



# Private and Personal Information

## Essential Question

*How can you protect yourself from online identity theft?*

**Estimated time:** 45 minutes

## Lesson Overview

As students visit sites that request information about their identities, they learn to adopt a critical inquiry process that empowers them to protect themselves and their families from identity theft. In this lesson, students learn to think critically about the user information that some websites request or require. They learn the difference between private information and personal information, distinguishing what is safe and unsafe to share online.

## Standards Alignment –

### Common Core:

**grade 3:** RI.1, RI.4, RI.10, RF.4a, W.4, W.7, W.10, SL.1a, SL.1b, SL.1c, SL.1d, SL.3, SL.4, SL.6, L.3a, L.6

**grade 4:** RI.1, RI.4, RI.10, RF.4a, W.4, W.7, W.10, SL.1a, SL.1b, SL.1c, SL.1d, SL.4, SL.6, L.3a, L.6

**grade 5:** RI.1, RI.4, RI.10, RF.4a, W.4, W.7, W.10, SL.1a, SL.1b, SL.1c, SL.1d, SL.4, SL.6, L.3a, L.6

**NETS•S:** 1b, 5a, 5b

## Learning Objectives

*Students will be able to ...*

- learn about the benefits of sharing information online, but also about the safety and security risks of sharing certain types of information.
- understand what type of information can put them at risk for identity theft and other scams.
- distinguish between personal information, which is safe to share online, and private information, which is unsafe to share.

## Key Vocabulary –

**register (online):** to enter your information in order to sign up and get access to a website

**personal information:** information that can't be used to identify you, such as your age, gender, how many siblings you have, your favorite food, etc.

**private information:** information that can be used to identify you, such as your Social Security number, street address, email, phone number, etc.

**identity theft:** when a thief steals someone's private information in order to pretend to be that person

## Materials and Preparation

- Copy the **Protect Yourself Student Handout**, one for each student.
- Copy the **All About Me Student Handout**, one for each student.
- Preview the websites Neopets ([www.neopets.com](http://www.neopets.com)), Nickelodeon ([www.nick.com](http://www.nick.com)), and BookAdventure ([www.bookadventure.org](http://www.bookadventure.org)) and be prepared to show them to the class.
- Chalkboard or white board

## Family Resources

- Send home the **Online Security Family Tip Sheet (Elementary School)**.



## introduction

### Warm-up (5 minutes)

#### ASK:

*What types of information do you think are okay to share publicly online, on a profile that others will see, for instance?*

Sample responses:

- Interests and favorite activities
- Opinions about a movie
- First name

**INVITE** students to share the names of websites they visit that require or request user information before allowing people to participate in online activities.

#### ASK:

*What are some examples of websites where you must register in order to participate?*

Review the Key Vocabulary term **register**.

Sample responses:

- Social networking sites
- Video-sharing sites
- Youth discussion sites
- Ask-an-expert sites
- Game sites

**WRITE** the names of the websites on the board. Explain that it's important to know that sharing some kinds of user information can put you and your family's privacy at risk.

## teach 1

### Log In (15 minutes)

**PROJECT** for the class, or have students go online to, [www.neopets.com](http://www.neopets.com), [www.nick.com](http://www.nick.com), [www.bookadventure.org](http://www.bookadventure.org), or one of the websites that your students suggested.

**Note:** As an offline alternative, print out and copy two of the website pages that ask for registration and log-in information. Distribute copies of the pages to each student.

**DISCUSS** with students the kinds of information that each website requires or requests before users can participate.

#### ASK:

*What information is required and why do you think it is required?*

This may include first name, user name, password, password hint, birth date, gender, the state you live in, parent's permission, etc. Let them know that the information may be required because it helps distinguish one person from another. Or perhaps the website is keeping a record of who uses it.

**ASK:**

*What information is optional, and why do you think it is optional?*

This may include parent's email, birthday, state, country, gender, etc. Maybe this information is optional because the website does not require it for payment, to distinguish people from one another, or so the website can keep track of this kind of information.

*Why do you think websites ask for this kind of information?*

Answers may include: They want to get people to pay in order to use the site, they want to send messages to people who are signing up, or they want to try to sell things to those people.

**POINT OUT** that you do not have to fill out fields on websites if they are not required. Required fields are usually marked by an asterisk (\*) or are highlighted in red.

## teach 2

### Private and Personal (10 minutes)

**EXPLAIN** to students that some kinds of information are generally safe to share on the Internet and some are not. However, the information that's considered safe should not be shared one-on-one with people they don't already know offline.

