Technology Handbook Module 6

Online Ethics, Safety, and Privacy

Ethics and Technology

Computers can be used to do wonderful things. They can be used to complete homework assignments, workplace projects, as well as keep friends and family in touch with one another. However, they can also be misused.

Knowing some simple ethical guidelines will ensure that you are always doing the right thing:

- Because your school may have a fast Internet connection, you may be tempted to use these connections to download large files. Check with your teacher first, as there may be policies forbidding this.

- E-mail systems leave a "**digital paper trail**." This means that what you type into an e-mail can be found by a system administrator. Be sure not to abuse company or school e-mail systems—it may come back to haunt you!

- Avoid **plagiarism**, or taking somebody else's ideas and passing them off as your own, whether it is one or two sentences or an entire term paper. The "cut-and-paste" feature built into modern software makes a lot of mundane tasks, like moving a paragraph of text, quick and easy—but also makes plagiarism all too easy. Be on guard against falling into this trap.

  It is acceptable to quote online sources in your work, but you must make sure you identify those sources and give them proper credit.

  Also, some Web sites do not allow you to quote from them. Check each site or resource you are quoting to make sure you are allowed to use the material.

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- You would not steal office supplies from your office or school, so make sure you do not take home computer-related resources like CD-ROMs or floppy disks.

- It is not legal to download copyrighted music and videos and share them for free. Only use legal file sharing sites, which usually charge a small fee.

- Follow copyright laws. If you want to use part of an online work that has been copyrighted, contact the Webmaster of the site or the author of the article to request permission.

- Evaluate the information listed in a Web site carefully. Be sure each site is relevant, reliable, recent, and verifiable.

Whether in the classroom or at the library, you likely spend time working at a computer. Remember that the computer is there to help you get your work done. If you instead use the computer to play games, check your personal e-mail, or look at offensive material on the Internet, you are inappropriately using the resource that is being provided for you and others.

Many institutions are taking action to prevent such misuse. Hidden software applications watch everything users do while they are on a machine, including which Web sites they visit, what e-mails they send, even what keystrokes they key. If you are engaging in inappropriate activity on a school computer, you could be suspended from school, or perhaps even prosecuted.

While it might seem harmless to do a few small personal tasks while you are at work, the costs really do add up.

TIP

Sites that include bibliographical information tend to be more reliable.

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Billions of dollars are wasted in American businesses every year due to personal use of company computers. These losses can be eliminated if computers are only used for business purposes.

✓ Tech Check
Answer the questions on a separate piece of paper.

1. Explain What is a "digital paper trail"?

2. Predict When is it acceptable to quote from someone else's work?

3. Analyze Why do you think music companies are trying to stop illegal downloading of music files?

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Copyrights and Wrongs

A **copyright** protects someone who creates an original work. When you create something—a book, a play, or a single sentence—you can copyright it, thereby claiming that you created it and you are the owner. The goal is to prevent unauthorized copying of that work by another party.

Copyright protection is provided by the **Copyright Act of 1976**, a federal statute.

At one time, if you wanted to copyright something you had to fill out a form, file your work with the Copyright Office in the Library of Congress, and pay a fee. Today, this is no longer the case. If you create an original work, it is automatically protected by copyright law—even if you forget to put the "© 2008" marker on the document. However, registering a copyright with the office does provide some additional protections, should you ever have to go to court over your creation.

What do you do if you want to use a portion of a copyrighted work in your own work? You need to obtain **permission**, or authorization to do so, from the copyright holder.

Obtaining permission depends on the work in question. If you want to use an excerpt from a book, you will need to write a letter to the publisher, since they are the owner of the copyright. Each instance is different, but many publishers are willing to grant permissions to individuals for educational purposes. If you want to reproduce information you found on the Web, contact the Webmaster or author of the article to request permission. Always ask permission to use the content that has been developed by someone else. In many cases, permission is granted for free use although sometimes a fee is charged to use the content.

