

FAMILY DIGITAL LITERACY

Quick Reference

TERMS, PRACTICAL EXAMPLES, AND
CONVERSATION STARTERS FOR K-5



Start With What Fits Your Family

Every family has different devices, internet access, schedules, experiences, values, and comfort with technology. You do not need to be a technology expert. Staying curious, asking questions, setting age-appropriate expectations, and keeping communication open are strong ways to support digital literacy.

Digital literacy does not mean children need more screen time or need to use every type of digital tool. Being aware of a technology does not mean a family or school needs to encourage or permit its use. Age requirements, purpose, privacy, maturity, school expectations, and family decisions all matter.

A FEW USEFUL TERMS

- **Digital literacy:** Using, understanding, questioning, creating, and communicating with digital tools in safe, thoughtful, ethical, and responsible ways.
- **Artificial intelligence (AI):** Technology that can recognize patterns, respond to questions, make suggestions, and generate content. AI may already be built into tools such as search, voice assistants, translation, spelling suggestions, and learning platforms.
- **Generative AI:** A type of AI that creates new content - such as text, images, audio, video, or code - in response to instructions or prompts.
- **Privacy:** Having appropriate control over personal information, who can access it, and how it is collected, used, stored, or shared.
- **Social features:** Features such as profiles, chats, comments, content sharing, or interaction with other users. Games, messaging apps, and other digital tools may include social features even when they are not labelled social media.
- **Responsible and ethical use:** Using technology in ways that support learning and well-being, respect other people and their work, protect privacy, follow expectations, and consider possible consequences.

A SIMPLE WAY TO THINK ABOUT DIGITAL USE

Instead of labelling particular apps or tools as “good” or “bad,” look at the purpose, features, context, level of adult guidance, and effect on the child using them.

- **GREEN - generally supportive use:** Age-appropriate and purposeful; supports learning, creating, accessibility, communication, problem-solving, or healthy connection; privacy and family/school expectations are considered.
- **YELLOW - pause and think:** The tool asks for personal information, includes unfamiliar social features or contact with unknown people, uses AI in ways the child does not understand, affects sleep or mood, or begins doing thinking the learner needs to practise.
- **RED - stop and get adult help:** Someone asks for private information, secrecy, money, photos, or location; there are threats, coercion, impersonation, inappropriate content or requests; or any interaction makes the child feel unsafe or uncomfortable.

WHAT SUPPORTIVE TECHNOLOGY CAN LOOK LIKE.

- **Accessibility:** text-to-speech, speech-to-text, captions, translation, visual supports, or other features that remove barriers and support participation.
- **Creating:** drawing, writing, making a presentation, recording audio or video, coding, designing, or documenting learning.
- **Learning and practice:** exploring an interactive mathematics or literacy tool, practising a skill, researching with adult guidance and verification, or using an approved learning platform.
- **Connection:** communicating with people a child knows and participating in age-appropriate online spaces with appropriate adult guidance.
- **Balance:** technology is one way to learn, create, communicate, and play. Children also need opportunities to read, write, talk, move, build, create, spend time outdoors, and solve problems without technology.



TRY THIS TOGETHER

- Ask your child to show you one app, game, website, or digital tool they enjoy. Start with curiosity: “What do you like about it?”
- Review one privacy, communication, or location setting together.
- Look at a picture, video, post, or search result together and ask: “Who made this? How could we check if it is accurate?”
- Ask: “How did this tool help you, and what thinking did you still need to do yourself?”
- Ask your child when technology helps them learn and when another way of learning, creating, or solving a problem might be better.

QUESTIONS FAMILIES CAN ASK SCHOOLS

- Which digital tools are approved or commonly used at this grade level?
- What does each tool do to enhance learning?
- What privacy, data, and account protections are in place?
- What are the expectations for AI use at this grade level, including when adult or teacher guidance is required?
- What accessibility features or alternatives are available for learners who need them?
- When are non-digital approaches used, and how does the school think about balance?

WHEN SOMETHING GOES WRONG

Keeping communication open makes it more likely that a child will ask for help. If something online is confusing, uncomfortable, inappropriate, or unsafe, encourage your child to stop and tell a trusted adult. Help them leave the situation, avoid responding or sharing more information, block or report when appropriate, and involve the school or another appropriate service when needed.

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](#)