**DEFINE** the Key Vocabulary terms **personal information** and **private information**. Emphasize that personal information is usually safe to share online. Private information is usually unsafe to share online (students should get permission from a parent or guardian).

**SHARE** the following examples of information that is safe or unsafe to share:

SAFE – Personal Information	UNSAFE – Private Information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your favorite food</li> <li>• Your opinion (though it should be done respectfully)</li> <li>• First name</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mother's maiden name</li> <li>• Social Security number</li> <li>• Your date of birth</li> <li>• Parents' credit card information</li> <li>• Phone number</li> </ul>

**ASK:**

*Why would someone want to steal someone else's identity on the Internet?*

Sample responses:

- To steal money
- To do something bad or mean
- To hide their real identity

**DEFINE** Key Vocabulary term **identity theft**.

**EXPLAIN** that an identity thief uses private information to pretend to be the person whose identity he or she has stolen. Once the thief has taken someone's identity, he or she can use that person's name to get a driver's license or buy things, even if the person whose identity they stole isn't old enough to do these things! It's often not until much later that people realize their identity has been stolen. Identity thieves may also apply for credit cards in other people's names and run up big bills that they don't pay off. Let students know that identity thieves often target children and teens because they have a clean credit history and their parents are unlikely to be aware that someone is taking on their child's identity.

**EMPHASIZE** the difference between private information (which can be used to steal your identity) and personal information (which cannot be used to steal your identity). Invite students to answer the following questions (write their answers on the board):

**ASK:**

*What kinds of private information could an identity thief use to find out and steal your identity?*

Examples include: first and last name, postal address, email address, phone numbers, passwords, credit card numbers, Social Security number, mother's maiden name.

*What kinds of personal information could you share about yourself without showing your identity?*

Examples include: your age, gender, how many brothers and sisters you have, your favorite band, your favorite food, what pets you have, the name of your pet, your opinion about an important issue.

**EXPLAIN** to students that on the Internet, people you interact with could be your friends next door or strangers who live on the other side of the world. Because it's hard to know the intentions of people who you've never met before, it is best to remain cautious when sharing your information. You wouldn't give strangers your private information in the real world, and you need to be just as careful when you're online.

**REMIND** students how important it is each time they share information online to stop and think: "Am I giving out information that I should keep private?" Point out that it can sometimes be safe to give out some private information. For example, a website might ask for your birth date or email address. But students should always ask their parent or guardian before giving out private information.

**DISTRIBUTE** the **Protect Yourself Student Handout** and have students complete the activity. Review the correct answers (listed below):

- **Personal Information:** Your age, gender, how many brothers and sisters you have, your favorite band, your favorite food, the name of your pet.
- **Private Information:** Full name, street address, email address, your date of birth, phone numbers, credit card information, mother's maiden name, name of school.

## teach 3

### What's Safe to Share Online? (10 minutes)

**DISTRIBUTE** the **All About Me Student Handout**. Have students write down all the personal information they would like to share on a public profile in an online community. Emphasize that even though personal information is safe to share online, it is okay to choose not to share it. Remind students that everything on the list should be safe to share; none of it should be private information that can put their identity at risk.

**ENCOURAGE** students to share their lists with the class.

**ASK:**

*Is there anything on the lists that could be used by an identity thief? Why?*

Guide students to explain their answers and encourage them to use the Key Vocabulary terms.

## closing

### Wrap-up (5 minutes)

You can use these questions to assess your students' understanding of the lesson objectives. You may want to ask students to reflect in writing on one of the questions, using a journal or an online blog/wiki.

**ASK:**

*What is identity theft?*

Using someone else's private information to pretend to be that person.

*How does personal information and private information differ?*

Private information, such as a Social Security number, is unsafe to share. It should be kept private so that identity thieves cannot use it. Personal information, such as your favorite food, cannot be used by identity thieves and is safe to share. Even though personal information is usually safe to share online, you might choose not to share this information, and that's fine.

*What would be a good rule for kids about giving out private information online?*

They should not share it online without the permission of a teacher, parent, or guardian.

## Private and Personal Information

### Directions

Pretend you have a public profile in an online community. There are people you know, and people you don't know, who can view your profile.

Write down personal information that you would want to share about yourself. Make sure that everything on your list is safe to share and that it is not private information that could reveal your identity.

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### Use Common Sense!

Each time you share information about yourself online, stop and think: "Am I giving out information that I should keep private?"

Personal information often is safe to share. But you should never share private information without the permission of a parent, guardian, or teacher.

## Private and Personal Information

### Directions

Decide if each piece of information below is an example of personal information or private information. Then check the box to show your answer.

