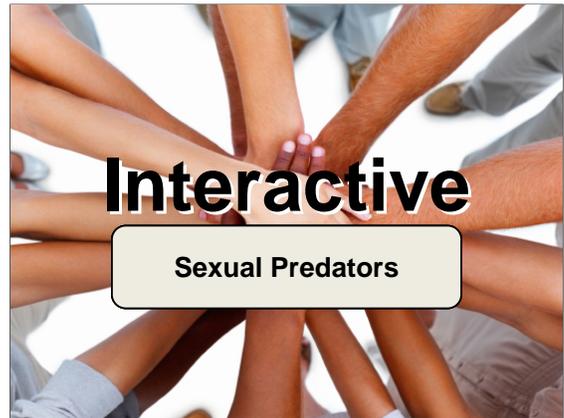




- Kids today use media and technology to communicate with their friends, play games, express themselves, and connect with the world.
- The reality is that kids spend far more time interacting with media than they do at school or with their parents. The average 8- to 18-year-old spends 7 ½ hours a day online, watching TV and movies, playing games, and listening to music. Kids no longer make a distinction between the “real” world and the “virtual” one. It’s all one and the same to them.
- The digital world offers amazing opportunities for kids, but as we’ll discuss – because it’s a world with a huge audience, where kids who crave recognition are rewarded for boundary-pushing behavior, and actions are separate from consequences -- there are also multiple challenges.
- We’ll talk about all of these opportunities and challenges in the context of kids’ development and what’s different about media today than when we were growing up. Most importantly, I’ll offer tips on how you can help your kids be safe, smart, and responsible.
- These tips, and the rest of the presentation, were developed by Common Sense Media, a national nonprofit organization dedicated to helping kids thrive in our digital world.
- Let’s get started.



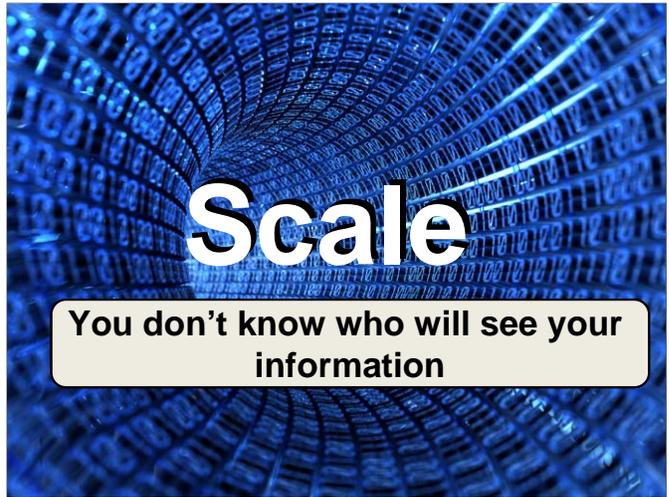
- Unlike when we grew up just watching TV or listening to music, young people are not passive with media. They are connecting, creating, and collaborating.
- They communicate with friends, friends of friends, and sometimes strangers on social networking sites like Facebook, in online games such as World of Warcraft, on their Xboxes playing Halo, and through instant and text messaging.

Click One: Norms of Communication

- As they do work with media kids are learning the norms of communication, how to provide constructive feedback and build groups of people with common interests. These skills will serve them well when they enter the workforce.

Click Two: Predators

- Of course, as kids connect with people, we know that parents are concerned about the possibility that they will connect with a sexual predator. Despite the news hype about this issue, research shows that very, very few children are actually at risk of becoming victims. Even putting your name and address online doesn't put you at risk -- what does is engaging in sexually provocative conversations in chat rooms or sending explicit photos or videos to someone you don't know.
- In nearly all of the cases you hear about, a child has met up with a sexual predator willingly -- and in many cases, even went to great trouble to cross state lines, often because they've been manipulated into believing that the person loves them.
- The large majority of kids just block messages from people they don't know -- they think it's "creepy." The kids who are at risk are those who have low self-esteem and often lack meaningful connections offline.



