

Digital setup savvy



Grades: 4 to 6

Overview

New apps, games and devices can open up exciting ways for students to learn, play and connect. But before getting started, students may be asked to make decisions about the information they share permissions they allow, passwords they create and people they connect with.

This lesson introduces students to some of the choices they may encounter when setting up a new app, game or device. Students will explore personal information, privacy, app permissions, passwords and online connections, and practice making safe and responsible decisions from the start. By understanding what to look for during the setup process, students can build smart digital habits that help them use technology more safely and responsibly.

Learning outcomes

Students will:

- Identify personal information that should be kept private online
- Understand why apps request permissions and what they should consider allowing
- Recognize the importance of strong, private passwords
- Make thoughtful choices about who they connect with online
- Know when to ask a parent, caregiver, teacher or other trusted adult for help
- Develop safe and responsible habits for using new apps, games and devices

Preparation and materials

- Prepare the discussion prompts
- Prepare to display or distribute the “Setting up a new app” scenario
- Set out whiteboard or chart paper
- Have paper or notebooks for students to record their responses

Introduction: Getting started safely

Time: 5-10 minutes

Begin by asking students to imagine they have just downloaded a new app or game they are excited to try.

Ask:

- What might an app ask you to do before you can start using it?
- What information might you be asked to provide?
- Have you ever seen an app ask for permission to use something on a device, such as the camera or location?
- What could you do if you were not sure whether to say yes?

Explain that setting up an app, game or device often involves making choices before we even start using it. We might be asked to create an account, provide information about ourselves, choose a password, allow access to parts of our device or connect with other people. Being a responsible digital citizen means thinking about these choices instead of automatically selecting “yes,” “allow” or “accept.”

Class discussion: What does an app know about you?

Time: 10-15 minutes

Ask students to brainstorm different types of information an app or game might ask for during setup.

Write their answers on the whiteboard. Examples could include:

- Name
- Birthday
- Email address
- School
- Location
- Photos
- Contacts
- Camera/microphone

Explain that some of these are examples of personal information, while others are permissions that give an app access to information or features on a device.

Ask:

- Why might an app want this information?
- Why might an app need access to your camera or microphone?
- Would every app need access to your location or contacts?
- Should you automatically allow every permission an app requests?

Discuss whether a permission makes sense based on what the app does. For example, an app used for video calls may need access to a camera and microphone. Students should think about what an app is asking for and ask a trusted adult if they are not sure.

Reinforce that students don't need to make every digital decision on their own. A parent, caregiver, teacher or other trusted adult can help them decide what information or access is appropriate to provide.

Activity: Setting up a new app

Time: 20-25 minutes

Tell students to imagine that they are setting up a fictional new app called ConnectUp. Explain that they will encounter different decisions during the setup process. For each step, students should think about what they would do and why. Students can discuss the scenarios in small groups before sharing their answers with the class.

Step 1

Create your profile

ConnectUp asks for:

- Your first and last name
- Your birthday
- Your school
- A profile photo
- Your location

Ask students:

- Which information would you feel comfortable providing?
- Is all of this information necessary to use the app?
- Is there any information you might want to keep private? What could you do if you aren't sure what to share?

Step 2

Create a password

Present three fictional passwords. Below are some examples, or create your own:

- Soccer
- Maya2015
- Purple!River7Cloud

Ask:

- Which password appears strongest?
- What makes it more difficult to guess?
- Why might using your name, birthday or favourite activity make a password easier to guess? Why should passwords be kept private?

Explain that strong passwords are generally longer, difficult for someone else to guess and not based on obvious personal information. Students should also avoid sharing passwords with friends.

Step 3

Choose your permissions

ConnectUp asks for permission to access:

- Camera
- Microphone
- Location
- Contacts

For each permission, ask:

- Why might the app want access to this?
- Does it make sense based on what the app does?
- What information could the app access if you allow it? What could you do if you aren't sure?

Remind students that they don't have to automatically agree to every request. They can pause, think about what the app is asking for, and ask a trusted adult for help.

Step 4

Start connecting

You are ready to use ConnectUp. A username you don't recognize sends you a connection request.

Ask:

- Would you accept the request? Why or why not?
- What would you want to know before connecting with someone? If you have friends in common, does that necessarily mean you know the person?
- What could you do if you aren't sure who someone is?

Discuss why students should think carefully about who they connect and communicate with online.

Class discussion: Our smart digital setup checklist

Time: 10 minutes

After completing the activity, tell students that the class is going to create a checklist they can use the next time they try a new app, game or device. Write the heading "Before I get started..." on the whiteboard.

Ask students to suggest smart habits based on what they learned during the lesson. The checklist might include:

- Think about what personal information I'm sharing
- Keep personal information private
- Create a strong password and keep it private
- Check what permissions an app is requesting
- Think about whether the permissions make sense
- Be thoughtful about who I connect with
- Ask a trusted adult if I'm unsure

Discuss how these habits can help students make safer, more responsible choices from the moment they start using a new technology.

Wrap-up

Time: 5-10 minutes

Ask students:

- What is one thing you would check before using a new app, game or device?
- Why is it important to think about the information an app is asking for?
- What should you do if you aren't sure whether to allow a permission or share information?

Ask each student to identify one smart digital habit they want to use during the school year.

Finish by reinforcing that students don't need to know the answer to every digital situation.

Taking time to think about what information they're sharing, what they're allowing and who they're connecting with can help them make safer, more responsible choices online.