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Once a copyright is in place, how long before it expires? The answer depends on when the work was created. For all works created since January 1, 1978, copyright lasts until 70 years after the creator's death. For works created before that date, the answer is considerably more complex. The copyright would last anywhere from 28 to 67 years from the date of creation, with possible options for renewal.

Once a work's copyright has expired, that work is considered to be in the ==public domain==, meaning that nobody owns it and anybody can reprint it as they please. This is why you can find so many different printed versions of classic literature from writers like Dickens, Shakespeare, and the like—the publishers do not have to pay any fees for the right to print those books. Now, one can read for months on end the complete collection of Shakespeare!

It is important to remember that although public domain material is free to use, it is still necessary to cite the source of the material. In addition, if you are unsure about whether it is necessary to ask for permission to use intellectual property, it is best to ask for permission to make sure you avoid violating copyright laws.

Following are some common misconceptions about copyrights:

- "If it does not say it is copyrighted, it is not copyrighted." Original work published after March of 1989 is copyrighted, whether it says so or not.

- "I found it on the Internet, therefore it is okay for me to copy it." Most of the text on the Internet is indeed copyrighted. Copying information from the Internet is a serious breach of copyright, and can result in prosecution.

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- "It is okay to put copyrighted material on my Web site, because I do not charge people to look at it." It does not matter whether you are making a profit from the reuse of copyrighted material—you are distributing it, and that is illegal.

- "I have changed the material, so it is no longer copyrighted." Copyright law says that only the owner of the copyright can make "==derivative works=="—that is, new works based on the existing material. This law allows only the owner of the copyright to profit from the intellectual property.

- "I can reprint the material, because it is considered fair use." Be careful! ==Fair use== refers to the right to reprint brief excerpts from copyrighted works without obtaining permission. However, there are no clear definitions on how much of a work can be used. Some examples of the fair use doctrine include quoting a book or part of a book in a book report or parodying a work. The purpose and character of the use must be considered.

TIP

Under fair use, educational purposes are sometimes considered acceptable, such as when teachers copy a few pages of a book to hand out to students to teach a lesson.

✓ **Tech Check**

Answer the questions on a separate piece of paper.

1. Recall What is a derivative work?

2. Analyze Give an example of a fair use of copyrighted material.

3. Identify Name a work that is in the public domain.

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Netiquette

New rules of etiquette have evolved for the new online communication media provided by the Internet: e-mail, chat rooms, and newsgroups. Nicknamed "**netiquette**," the basic guidelines described here are important to keep in mind whenever you are communicating with someone online.

E-mail
Of all the conveniences provided by the Internet, e-mail is the most widely used. It has changed how people live, work, and socialize. Letters that used to take days to arrive in the mail now take mere seconds. Business communication has become much more efficient thanks to e-mail. Here are a few things to keep in mind when sending e-mail:

- Make a good impression in your e-mail communications. Be clear and concise. Keep all your responses in context. Proper spelling, capitalization, and grammar are as important in e-mail as they are in the papers you are writing for your English classes!

- Do not send large attachments, unless the recipient is expecting them. Be sensitive to the time that it takes to download an attachments on different computer configurations.

- When forwarding e-mails, trim off unnecessary information like old headers and quotes—these can build up quickly! Delete the e-mail addresses for prior forwarded names.

- Do not say anything about someone that you would not want them to hear. Even after you click Delete, e-mail records stay in the system for a long time.

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- Never send or forward chain letters. Even if they seem like a good idea, they are often fraudulent.

- Do not "spam." **Spam**, or junk e-mail, is a billion-dollar problem, clogging e-mail systems and wasting time. Spam floods the Internet with many copies of the same message.
- Do not SHOUT. It is difficult to convey emotion in e-mails. Avoid using capital letters. All capital letters can be considered rude. Make sure your Caps Lock key is off.

Chat Rooms

Chat rooms can be useful communication tools, but they can also be raucous free-for-alls. Look for sites that include procedures and guidelines that contributors must follow. Some things to keep in mind:

- Choose the chat room wisely. Some chat rooms have questionable people, so do some research first.

- Behave as though you were communicating face-to-face. Remember that words can be misinterpreted, and things like sarcasm and body language may not come across online.