- One of the reasons that kids can connect with so many different people online is that the Internet gives kids an opportunity to reach a vast audience.
- This can be hard for parents to understand, but think of this: Facebook has 400 million active users (as of April 2010). If it were a country, it would be the third largest in the world, between India (with over 1 billion residents) and the United States (300 million).

Click One: 15 minutes of fame

- Kids can reach this vast audience quickly — for example, in the case of a child posting a video to YouTube that they hope will get a lot of views. Stories abound of people gaining international acclaim after posting videos or music on sites like MySpace.

Click Two: You don't know who will see your information

- This means that interactions kids might think are just among friends can be seen by a wider audience than they might intend.



- As part exploring their identity, kids post all sorts of information about themselves. But it's not always a good thing that a wide audience can see and FIND their information.
- Because everything a person posts is searchable, it's easy to find.

Click One: Kids don't think before they post

- They often post stuff without really thinking about who will see it or how it might be interpreted.
- And we know that college admissions officers often search for candidates on social networking sites -- and so are employers.

Click Two: Damage to reputation

- The information that kids see online informs the decisions they make, with many candidates not getting jobs or getting into their top schools because of online postings.
- In addition to drug use, older kids are often exploring their sexuality. They do this through texts, posting racy photos, and writing that might be inappropriate and even damaging to themselves and others. Again, they often don't think about the consequences. For example, kids can get themselves in trouble with the law or get other kids in trouble.
- But kids this age just aren't wired to think about consequences, and online consequences may not immediately be apparent to them.



- One of the reasons that kids don't associate their online actions with consequences is that these actions can be anonymous.

Click One: Cyberbullying

- Kids often believe that there won't be consequences for their actions, so issues like cyberbullying come up. If you offend someone face to face, you know right away that you have stepped over a boundary, but this is not true in the digital world.
- Kids tend to be meaner if they think that no one knows who they are. Gossip spreads more quickly this way too.

Click Two: Self-exploration

- There are some positive aspects to this anonymity, though, because kids have the chance to explore who they are and who they want to be —important parts of their development. Children can explore their identities through avatars on sites like Second Life, and test out new personas and see what others think of them.



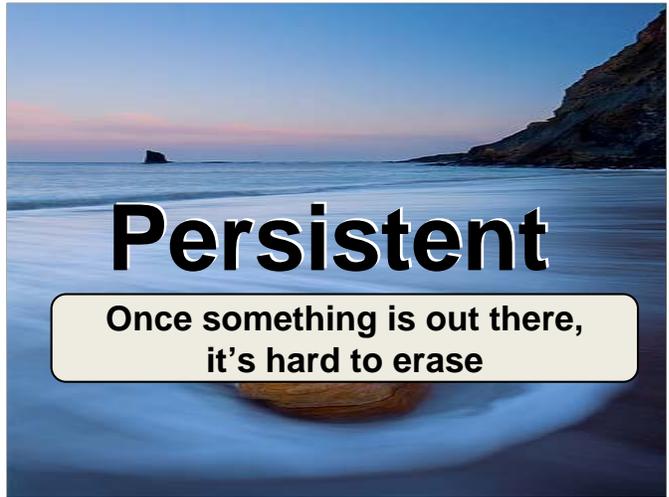
- While fueled by anonymity, cyberbullying is further exacerbated by the fact that all content in a digital space can be moved around freely.
- This "cut and paste" culture allows rapid and widespread sharing of information. It also means that photos, emails, IMs, comments, and more can be taken out of context and used in ways that the author didn't intend.

Click One: Information can go viral

- The fact that anything posted or shared online can be pulled out of context and shared broadly amplifies the impact that bullying has on kids. For example, an entire school can find something out within minutes.
- The challenge is further complicated when cyberbullying is combined with sexting....

Click Two: Sexting

-which is when people take sexually revealing pictures of themselves and send them as text message attachments.
- Kids "sext" to show off, to entice someone, to show interest in someone, or to prove commitment. The problem is that the moment the relationship ends (and most of them do) someone is in possession of a highly compromising image that can be easily posted on a social networking site or sent around via email or text.



