

LET'S TALK ABOUT Digital Literacy



A FAMILY GUIDE TO SUPPORTING DIGITAL LITERACY (GRADES 6-8)

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 that recognize patterns, respond to questions, make suggestions, or generate content. Many familiar tools, including search, translation, spelling suggestions, voice assistants, and learning platforms, may use AI. Generative AI creates new text, images, audio, video, or other content. AI can be useful, but it can make mistakes or reflect bias.

TIPS TO GET STARTED

- Begin with curiosity rather than judgment. When possible, explore new platforms or apps together before independent use.
- Ask your child to show you the platforms, creators, games, or tools they enjoy and explain what they like about them.
- Discuss family expectations for technology, including what matters, what is flexible, and when expectations may need to change.

STAY INVOLVED AND BUILD TRUST.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Grades 6-8 students need room to practise independence while still knowing trusted adults are available to help. Curious, ongoing conversations make it easier to talk about online experiences and ask for support.

IDEAS FOR FAMILIES

- Ask your child to show you one app, game, creator, or online space they enjoy. Start with, "What do you like about it?"
- Talk about how social media, group chats, influencers, likes, streaks, and recommendation feeds can affect friendships, identity, belonging, comparison, and fear of missing out.

WAYS TO APPROACH IT IN GRADES 6-8

In Grades 6-8, students are developing greater independence with technology while also exploring identity, belonging, friendships, and how they present themselves online. Although they may use technology with ease, they still benefit from guidance about how digital experiences can affect learning, confidence, relationships, and well-being.

Students are also learning to verify information, protect personal information, understand the limits and potential biases of AI, and use digital tools to support - not replace - their own thinking.

Families can coach, discuss, and gradually release responsibility as students demonstrate readiness. Every family has different resources, schedules, access, and experiences with technology; curiosity and ongoing conversation matter more than being a technology expert.

- Talk about digital issues when they arise in everyday life, media, or the news.
- Make sure your child knows they can ask for help when something online feels uncomfortable or unsafe.
- Model the respectful and balanced technology habits you expect.

- Encourage respectful language, empathy, and openness to different viewpoints.
- Move from closer supervision toward greater independence as your child demonstrates responsibility.
- Talk about AI chatbots that may sound caring or human. They can be useful tools, but they do not replace trusted people or real relationships.

ONLINE ACTIONS AFFECT REAL PEOPLE.

What you post, share, comment on, or do online can become part of your digital footprint - the record created by your online activity. Even when something is deleted, copies may remain or be shared by others.

PROTECT PRIVACY AND CYBERSECURITY.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Apps, games, websites, and AI tools may collect personal information, and privacy and safety features vary. Learning what a tool collects, who can make contact, and how to control privacy helps students make safer choices.

IDEAS FOR FAMILIES

- Review one privacy, security, advertising, or location setting together.
- Use strong passwords and multi-factor authentication when available.
- Talk about scams, suspicious links, fake accounts, and impersonation.
- Discuss what personal information should stay private in public spaces and AI tools.
- Before using a new tool, check age requirements, privacy, who can make contact, what information is collected, and whether blocking and reporting tools are available.
- Pause if a tool asks for unnecessary personal information, makes privacy difficult to control, or encourages secrecy from trusted adults.

Settings can help, but they are not perfect. Conversations, trust, and clear boundaries still matter.

QUESTION WHAT YOU SEE ONLINE.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Online information may be inaccurate, biased, sponsored, edited, or generated by AI. Posts, advertisements, influencer content, and AI-generated information can look convincing without being accurate or transparent.

Encourage your child to ask:

- Who created this, and what evidence is provided?
- Is this fact, opinion, entertainment, advertising, or influencer content?
- What trusted sources can I use to verify it?
- Whose voices or perspectives are included - or missing?
- What is this trying to make me think, feel, believe, buy, or do?

AI can “hallucinate,” or make up information, sources, or details that sound real. It may also reflect bias or stereotypes. Recommendation systems can shape what people see by showing more of what they already watch, like, or believe.

PAUSE • QUESTION • CHECK

Before believing or sharing something online, pause, question the source and purpose, and check the information against reliable sources and different perspectives.



SUPPORT BALANCE AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Screen time is not all the same. Creating, learning, connecting, using accessibility features, and entertainment serve different purposes. What matters is what the activity adds and how it affects learning and well-being.

Digital experiences can affect sleep, mood, focus, self-esteem, belonging, and friendships. Social media and group chats can also create pressure to compare, respond quickly, seek validation, or stay constantly connected.

IDEAS FOR FAMILIES

- Ask how your child feels after using a favourite app or online space - connected, inspired, pressured, left out, calm, or drained.
- Create device-free times or spaces when they work for your family, such as meals, bedtime routines, or family activities.

- If device use affects sleep, consider notification limits or charging devices outside bedrooms.
- Protect time for hobbies, movement, reading, outdoor activities, volunteering, and time with others.
- Watch for changes in sleep, mood, friendships, schoolwork, confidence, or activities your child usually enjoys.
- Talk about the pressure to respond immediately, stay connected, compare with others, or seek online validation.

NOTICE • TALK • ADJUST

If technology affects sleep, mood, relationships, responsibilities, or well-being, talk about what you notice and adjust routines, settings, or expectations together.

MAKE SURE YOUR CHILD KNOWS WHAT TO DO IF SOMEONE ONLINE PRESSURES THEM TO SHARE IMAGES, KEEP CONTACT SECRET, SEND MONEY, OR DO SOMETHING THAT FEELS WRONG: LEAVE, BLOCK OR REPORT WHEN APPROPRIATE, SAVE EVIDENCE, AND ASK A TRUSTED ADULT FOR HELP.



USE DIGITAL TOOLS WITH PURPOSE

Digital tools can help Grades 6-8 students create, communicate, practise skills, explore interests, solve problems, and access learning. Accessibility features and assistive tools can reduce barriers. AI should be one tool among many.

IDEAS FOR FAMILIES

- Ask your child to show you one digital or accessibility tool that helps them learn, create, communicate, or participate.
- Ask how a tool helped, what choices your child made, and which parts of the work show their own thinking.
- Talk about why copying text, images, music, code, or AI-generated work without credit can be dishonest, and why school expectations matter.
- Encourage your child to check AI suggestions and online sources before using or sharing them.
- Protect opportunities to read, write, discuss, create, and solve problems without AI when that better supports learning.

Responsible use includes protecting privacy, respecting others, being honest about how tools are used, and making choices that support learning and well-being.

KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR CHILD

- Which digital spaces help you feel that you belong, and which create pressure?
- How do you decide whether something online is trustworthy?
- What parts of your digital footprint and personal information need protection?
- How do influencers, algorithms, or AI shape what you see, feel, or believe?
- When is technology helping your learning - and when might another approach 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](#)

IS THIS TOOL SUPPORTING LEARNING?

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

Students need opportunities to learn with AI, about AI, and without AI. AI should support their thinking, not replace it, and students should be able to explain their work in their own words.

