

LET'S TALK ABOUT Digital Literacy

A FAMILY GUIDE TO SUPPORTING DIGITAL LITERACY (GRADES 3-5)



WHAT IS DIGITAL LITERACY?

Digital literacy describes the knowledge, skills, and habits people need to use technology safely, responsibly, and effectively. It includes communicating, creating, thinking critically, protecting personal information, and making informed choices when using digital tools.

WHAT IS ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)?

Artificial intelligence (AI) refers to computer systems designed to recognize patterns, respond to questions, make suggestions, and generate content such as words, images, or sounds. AI may already be part of familiar tools such as search, voice assistants, translation, spelling suggestions, and learning games.

WAYS TO APPROACH IT IN GRADES 3-5

In Grades 3-5, students are becoming more independent with digital tools. They are learning to make thoughtful choices, protect personal information, question what they see online, and recognize when they need support from a trusted adult.

Students may also learn how AI works, where they encounter it, and how it can support learning. Generative AI should be explored with teacher or adult guidance rather than used independently at this stage. Digital literacy does not mean using technology for every task. Children are also learning to decide when a digital tool is helpful - and when another way of learning may be better.

TIPS TO GET STARTED

- Talk with your child about how they use technology and what they enjoy.
- Explore new apps, games, websites, and online spaces together before independent use.
- Ask what a digital tool is helping your child learn, create, communicate, or solve.
- Encourage your child to pause, ask questions, and talk to a trusted adult when something feels confusing or uncomfortable.
- Model safe, respectful, responsible, and balanced technology habits.

STAY INVOLVED AND BUILD TRUST.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

As children become more independent with technology, they still need guidance from trusted adults. Curious, ongoing conversations help children make thoughtful choices and feel comfortable asking for help.

IDEAS FOR FAMILIES

- Ask your child to show you a digital tool they enjoy and explain how it works.
- Explore new platforms and social features together before independent use.

- Talk about how online words, images, messages, and actions affect real people.
- Work through online problems together by discussing choices and consequences.
- Learn what digital tools are being used at school and how they support learning.

ONLINE ACTIONS AFFECT REAL PEOPLE.

The same expectations for kindness, safety, and responsibility apply online as they do in person.

PROTECT PRIVACY AND CYBERSECURITY.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

As children become more independent online, they use more apps, games, websites, and digital tools. Learning to protect personal information and recognize potential risks helps them develop safe and responsible digital habits.

IDEAS FOR FAMILIES

- Review privacy, security, communication, and location settings together.
- Use strong passwords and talk about why they should remain private.
- Talk about personal information, including names, location, school, photos, passwords, and other identifying details.
- Discuss suspicious messages, links, websites, scams, and requests for information.
- Encourage your child to ask permission before sharing another person's photo or information.
- Before introducing a new app, game, or platform, consider its age recommendation, privacy practices, social features, and who can interact with your child.

Settings can help, but ongoing conversations, trust, and good digital habits remain important ways to help children stay safe online.

QUESTION WHAT YOU SEE ONLINE.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Not everything online is accurate or trustworthy. Pictures and videos can be edited, advertising can influence choices, and AI-generated content can sound convincing even when it is incorrect. Learning to pause and ask questions helps children think critically.

Encourage your child to ask:

- Who created this, and why?
- Is this fact, opinion, entertainment, or advertising?
- What might be missing?
- How do I know this is accurate?
- Can I check another trusted source?
- Is this trying to make me think, feel, buy, or do something?

PAUSE • QUESTION • CHECK

Before believing or sharing something online, encourage your child to pause, ask questions, and check with a trusted adult or reliable source.



FIND A HEALTHY BALANCE.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Technology can support learning, creativity, communication, and fun. Healthy use is about more than screen time - it is also about how technology affects sleep, learning, relationships, emotions, and everyday life.

IDEAS FOR FAMILIES

- Protect time for sleep, movement, reading, hobbies, family, friends, and outdoor activities.
- Notice how technology affects your child's mood, focus, sleep, and ability to move on to other activities.
- Talk about notifications and the pressure to respond right away.
- Make sure your child knows how to leave, block, report, and ask a trusted adult for help when something online feels unsafe or uncomfortable.
- Model balanced technology habits yourself.

USE DIGITAL TOOLS WITH PURPOSE

Digital tools can help children create, communicate, practise skills, investigate, and solve problems. AI may also be built into familiar tools such as search, spelling suggestions, translation, voice assistants, games, maps, and learning platforms.

IDEAS FOR FAMILIES

- Explore a digital tool that helps your child create, investigate, or solve a problem.
- Use accessibility features such as text-to-speech, speech-to-text, captions, or translation when they support learning.
- Talk about where your child encounters AI and remind them that AI-generated information needs to be checked.
- When exploring generative AI together, ask what the tool contributed and what represents your child's own thinking.
- Protect opportunities to read, write, discuss, create, and solve problems without technology.

GENERATIVE AI

Generative AI creates new content - such as text, images, or audio - in response to a user's instructions or questions.

IS THIS TOOL SUPPORTING LEARNING?

"Is this tool helping my child learn, or is it doing the learning for them?"

KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR CHILD

- What are you learning, creating, or enjoying with technology?
- How do you decide whether something you see online is trustworthy?
- When is technology helpful - and when might another way of learning be better?

HELPFUL RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES

- [MediaSmarts Digital Literacy Fundamentals](#)
- [Common Sense Education Digital Citizenship Resources](#)
- [Canadian Centre for Cyber Security – Get Cyber Safe](#)
- [Digital Moment AI Literacy Resources](#)

