

DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP TOOLKIT

Creating and engaging with social media: Community considerations and Institute policies



Developed by the *Digital Citizenship/ Social Media Informal Working Group 2024* for classrooms and research settings at MIT.

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About this Resource

MIT is committed to [freedom of expression](#) as central to its mission of advancing knowledge, and to a community culture of civility, mutual respect, and compassion.

This resource reinforces the shared responsibility of every member of the MIT community in promoting digital citizenship, both within the Institute and beyond.

It highlights the “responsibilities, and opportunities of living, learning, and working in an interconnected digital world,” and the importance of modeling and practicing safe, legal, and ethical behavior online.¹

This resource can guide MIT faculty and staff in educational conversations with their students about the norms and expectations of social media engagement.

¹ Based on the definition of digital citizenship developed by the [International Society for Technology in Education \(ISTE\)](#)

Principles of Digital Citizenship at MIT²



Digital Literacy

We are a community of critical thinkers & creators

- ⇒ Evaluate the accuracy, perspective, and validity of digital media and social posts.
- ⇒ Be knowledgeable, diligent, and skillful when creating and disseminating information online.
- ⇒ Challenge personal biases and be aware of “filter bubbles” in social media feeds.
 - [More guidelines from the Institute Communications Office](#)
 - [Institute policy on the use of information technology](#)



Digital Hygiene

We define who we are

- ⇒ Be aware that digital identities can reflect both personal and MIT community values.
- ⇒ Understand that what you share online is not private and can affect your reputation and relationships, and may subject you to trolling and harassment.
 - [More guidelines from the Institute Communications Office](#)

² These principles are adapted from Common Sense Digital Citizenship Curriculum

- [Institute policy on the use of the Institute name](#)



Digital Rights & Responsibilities

We care about everyone's privacy

- ⇒ Adhere to federal laws and MIT community standards that inform interactions with others online (privacy, libel, and defamation) and the use of intellectual property and copyrighted material.
- ⇒ Understand the protections and responsibilities of [FERPA](#).
 - [More guidelines from the Institute Communications Office](#)
 - [Institute policy on privacy and intellectual property](#)



Digital Etiquette & Communication

We know the power of words and actions, and are kind and courageous

- ⇒ Be open to, and respectfully recognize multiple viewpoints, and engage with others online with respect and empathy.
- ⇒ Be a responsible bystander by reporting degrading or harmful content, personal threats, or cyberbullying.
 - [More guidelines from the Institute Communications Office](#)
 - [Institute policy on relations and responsibilities within the MIT community](#)



Suggestions for Faculty, Instructors, & Staff

If you plan to utilize digital communications and/or online student engagement, consider including a Digital Citizenship Statement in your syllabus. For example:

- ⇒ During this course, we will be engaging with various forms of digital communication and social media. It is therefore important that you are aware of the responsibilities and opportunities of living, learning, and working in an interconnected digital world, and in practicing safe, legal, and ethical behavior online.
- ⇒ Address the topic in terms of "the whole MIT community," not just students
- ⇒ Consider modeling digital citizenship in your own digital media or social posts
- ⇒ Make sure students have access to the Institute resources and policies listed below:
 - To report incidents of online harassment, send an email to stopit@mit.edu. If you believe you or someone else is in danger, call the Campus Police immediately at x3-1212. (from [IS&T network rules](#).)
 - [Student Support Services \(S³\)](#) or [GradSupport](#) can make one-on-one recommendations and necessary referrals.
 - [Supportive Measures | Protecting Yourself After Online Abuse – MIT Institute Discrimination and Harassment Response Office](#)

MIT Guidelines from the Institute Communications Office (ICO)

Digital Literacy

- ⇒ **Be transparent.** MIT promotes transparency. We recommend that you do not blog anonymously or use pseudonyms or false screen names when posting or creating a page on behalf of MIT.
- ⇒ **Slow down.** Think before you post. Consider the content carefully and be cautious about disclosing personal details or making statements that you may regret later.
- ⇒ Consider adopting MIT's best practice guidelines for its flagship social media accounts.

Digital Hygiene

- ⇒ **When speaking on behalf of MIT**, don't be afraid to be yourself, but do so respectfully and with good judgment.
- ⇒ **Think carefully when you "friend," "like," or "follow."** Is it an appropriate relationship? Is there a chance for misinterpretation by your audience?
- ⇒ **When representing yourself on social media**, be clear that the views and opinions expressed are yours alone and do not represent the official views of MIT.
 - *Still, your audience may attribute your comments to MIT, so be mindful of how they will reflect on MIT and its reputation.*

Digital Rights & Responsibilities

- ⇒ Respect the privacy of others. Respect the privacy of your fellow faculty, staff, and students. Before sharing a comment, post, picture, or video through any type of social media or network, it is usually best to get consent.

