questions

Do you think it’s right that I put this information about someone else on the board? Why or why not?

Guide students away from the “eye-for-an-eye” mentality. Point out that it usually just leads to escalation.

What responsibility do you feel you have when you publish a photo of a friend?

Guide students to think about how posting the photos will impact other people’s reputations and relationships. It is usually better to ask someone’s permission before posting their photo, especially if it may seem embarrassing.

What do you think are the most important questions that come up about responsibility and privacy in this case study? Make a list of at least three.

Guide students to formulate questions such as: When do I ask a friend’s permission to post his or her photo? What types of photos are most embarrassing to someone else if posted? How do I know when to trust claims made by websites?

case study 2

Profile Problems

At the end of a long day, 10th-grade student Aaron settles in front of his computer and checks out his MyFace page. As he scrolls down he sees his girlfriend, Jillian, has changed her relationship status to single. Aaron is surprised to see this, but not really shocked. He knows they've been having problems lately. But he's still hurt, because she didn't let him know that she was breaking up with him before telling every one of her MyFace contacts. Then he sees another update: Jillian is cleaning up her profile by throwing out old garbage. Below the message are links to several emails and texts that Aaron sent Jillian when they first started going out. Some of them are very private and embarrassing, including a poem he wrote to her by changing the lyrics to her favorite song. Aaron feels really angry and isn't sure what to do next. First, he writes Jillian a private message letting her know how he feels about what she has done. Then he remembers that when they were going out, they told each other their MyFace passwords. When he sees Jillian log out of MyFace, he logs on as her and starts messing around with her profile, changing her profile picture to a photo of a monkey and sending mean messages to all her best friends, impersonating her. The next day at school, Aaron is a little nervous about seeing Jillian. He doesn't see Jillian anywhere, and later he finds out that she stayed home because she was so upset about what Aaron had done.

Debate Questions

Was breaking up with Aaron on MyFace okay? If you think so, explain why. If not, why not?

Guide students to consider how they would feel if someone did this to them. It would likely be humiliating and a breach of trust.

Was Aaron entitled to do what he did? Which actions were okay? Which weren't? Why?

Guide students to think about how revenge is rarely a constructive solution because it can lead to escalation. If one person gets back at someone else, it might start a cycle of mean-spiritedness that may never end.

What do you think are the most important questions that come up in this case study? Make a list of at least three.

Guide students to formulate questions such as: Would I put my relationship status on a social network? Should a breakup be exclusively a private matter between the two people involved? Is it okay to seek revenge if someone has humiliated you publicly online?)

case study 3

Money for Nothing

Alison, an 8th-grade student, spends a lot of online time at Virtual Runway, a website that lets her pick different outfits for her paper doll avatar. The basic section of the site is free, but sometimes she needs to use "virtubucks," the site's virtual currency, to buy items. One day when Alison logs on, she sees that a new item has been introduced, a complete virtual outfit by her favorite designer. It costs more virtubucks than she has, but she soon finds a contest to win lots of virtubucks. The contest announcement reads: "Are all your friends already on Virtual Runway? If not, sign them up and earn 100 virtubucks apiece. Sign up five friends and get 1,000 virtubucks. Plus, the person who signs up the most friends by the end of this week will get a grand prize of 10,000 virtubucks!" Alison decides to register her three best friends. The site asks for information such as name,

age, email address, and hobbies. Alison wants to win more virtubucks, so she logs on to her social networking site, MyFace, where a lot of her friends have public profiles. She easily finds enough information to register 13 more people for Virtual Runway. Just by registering her friends, she earned at least 30,000 virtubucks.

Debate Questions

Was what Alison did okay? Why or why not?

Guide students to think about the potential safety risks of disclosing personally identifiable information, such as email address and age, about others.

Do you think Alison should tell her friends what she did? Why or why not?

Guide students to think about what might happen if Alison does not tell her friends. They will likely receive SPAM, and may even have their identity stolen.

What do you think are the most important questions about what Alison did that come up in this case study? Make a list of at least three.

Guide students to formulate questions such as: What are the hidden costs or consequences of signing up for online contests for oneself? What are the hidden costs or consequences of signing up others for online contests? Are there any cases when it is okay to disclose personally identifiable information of friends online, such as Social Security numbers or addresses?

Secret Sharer

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1. Which is NOT an example of showing respect for a friend's online privacy?

- a) Tagging a friend in an embarrassing photo
- b) Asking permission to post a friend's photo
- c) Keeping a private message to yourself

2. Which person respects their friend's online privacy?

- a) Alex notices that his friend forgot to log out of a social network site, so Alex updates his friend's status as a joke
- b) Lauren's friend asked her to take down a photo she posted online, so she does
- c) Vinny posts his friend's full name on his website, even though she asked him not to

3. Sheena starts a rumor online about Andrew because she's mad at him. In the post, Sheena says that Andrew spray-painted a wall at their school. Their principal sees the post and suspends Andrew from school. Later, the principal learns that Sheena started the false rumor. She gives Sheena detention for lying about Andrew.

What can you conclude based on this story?

- a) Posting information online can affect both yourself and others
- b) Once you post information, you don't have control over who sees it
- c) Both a and b

Secret Sharer

1. Which is NOT an example of showing respect for a friend's online privacy?

- a) **Tagging a friend in an embarrassing photo**
- b) Asking permission to post a friend's photo
- c) Keeping a private message to yourself

Answer feedback

The correct answer is **a**. Our decisions online may make other people feel uncomfortable or upset.

2. Which person respects their friend's online privacy?

- a) Alex notices that his friend forgot to log out of a social network site, so Alex updates his friend's status as a joke
- b) **Lauren's friend asked her to take down a photo she posted online, so she does**
- c) Vinny posts his friend's full name on his website, even though she asked him not to

Answer feedback

The correct answer is **b**. You can respect your friends' online privacy by asking their permission before posting anything about them, or on their behalf.

3. Sheena starts a rumor online about Andrew because she's mad at him. In the post, Sheena says that Andrew spray-painted a wall at their school. Their principal sees the post and suspends Andrew from school. Later, the principal learns that Sheena started the false rumor. She gives Sheena detention for lying about Andrew.

What can you conclude based on this story?

- a) Posting information online can affect both yourself and others
- b) Once you post information, you don't have control over who sees it
- c) **Both a and b**

Answer feedback

The correct answer is **c**. You put your reputation and your friendships at risk when you post things about other people online without asking them first.