- Do not threaten, harass, or abuse any participants in a chat room. Treat people online exactly as you would treat them in person.

- Take turns with the conversation. Just like in a real conversation, allow people to finish their thoughts, and do not interrupt.

- Be aware of "lurkers," people who are reading the conversation but not taking part.

TIP

The Usenet system is made up of thousands of discussion groups, each on a particular topic.

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Newsgroups

Having a rewarding newsgroup experience requires some basic netiquette, including the following guidelines:

- Join newsgroups that have rules for participation.

- Stay on topic. Most newsgroups are very specific, and readers do not appreciate posts (contributed information) that do not fit the topic.

- Do not "flame." A **flame** is an aggressive or insulting letter. People in newsgroups often get passionate or excited in these conversations, which make it easy to flame. Respect the opinions of others. Never say something that you would not want to say out loud.

- Know your facts. There is no fact-checking process in newsgroups. Just because somebody makes a statement does not mean it is true. Remember this when quoting or replying to someone.

- Do not hide behind a screen name.

> **TIP**
>
> **Behave online as you would in the real world—honestly, ethically, and wisely.**

✓ Tech Check

Answer the questions on a separate piece of paper.

1. Define Define "netiquette."

2. Summarize What are some general "netiquette" rules?

3. Analyze Why do you think it is bad netiquette to send large files to someone who is not expecting them?

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Staying Safe Online

The Internet can be a wonderful place. There is much to learn, explore, and discover. Through the Internet, you can stay in touch with friends and relatives and meet new friends who share your interests. While the Internet helps communications, spending a lot of time at computers can also isolate people. It is important to balance the time you spend online with other activities.

The Internet is widely used in personal, school, and business settings. In each of these settings, there is a set of formal and informal rules that online users must follow. Following such rules will keep you safe online.

Information is valuable. Companies that operate on the Internet are constantly seeking more information about customers, as well as potential customers. By building vast databases of names, addresses, and information about buying habits, those companies can market their products and services with increased efficiency, thereby increasing sales.

But in addition to legitimate sites that ask you for information like name, address, or age, there are many questionable sites that are looking for data as well. Before you key any information into an online form or in a chat room, be sure to evaluate to whom you are sending that information and why you are sending it. When you are online, remember people may not be who they seem.

Identify theft is a crime in which someone takes your personal information—such as your name, address, social security number, driver's license number, date of birth, or mother's maiden name—and uses it to establish credit and charge items to you. In some cases, identify thieves arrange to have mail, such as a credit card bill set up in your name,

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sent to their house so that you are not aware of the charges that you owe until someone investigates your credit history.

In many business transactions, such as renting an apartment or securing a car or home loan, the owner or banker runs a credit check to see if you have any debt that you have failed to pay. Imagine your surprise when you find out that you owe thousands of dollars on a credit card that you never applied for! Not only will you have to prove that you were the victim of identity theft to avoid paying the debt, but you will also be unable to rent an apartment or buy a car or house until you clear your credit history.

In the past, identify thieves scavenged victims' trash for credit card bills or other correspondence with personal information that can be used to establish credit. With the Internet, thieves no longer need to dig through your trash. They use the Internet to solicit the information from you. If you come across one of the following Internet scams, report it immediately to an adult:

- "**Phishing**" is a scam in which an identity thief sends you an e-mail in which he or she pretends to be a representative from a company with which you do business. For example, you might receive an e-mail that is supposedly from your bank or Internet provider that asks you to provide personal information to update your account.

- Some identity thieves send e-mails in which they claim that they are from a foreign country and they need help transferring money to the United States. They ask for your bank information and promise that they will pay you for your assistance.

- Ironically, some people have actually received e-mails from companies that claim to offer identity

TIP

Be aware of scams intended to steal your personal information from you.

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theft protection and credit repair. However, after they send their personal information, they find out that those who sent the e-mail were quite the opposite.

- The "You won a prize!" scam is increasingly common. This scam involves receiving an e-mail that indicates you have won a prize, perhaps a trip or a of cash. Of course, you must provide your personal information in order to receive the prize.