- And once a photo or video is out there, it's pretty hard to get rid of it.
- This happens in part because something can be cut and pasted without your knowledge -- so even if you delete a photo on your Facebook profile, for example, a friend may have already taken it and posted it on her page. And because it's becoming easier and easier to search content online -- the photo is pretty easy to find.



- What this means is that we all have digital footprints. All children – indeed, all people who are exploring digital media – need to understand that they’re leaving digital footprints wherever they go on the Internet.
- Everything is searchable, and anonymity is a myth. There is now a permanent record of all of kids’ explorations, with implications that kids can’t predict or control.
- If kids aren’t cautious, digital footprints can damage their future reputations. But, at the same time, these footprints can also help people understand all the wonderful things about your child and who your child is – perhaps an artist, a writer, or a social activist.
- Whether kids are seen in this positive light depends on what they are doing online, and that’s where you come in.



- Media isn't going anywhere – in fact, it's only going to evolve. And kids are going to continue to use technology to do what they need to do developmentally-define themselves and push boundaries. But unlike when we grew up, they're doing it in public.
- That's why it's more important than ever for kids to think critically about the opportunities and challenges of the “digital world,” and make safe, responsible, and respectful choices.
- Just because kids are fluent in new technologies doesn't mean they understand the implications of their actions – their abilities outstrip their judgment.
- That's why parents need to help guide their kids. Keeping up with them can be difficult, but with a little bit of common sense, you can make a big difference.



Here are some basic rules of the road to get you started.

Click One: Embrace Their World

- Using digital media is part of what it means to be a kid today, and if you share your kids' enthusiasm for it, they're more likely to come to you for help navigating it. So learn how to make a Facebook page, figure out how to text, try uploading a video, and check out what that gaming box can do besides play games. A great way to do this is to ask your child for help and then do these activities together. That said, try not to invade boundaries – they need room to develop.

Click Two: Encourage Balanced Use

- A general rule of thumb is that the amount of time that kids spend with media and technology should be equal to time they spend doing other activities, whether that's hanging out with their friends face-to-face, spending time with their family, playing sports, or doing their chores.
- To help you and your kids manage their time, you can have them keep a media log to keep track – or use the Common Sense Family Media Agreement.

Click Three: Monitor media use as best you can

- With WiFi, mobile devices, and now their laptops, it's nearly impossible to monitor everything that your kids are doing. That's why it's important to ask questions about what they're doing and keep lines of communication open.
- You can encourage older kids to use media in areas that are easier for you to monitor, like the living room or kitchen.
- And if you want to go farther, you can make a "no cell phone or laptop" policy at bedtime and actually remove the devices from your kids' rooms at a specified time. This will help them get much-needed sleep – and help you know that they're not behind closed doors texting with their friends at 2 a.m.

Click Four: Discuss Which Sites They Can Visit and What They Can Download

- As kids get older, they're going to look to their friends to find the media that's popular and cool. That said, you can still help your kids find age-appropriate media, and discuss which sites they can visit, what they can download, how they can access the Internet, how they can use cell phones, etc. The best way to do this is proactively – don't wait until your kids have been using a device for months before setting some guidelines.
- Don't forget to be a good media role model. Kids learn from what we're doing, so if you don't want them texting during dinner or while they're driving, you shouldn't do it either.



Click One: Explain That Nothing Is Really Private

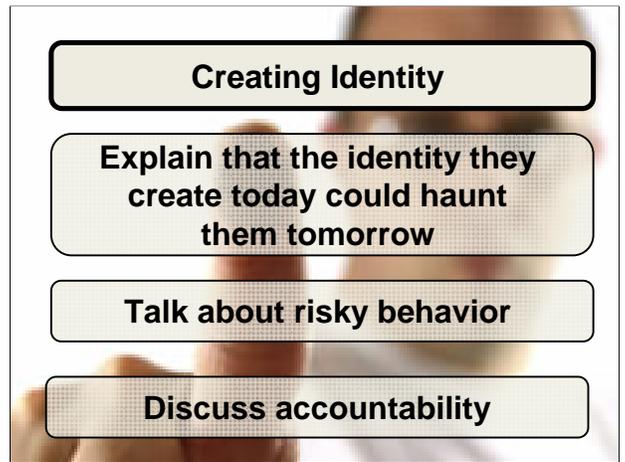
- In today's media environment, it's very important to discuss protecting kids' own privacy – as well as their friends'.
- Kids need to understand that anything they put online or send to their friends on their cell phones isn't really private. Everything leaves a digital footprint, and whatever gets created never goes away.
- Anything that kids put out in the digital world can be cut and pasted and spread throughout their entire school – and beyond – with the click of a button. So while kids may not intend for something to go public, it easily can.