Information	Personal	Private
Full name (first and last)		
Age		
Street address		
Email address		
Date of birth		
Gender		
How many brothers and sisters you have		
Favorite band		
Phone numbers		
Credit card information		
Favorite food		
The name of your pet		
Mother's maiden name		
Name of your school		

## Private and Personal Information

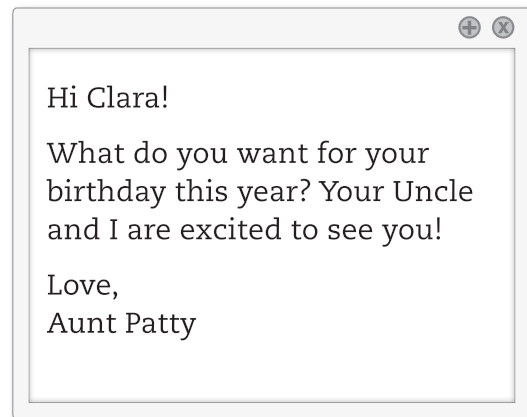
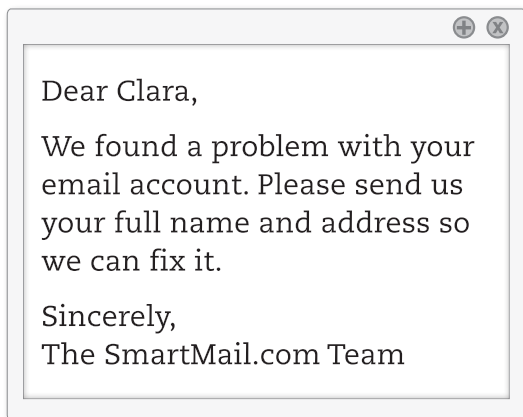
1. If a website asks you for your \_\_\_\_\_ online, you should talk to a parent or family member.

- a) favorite color
- b) date of birth
- c) screen name

2. An identity thief probably would not be interested in your personal information, such as \_\_\_\_\_.

- a) our full name
- b) your street address
- c) your favorite movie

3. Clara received two emails. Which email should she NOT respond to?  
Circle your answer.





# Private and Personal Information

1. If a website asks you for your \_\_\_\_\_ online, you should talk to a parent or family member.

- a) favorite color
- b) date of birth**
- c) screen name

*Answer feedback*

The correct answer is **b**. Your date of birth is an example of private information. If a website asks for private information, you should ask a trusted adult before doing anything.

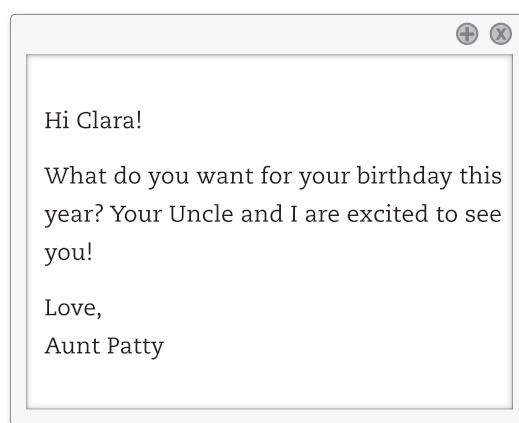
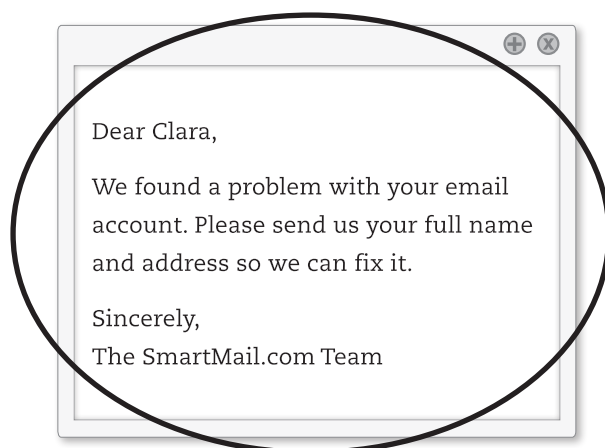
2. An identity thief probably would not be interested in your personal information, such as \_\_\_\_\_.

- a) your full name
- b) your street address
- c) your favorite movie**

*Answer feedback*

The correct answer is **c**. Both your full name and your street address are examples of private information. Personal information, like your favorite movie, would probably not be useful for an identity thief.

3. Clara received two emails. Which email should she NOT respond to? Circle your answer.



*Answer feedback*

If an email asks you for private information, such as your full name or address, you should not respond—especially if you do not know the person who sent the message.