In order to avoid these scams, always keep in mind what people really need to know to complete a transaction. For example, when you call your bank, the banker often asks for your mother's maiden name because he or she needs to verify your identity. However, if someone claiming to work for your bank calls or e-mails you, he or she has no need to know any information already included in your bank file. Clearly, this person has contacted you only to solicit your personal information.

To stay safe online, take the following precautions:

- Know to whom you are giving the information. Check the URL in your browser. Does it match the domain you visited? Or were you redirected to another site without your knowledge?

- Why are you giving the information? For example, if you are ordering something online, you will need to give your address in order for the product to be shipped. There should always be a good reason for all the information you provide.

- Never give out your social security number, your birth date, or your mother's maiden name without adult consent. This information is often used to

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If you are still unsure whether it is safe to give the information, check with a parent or another trusted adult.

secure credit reports, and giving this information to a dishonest source can ruin your credit.

- Never give personal information of any sort to someone you meet in a chat room. Always remain anonymous.

- Never give your password to anyone. Even if you call your Internet provider help support, you should not have to provide your password.

✓ **Tech Check**
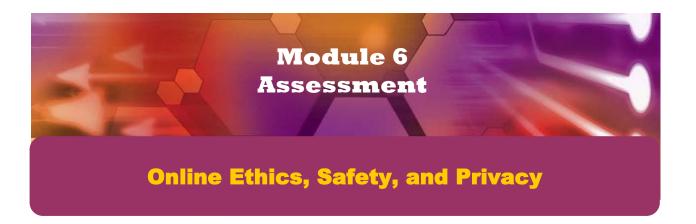
Answer the questions on a separate piece of paper.

1. Define What is "phishing"?

2. Predict What information will you need to give if you order something online?

3. Discuss Write a paragraph that discusses the dangers of the Internet.

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Assessment

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Answer the following questions on a separate sheet of paper.

1. Be sure not to abuse company or school e-mail systems, as e-mail systems leave a(n) _____.

2. Taking somebody else's ideas and passing them off as your own is called _____.

3. A(n) _____ protects someone who creates an original work.

4. Copyright protection is provided by the _____, a federal statute.

5. If you want to use a portion of a copyrighted work in your own work, you need to obtain _____ from the copyright holder.

6. Once a work's copyright has expired, that work is considered to be in the _____, meaning that nobody owns it and anybody can reprint it as they please.

7. A(n) _____ is a new work based on existing material.

8. _____ refers to the right to reprint brief excerpts from copyrighted works without obtaining permission.

9. New rules of etiquette that have evolved for the new communication media provided by the Internet are called _____.

10. _____, or junk e-mail, is a billion-dollar problem, clogging e-mail systems and wasting time.

11. A(n) _____ is an aggressive or insulting letter.

12. _____ is a crime in which someone takes your personal information and uses it to establish credit and charge items to you.

13. _____ is a scam in which a person sends you an e-mail in which he or she pretends to be a representative from a company with which you do business.

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Assessment

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Concept Review

Answer the following questions on a separate sheet of paper.

14. If you quote online sources in your work, you must identify those sources and give them proper _____.

15. If you want to reproduce information you found on the Web, contact the _____ or _____ to request permission.

16. Never send or forward _____. Even if they seem like a good idea, they are often fraudulent.

17. Make sure your Caps Lock key is off to avoid _____.

18. To have a rewarding newsgroup experience, stay on _____.

19. Today's identity thieves use the _____ to solicit the information from you.

20. Make sure the URL in your browser matches the domain you visited and that you were not _____ to another site without your knowledge

Critical Thinking

Complete the following exercises to reinforce your understanding of the lesson.

21. **Predict** Think of three types of businesses that you think rely on copyright laws to protect their assets and make their business more profitable. Write down the type of business and then describe how copyright laws could help that type of business.

22. **Compile** Create a checklist of Internet scams you learned about in this module as well as any you have heard about or seen on your own. You can place your list next to your computer as a reminder for staying safe online.