Click Two: Establish Privacy Settings

- The most basic thing that kids can do to protect themselves is set up privacy settings on any social networking site. Each major site has an area where you can access this information. Kids shouldn't assume that the default state is "private" – they need to adjust the settings to limit what other people can see and access.
- Kids also need to understand that they should protect their friends' privacy too. Passing along a rumor or identifying someone in a picture (called "tagging") affects that person's privacy. If your kids are tagged in friends' photos, they can ask to have the photos or the tags removed. But there's not too much they can do beyond that.

Click Three: Keep Passwords Private

- Kids shouldn't share their passwords with anyone but you. They may think that telling their best friend is OK, but they can never predict what their friend might do with that information if they happened to get in a fight. It's just not worth the risk.



Click One: Explain that the identity they create today could haunt them tomorrow.

- So help kids self-reflect before they self-reveal.
- Remember, it's their job to explore their identities. But they need to be reminded that what they post today could haunt them tomorrow.
- Kids should think before they post. Talk about the importance of asking questions, such as:
 - What is my purpose for creating this?
 - Who is my audience?
 - Am I creating this for myself, to make an impression, and/or to get my peers' approval?
 - How much should I reveal?
 - Who might see this? What am I saying about myself? How will people interpret this?
 - What will they think about me?
- Use what your kids post as a jumping-off point for conversation and discussion – ask why they chose that particular screen name, why they posted a certain picture, etc.
- Ask your kids about their avatars and how much they identify with them. What do they think is like them, and what's different? Feel free to question the choices that kids have made. If your kids say their avatar means nothing, that's a valid response. They could just be playing around and like what they created. Either way, it will give you insight into who they are.

Click Two: Talk About Risky Behavior

- Establish some ground rules in case kids are fuzzy about what not to post. No nude or semi-nude photos or videos. No pictures of doing drugs, drinking, or having sex. Since kids don't know who will see that information or how it could get passed on, it's just too risky, even if they think they're being "cute."
- Talk about other risky behavior too, like having sexually explicit conversations in chat rooms with people they don't know.

Click Three: Discuss Accountability

- Whatever kids post – whether they do it anonymously or not – they need to be accountable for it. Remind them that what goes around comes around. If they spread a rumor, send a photo someone sent them which was meant to be private, or talk trash about a teacher, it's likely that someone will find out that they posted it. And they could get in trouble with the school – or even law enforcement.
- If kids are creating avatars, make sure they aren't making stereotyped or racially charged decisions. Prejudice is as real in cyberspace as it is in the offline world. And even with avatars, kids need to know that just because they're disguised doesn't mean they can't be identified.
- The bottom line is that if kids wouldn't say something to someone's face, they shouldn't say or post it online.



Click One: Encourage Creativity

- Kids can do amazing things digitally, and there are many wonderful sites that engage them in creating works of art – whether it’s music, anime, videos, or fan fiction. Get familiar with some of these sites, especially the ever-popular YouTube. Steer kids toward sites that further their interests and your family’s values.

Click Two: Once It’s Gone Digital, Kids Lose Control

- We want kids to share their work, but we also want to be sure they realize that the moment they share their creations, they lose control over them. And just because they *can* do something doesn’t mean they *should*. The promise of an audience and instant recognition can inspire kids to use creative tools in anti-social or inappropriate ways. Videos of fights, sexually revealing images, speech that’s hateful or simply cruel – all are far too common in the digital world and should be considered off limits.