- ⇒ Respect the intellectual property of others. It is critical that you show proper respect for the laws governing intellectual property, including patents, copyrights, trademarks, and fair use. Always credit others' work.
 - *Be careful about disclosing information about research in your department.*

Digital Etiquette & Communication

- ⇒ **Respect your audience, MIT, and your coworkers.** Members of the MIT community reflect a diverse set of customs, values, and points of view.
- ⇒ **Encourage conversation.** Do not turn into a one-way broadcaster; this defeats the purpose of social media.
- ⇒ It is not always advisable to block negative comments. When appropriate, **use negative comments as an opportunity** for discussion.
- ⇒ Be the first to respond to your own mistake.

MIT Policies

Digital Literacy

- *Information:* [P&P 13.2](#) describes MIT's policy on the use of information technology

Digital Hygiene

- Institute name: [P&P 12.3](#) describes MIT's policy guiding the use of MIT's name by faculty or staff to represent or endorse a product, policy, or opinion.

Digital Rights & Responsibilities

- *Privacy:* [P&P 11.0](#) describes MIT's policy on the privacy and disclosure of personal information.
 - [P&P 11.1](#) notes, "While the organizations collecting and having custody of personal information are immediately responsible for its protection, the ultimate protection comes from a community-wide awareness of the importance of personal privacy in our society and the many ways it can be eroded."
 - [P&P 11.3](#) describes MIT's policy on the privacy of student records, including the Institute's adherence to the [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 \(FERPA\)](#), and specifies student information that must not be disclosed
 - [P&P 11.3.2](#) notes that students may opt to additionally withhold from disclosure their Directory Information (including their name, address, course, and certain other personal and academic information).
- *Intellectual property:* [P&P 13.1](#) describes MIT's policy around intellectual property.

- [MIT's Student Information Policy](#)

Digital Etiquette & Communication

- [P&P 9.0](#) describes MIT's policy on relations and responsibilities within the MIT community.
 - [P&P 9.2](#) sets an expectation that all members of the MIT community "conduct themselves with professionalism, personal integrity, and respect for the rights, differences and dignity of others."
 - Harassment: [P&P 9.5](#) prohibits harassment, "defined as unwelcome conduct of a verbal, nonverbal or physical nature that is sufficiently severe or pervasive to create a work or academic environment that a reasonable person would consider intimidating, hostile or abusive and that adversely affects an individual's educational, work, or living environment."
 - [9.5.2](#) also notes that stalking, including cyberstalking, is prohibited by MIT.

Resources

MIT Resources

- To report incidents of online harassment, send an email to stopit@mit.edu. If you believe you or someone else is in danger, call the **Campus Police** immediately at x3-1212. (from [IS&T network rules](#).)
- Reach out to [Student Support Services](#) (undergraduate) or [GradSupport](#) (graduate), who can make one-on-one recommendations and necessary referrals.
- [Protecting Yourself After Online Abuse](#)
- [Free Expression at MIT](#)
- [Community Toolkit to Navigate Challenging Times](#)
- [ICO | Social Media](#)
- [MIT Social Media Hub](#)
- [A blog for social media communicators at MIT](#)

Additional Resources

Sources Consulted

- [The five competencies of digital citizenship \(ISTE\)](#)
- [Vanderbilt Digital Citizenship Statement](#)
- [Temple University Guide to Being a Good Digital Citizen](#)
- [ICEV Seven Concepts of Digital Literacy](#)
- [Educause Three Pillars of Digital Citizenship](#)
- [Digital Citizenship: Creating Safe and Inclusive Spaces Online](#). Times Higher Education

Peer Institutions

Harvard

- [The Digital Citizenship+ \(Plus\) Resource Platform \(DCPR\)](#),
- [Berkman Klein Center for Internet & Society](#)

Stanford

- [Empowering Diverse Digital Citizens Lab](#)
- [Social Media Lab](#)

Cornell

- [Social Media Lab](#)

Other Institutions

Toronto Metropolitan University

- [Digital Citizenship Toolkit](#)

Toronto University of Edinburgh

- [The Digital Safety Supporter Toolkit](#)
- [Digital Safety, Wellbeing and Citizenship](#)

Organizations

- [iCEV](#)
- [Educause](#)
- [ISTE](#)

Linked-In Learning

- [Backgrounder-Netiquette](#)
- [Information Literacy](#)
- [Spotting Misinformation Online](#)

Papers/journal articles

- [Digital citizenship at school: Democracy, pragmatism and RRI](#)
- [Faculty and Digital Presences](#)
- [The Importance of Promoting Digital Citizenship for Students](#)

- [Digital citizenship and its teaching: A literature review](#)