

Frequently Asked Questions

1. **Who is *Our Space* for?**

The target audience for *Our Space* is students of high school age, although some lessons have been successfully used with upper middle school (grades 7 and 8) students. Accordingly, each lesson indicates suggested grade levels.

2. **Where can *Our Space* be used?**

Although the casebook was designed with a classroom environment in mind, many of the materials could be easily used in other contexts, including after-school clubs, youth organizations, libraries, museums, faith-based groups, or even at home with parents and their children. Within schools, the materials can be used in homeroom or advisory periods; wellness programs; and subject-matter classes, such as social studies, history, or English language arts.

3. **How is *Our Space* intended to be used?**

Our Space is a set of resources for educators and other adults to facilitate conversations with young people about digital ethics. The casebook is not a curriculum to be followed from beginning to end; rather, we envision it as a “toolkit” of activities from which educators can pick and choose the most relevant and appropriate lessons. Moreover, the lessons themselves can be used in different ways; some facilitators may use them “as-is,” while others may “appropriate” and “remix” them for their particular purposes, contexts, and participants.

4. **What does a typical *Our Space* lesson involve?**

Our Space is designed to encourage young people to engage actively with ethical issues raised in online environments. Most lessons involve reflective exercises, role playing activities, and/or small-group discussions, guided by an adult facilitator. These types of activities create fertile conditions for youth to work through, and ultimately demonstrate their understandings of, the ethical dimensions of online life.

The lessons also involve working through realistic scenarios and dilemmas raised in online spaces. Many of the examples are drawn from our observations and our research with digitally active youth. Our intention is to raise scenarios familiar to students—ones that recall and resonate with their experiences, questions, and challenges faced online. Our hope is that the units push thinking about such familiar scenarios in more reflective, critical, and ultimately ethical directions.

5. Why are the lessons “low-tech” (i.e., paper-and-pen)?

We acknowledge that there is much to be gained from encouraging youth to think ethically in an interactive, online environment that simulates their online activities. However, we designed the lessons that make up *Our Space* so that they could be used in *any* classroom—“wired” or not. That said, some activities contain “high-tech” options—interactive supplemental material that some facilitators and students may find useful.

6. Do I need to be a frequent user of sites like YouTube, Facebook, and Wikipedia in order to facilitate these lessons?

No. The most important goal of *Our Space* is to cultivate ethical thinking skills in young people; we believe that adults have an important role to play in achieving this goal, regardless of whether they are familiar with the particulars of different online environments in which youth participate. Ideally, the exercises in this casebook will inspire youth to share their knowledge about these spaces with adults who are less familiar with the sites or with the ways in which youth use them. Together, adults and youth can develop a deeper understanding of the ethical dilemmas that surface in new media environments.

7. How do the core themes (participation, identity, privacy, etc.) arise on the sites my students use?

Some facilitators may be unsure about how themes such as credibility or ownership are relevant in particular online spaces. Included in the front matter of this casebook is an Orientation Activity through which we seek to address such questions. This activity provides a vivid example of how these issues arise in one type of online space frequented by youth: social networks such as MySpace and Facebook. In the lessons for students, discussion questions also highlight how the themes relate to particular online spaces.

8. Does *Our Space* address sexting, cyberbullying, and online safety issues?

Our Space does not contain lessons dedicated to issues such as sexting and online safety. However, some *Our Space* lessons contain scenarios and dilemmas that broach topics such as cyberbullying

(see the “I Thought You Should Know” lesson in the Participation unit). Where such issues come up, they are situated in the broader frame of exploring the impact of one’s actions on others, and the potential harms that could result. The five broad themes addressed in this casebook—identity, privacy, ownership and authorship, credibility, and participation—can serve as entry points for discussing topics such as sexting as well. If appropriate, we encourage users of *Our Space* lessons to adapt them to engage youth in reflective conversations about these and other important safety issues.