Click Three: Talk About Copyright Issues

- Talk to kids about another big no-no: using someone else’s work without that person’s approval, when possible. And if it’s *not* possible, kids need to give the person credit for having created the original image/video/etc.
- When kids use someone else’s creation without their permission or crediting them as the source, it’s called plagiarism, piracy, or copyright violation. The idea is for kids to create something themselves, not to rip off something or someone else. A great way to drive this home is to ask kids how they would feel if someone used their own videos or photos – items they had worked really hard to create – without giving them any credit.
- Kids can use small chunks of other people’s work – that’s called fair use – but they should still source it.

Click Four: Explain That Cheating Online Is Still Cheating

- All of the previous rules apply not just to kids’ artistic creations, but also to their schoolwork. Many kids plagiarize using online sources or use their cell phones to send friends answers to tests. Kids need to understand that cheating using media is still cheating – not only is that behavior unethical, but they could get in a lot of trouble for doing it.

What Kids Can Trust and Believe

Teach kids to ask the who, what, when, and how questions

Balance research sources

Is a person who they say they are?

Point out all the ways marketers target them

What Kids Can Trust and Believe

Click One: Teach Kids to Ask the Who, What, and When Questions

- Help kids learn who and what they can trust and believe online. One of the best ways to do that is to teach kids to ask who, what, and when questions about websites.
- Who created this site? Is it from an educational institution (.edu), a nonprofit (.org), or a commercial enterprise (.com)?
- What information does the site include? Can you find other sources that verify the information? (If you can only find a fact/story on one site, it's probably not reliable.) Is the site trying to sell something, or is the information there solely for educational purposes?
- When was the site last updated? Generally, the more updated the information is, the better.

Click Two: Balance Research Sources

- Kids will hear this from their teachers, but you should reiterate that they need to balance research sources – and not just for their homework. They should look at different news sites so that they can get the full picture of a certain issue and different viewpoints, as well as verify what they've learned.

Click Three: Is a Person Who They Say They Are?

- Just as information may not always be accurate, people may not always be who they say they are. Kids shouldn't assume that just because someone says they're 17 – or that they're a girl – that they really are.

Click Four: Point Out All the Ways That Marketers Target Kids

- Kids need to recognize that they're being marketed to everywhere they turn – from traditional TV, print, and radio ads to product placements in TV shows and movies. Interactive ads blaze throughout online and gaming worlds, where sponsorships, contests, and product endorsements appear regularly. Ads also come to our kids disguised as "free" cell phone ring tones (in exchange for receiving text ads), surveys, and pass-along games and quizzes that capture email addresses when kids respond or forward them to each other (this is called viral marketing).
- Help kids learn to identify different types of advertising so that they can see through the hype.



Click One: Nonprofit

- Common Sense Media is a great resource that can help you as you navigate the media environment. Common Sense Media is partnering with the Maine Department of Education to bring you presentations like this one.
- The organization does three core activities: rate, educate, and advocate. All of the resources on its website are free.

Click Two: Easy-to-Use Reviews of Media Titles

- Common Sense Media has more than 12,000 reviews and ratings of all the types of media your kids love – websites, movies, games, TV shows, books, and music – all based on child development criteria so that you can decide what’s right for your child.
- The reviews include information about content and have helpful tips for family discussions.

Click Three: Parenting Advice

- Common Sense also has expert advice on all the issues we’ve talked about in this presentation and more.
- The organization’s email newsletter, which is free, offers a weekly round-up of the latest media releases and parenting tips on hot topics.

Click Four: Advocacy

- Common Sense Media is building a movement of parents, educators, and young people who care about raising media-smart kids.
- The organization focuses its advocacy on improving the media landscape and getting digital citizenship education into every school in the country.

Click Five: Website address

- You can join the movement and get the weekly newsletter by registering for free at www.commonsense.org.



- Our school is committed to helping your kids thrive in this digital world.
- But we need your help to ensure that they use this powerful tool in a safe, responsible, and respectful way.
- We know that it's hard for you to keep up with what your kids are doing online because things are evolving quickly, but organizations like Common Sense Media can help you stay up to date.
- Together, we can help our kids be good digital citizens.