

Digital Footprint

Skills:

Can recognise significant points in straightforward news articles on familiar subjects.
Can express their thoughts about abstract topics.

Teen / Adults

Group

1 In groups, brainstorm the different ways you use the internet in your daily lives. Share your list with the class.

Let's discuss:

How much of our personal information may be available online as a result of these activities?

2 Skim the article from Reader's Digest. Find the defined words in it. Write them down next to each definition:

1. not real; made to look like something it is not - _____.
2. to follow the movements or progress of something, usually using technology - _____.
3. to no longer be visible or present in a particular place or situation - _____.
4. to blame or consider someone responsible for something negative - _____.
5. measures taken to protect against danger, especially in relation to technology and data - _____.
6. to remove something completely from somewhere - _____.
7. a small amount or sign left behind to show that something was there - _____.
8. the information about a person that exists online as a result of their activities on the internet - _____.
9. the imaginary place where electronic communication happens, like the internet - _____.
10. to cancel the effect of something that has been done - _____.

Online privacy in your hands

Every time you do something online, like banking, shopping, or commenting on social media, you leave a digital footprint, essentially a trace of yourself in cyberspace. Most people accept this as part of online life. But for some, like those worried about online security or victims of attacks, the idea that Google tracks them is too much. If you're one of these people, you might want to know how to disappear from the internet.

There are some steps you can take, and if you are very careful and determined, you can clean up most of your online presence.

You can do it ... but should you?

It is possible to disappear from the internet, says Porch.com security expert Robert Siciliano. But he warns that there isn't an undo option for many of these actions. Once you delete emails from an old account, for example, they are never coming back.

Scheff encourages you to think twice about erasing yourself from the internet, as human-resource departments and college-admissions offices often use social media to review candidates. "If someone goes off-grid, this can be held against them. Companies will believe they either have a fake name or maybe they aren't good with technology," she explains. "For students, their admission spot could go to someone who has an online presence that shows their skills."



3

Mark the statements about the article as True/False/Not Given:

- ☐ Whenever people engage in online activities, they create a digital trail of themselves.
- ☐ The majority of people are concerned about their digital footprint.
- ☐ According to Porch.com security expert Robert Siciliano, it is possible to disappear from the internet.
- ☐ There is always a way to reverse the actions taken to disappear from the internet.
- ☐ In the future, more people will consider erasing themselves from the internet.
- ☐ Organizations may assume you are using a false identity or lack technological skills if there is no information about you in the internet.
- ☐ Students with no online presence are more likely to secure admission spots.

4

Fill in the gaps in these small conversations with the words from Exercise 2.



I'm really worried about my _____(1) online.



I wish there was a way _____(5) everything I've posted online.



Yeah, everything we do online leaves a _____(2), it's scary.



Once something is out there, it can't totally _____(6) the _____(7).



Do you have any concerns about online _____(3)?



I'm always careful not to do anything that someone could _____(8) me.



Yes, I always make sure to use strong passwords and avoid clicking on suspicious links.



Yeah, now it's important to think before you post.



The police were able _____(4) the suspect using his online activity.



I need _____(9) some old accounts that I no longer use.



It's scary how much information we leave behind without realizing it.



It's a good idea to clean up your online presence from time to time.

5

Have you ever been concerned about your digital footprint? Share your thoughts.

In groups, brainstorm what you can do to erase/decrease your online presence. Share it with the rest of the class.

How can we balance the desire for privacy with the need to maintain an online presence for professional or educational purposes?

Correct answers

1

The idea was generated in the “Lead-in activities” tool.

Teacher tip: Divide the class into small groups and ask them to brainstorm the different ways they use the internet in their daily lives. Have each group share their list with the class and discuss how much of their personal information may be available online as a result of these activities.

2

The text is based on this article from Reader’s Digest. It was simplified in the “Simplify or Upgrade” tool. The definitions were made in “Word-Definition Matching”.

1. fake
2. to track
3. to disappear (from)
4. to hold against
5. security
6. to erase
7. trace
8. digital footprint
9. cyberspace
10. to undo

3

Made in the “True or False” tool.

1. True
2. False - Most people accept this as part of online life. But for some, like those worried about online security or victims of attacks
3. True
4. False - Exaggerates the certainty mentioned in the text. It is said that: there isn't an undo option for many of these actions (like deleting emails from an old account)
5. Not Given - There is no information in the text to either prove or disprove this statement.
6. True
7. False - This statement implies that having no online presence is beneficial for students, but the text suggests the opposite.

4

Made in “Communicative situations” + “Fill in the Gap”.

1. digital footprint
2. trace
3. security
4. to track
5. to undo
6. disappear from
7. cyberspace
8. hold against
9. to erase

5

Made in “Discussion questions”.