9. Does the Ownership & Authorship unit cover legal issues, such as copyright infringement?

The Ownership and Authorship unit does *not* instruct students on the finer points of intellectual-property law or copyright infringement. Rather, the lessons will give a basic overview of copyright and ask students to think critically about legal and social norms surrounding copyright and the appropriation of copyrighted materials (see Axis of Media Ethics and Ad Men). In sum, our approach to ownership focuses on building a basic understanding of the legal principles while engaging students in ethical consideration of the meaning of ownership for creators. For more in-depth information and curricula on copyright law, please see:

- The Berkman Center for Internet and Society at Harvard University and eIFL.net’s Copyright for Librarians Curriculum:
http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/copyrightforlibrarians/Main_Page
- The Media Education Lab at Temple University’s Copyright and Fair Use Curriculum:
<http://mediaeducationlab.com/teaching-about-copyright-and-fair-use>

10. Has *Our Space* been quality tested?

Many of the lessons in this book have undergone limited pilot testing in schools and after-school programs. Selected lessons have also been shared with educators in professional workshops, including Harvard Project Zero’s annual educator institutes. The entire casebook has been reviewed by experts in education, media literacy, and digital citizenship. Based on these pilot tests and reviews, refinements have been made to the framing, substance, and format of *Our Space*.

11. How do I assess what my students have learned from *Our Space*?

Each lesson lists a set of Learning Objectives that tell teachers what students should know and be able to do by the end of the lesson. These Learning Objectives are laid out at the start of the lesson and reprised in the concluding Assessment section.

To determine whether your students have met the Learning Objectives, you can evaluate them based on one or both of the following:

- Their contributions to class activities and discussions.
- Their answers to the optional assessment questions found at the end of each lesson.

Although most assessment is individually oriented in the US, we have learned from our work abroad that group learning is important, too. Indeed, in the increasingly interconnected world, the capacity to work with others, and to arrive at collective solutions, increases all the time. To that end, you may choose to evaluate students either individually (e.g. using written answers to assessment questions) or collectively (e.g. observing how small groups work together to arrive at a collective solution).

As an example, consider the third lesson in the Privacy unit, titled “Trillion-Dollar Footprint.” In this lesson, students work in small groups to choose the final contestant for a reality TV show by evaluating the fictionalized Google search results for two candidates. Next, each group explains to the rest of the class which candidate they chose and why. Finally, in a whole class discussion, the teacher encourages students to reflect on the privacy issues raised by this activity.

Four Learning Objectives describe what students should be able to do by the end of the lesson:

- Define “digital footprint.”
- Consider the types of information that make up one’s digital footprint, the audiences who may see it, and the people beyond oneself who may help shape it.
- Articulate how and why to take care of their own digital footprints and the digital footprints of others.
- Recognize that digital footprints can change quite easily in one respect, and yet prove quite difficult to change in other respects.

To assess whether students have met these Learning Objectives, teachers could evaluate student responses in any one (or all) of the following:

- Small-group discussions
- Small-group presentations
- Whole-class discussion
- Assessment questions

Students who have met the first Learning Objective will be able to explain that their digital footprints constitute the record or “trail” of everything they do, say, or have said about them online. These digital footprints may persist for a long time and be accessible to a variety of audiences, some of them unanticipated.

Students who have met the second Learning Objective will be able to list specific types of information that make up their digital footprints, such as posting a photo, writing on a friend’s Facebook wall, and sending text messages via mobile phone. In addition, others may also contribute to one’s digital footprint, such as when one is tagged by someone else in a photo on Facebook. A variety of audiences may potentially have access to some or all of their digital footprint, including parents and other family members, current and future teachers, and potential future employers.

Students who have met the third Learning Objective will be able to explain that it is important to take care of their own and others’ digital footprints in order to protect their own privacy and reputations and respect the privacy and reputations of others. In addition, they will be able to describe ways they can take care of their own and others’ digital footprints, such as choosing to tell friends sensitive information in person rather than through a text message, or asking friends if they mind being tagged in a photo before tagging them.

Students who have met the fourth Learning Objective will be able to explain why it may be easy to change their digital footprints in some respects, but quite difficult to change them in other respects. For instance, they may decide to remove a photo album from Facebook that contains pictures from their early childhood. If these pictures haven’t been downloaded by other people, it may be easy enough to remove them from Facebook, never to be seen by others again. However, if one or more people have already downloaded the photos and either forwarded them to others or posted them to their own Facebook profile or another website, these childhood photos may become an enduring part of one’s digital footprint.

We welcome your reactions to *Our Space*. Please share your thoughts and experiences with us by email at: carrie_james@pz.harvard.edu or ereilly@usc.edu.