

# Digital footprint and online reputations

## AGES 5 TO 7

From an early age, work with your child online, accessing content together and discussing tracking features, such as cookies. If your child has an understanding at an early age that their interactions in the digital world are recorded, they are far more likely to develop a careful approach.

As a start, you could search your own name on the internet with your child to see what your digital footprint contains. Discuss how the information got there and if there is anything that you are unhappy about.

Use this activity to stress the importance of asking for permission before sharing anything online, including asking your advice about names to use if playing online games.

### Did You Know?

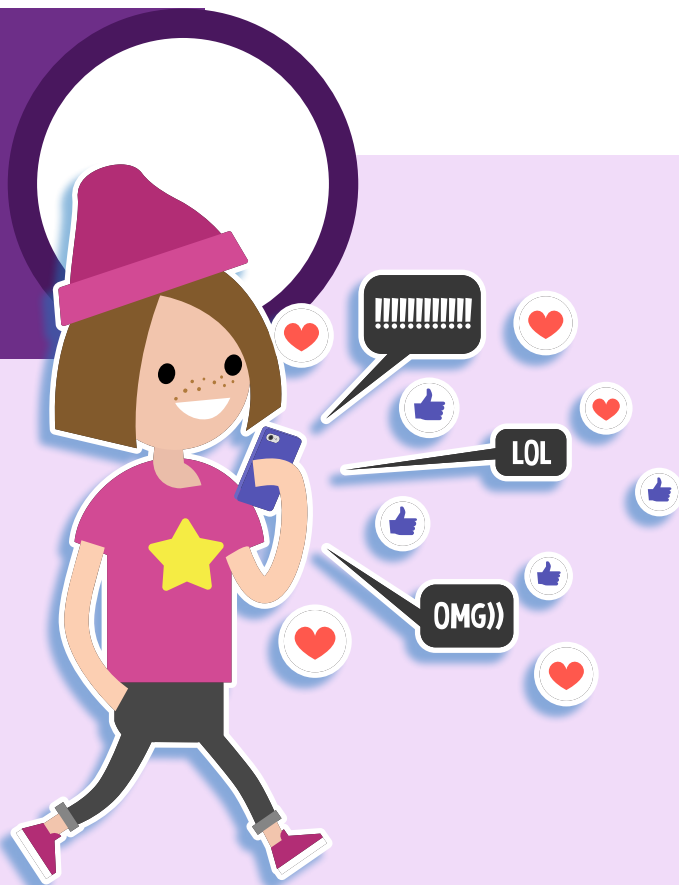
# 73%

of 8-12s have shared a photo online. (UK Safer Internet Centre, 2016)

### Top tips:

- Understand what a digital footprint is and its implications on the present and future.
- Work with your child to help them understand how to keep a sensible digital footprint.
- Get your child to realise that everything they like, share or comment on has a bearing on their online reputation.





There has been lots of noise in the media about digital footprints and online reputation. We hear of people losing their jobs or even being prosecuted for their activities online, as well as individuals who exploit naive users of the internet for financial or other reward. In contrast to this, we also learn of people becoming victims of organised-crime gangs.

A digital footprint is a trail of data created by individuals who use the internet and includes searches, website visits, information submitted to online services (social media accounts, etc.) and emails. Once we are aware of this, we need to consider the implications a digital footprint can have on our own and on our child's present and future online reputation.

Everything your child accesses, comments on, 'likes', shares or posts will leave a trail on the internet that forms their own digital footprint. The content that your child accesses, could have a bearing on the online reputation they are forming. For example, if they are 'liking' or following particular posts, other people will form opinions of them. This digital record will stay with them and be connected to them in the future; the impact of this is out of their control.

## AGES 7 TO 11

Build on the points covered in ages 5 to 7.

Children at the upper limits of this age range are likely to be sharing more online. Using a range of browsers, search your own name on the internet with your child to see what your digital footprint contains. How did the information get there? Is there anything that you are unhappy about? Discuss how you might get the information removed.

Look at sources of online information about people, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and other social media platforms. Help children to understand that when content is uploaded to these platforms, it also gets shared elsewhere and is out of your control. Even platforms that have limited time content, such as Snapchat, will be storing the information somewhere and, at some point in the future, it is possible that it could all be made public. People may also take screenshots, which can be shared long after an original post has been removed.

A strong sense of self and good self-esteem will make children hesitate before sharing content for a 'quick thrill', 5 minutes of popularity and lots of 'likes'.

If you have allowed your child to have any social media accounts or online game logins, you must stress the importance of 'locking down' these accounts. For example, if they have access to a video-sharing account, discuss the potential negative implications for their reputation if they or others post inappropriate content or comments.

# 1 in 15

children aged 8-15 have broadcast themselves live on popular social media sites. (Childnet, 2017)

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