SCHOLASTIC

LESSON 3   Making Online Profiles More Secure

Inspire your students to explore the cybersecurity strategies that can help thwart threats and keep them safe.

Objective
Students will use analytical and reasoning skills to identify areas of vulnerability in an online profile and come up with strategies for how to make them more secure by applying information from a text.

Time
90 minutes (two class periods)

Materials
• Analyze Your Profile activity sheet
• Find the Security Holes! activity sheet

Instructions

1 Ask students to consider how they behave differently at home, in school, and around strangers. Have them explain why they may be more aware of/adjust their behavior depending on who they are with. Ask students to discuss in pairs why people are cautious around strangers. Have pairs share their discussions with the class.

2 Challenge students to compare being cautious around strangers to their habits on social media (Instagram, game chat, Snapchat, etc.). Ask them if they think their peers actively think about protecting their privacy online. If not, why do they think this is?

3 Ask a few volunteers to describe the purpose of an online profile. Emphasize that while a profile is meant to be public, people often forget that giving the outside world access to personal details can have negative and potentially dangerous consequences.

4 Prompt students to think about types of profile information that might make them vulnerable online. Co-create an anchor chart documenting student responses.

5 Explain that cybersecurity experts analyze how people use information online to identify security weaknesses and develop strategies to protect against potential threats.

6 Distribute the Analyze Your Profile activity sheet. Have students read the information and share what they found most surprising/interesting. Encourage them to use the sheet as a safety tool at home.

7 Distribute the Find the Security Holes! activity sheet. Once students have completed the sheets, review as a class. (Answers: Profile picture should not be a photo of the user—use an avatar or clip art; privacy settings should be "on"; do not use your real full name; birth date should not include year; do not share home or location; do not include school name or other personal details, like phone number.)

Extension

As a culminating project, instruct students to use what they learned to invent their own cybersecurity device. They should detail how it works, what it protects against, and how users can install it on their devices.

Name _____

Analyze Your Profile 👤🔒

Take This Home!
Use this list to make sure all your profiles are safe.

Read the checklist below to make sure you aren't leaving yourself vulnerable to a cyberattack. Fill in any extra details you've learned in class or from additional research in the spaces below each set of tips.

STEP 1
These parts of your profile can give away too much private information:

- ☑ **Username** Avoid using any part of your first or last name.
- ☑ **Birthday** Don't post the year you were born—the whole Internet will know your age!
- ☑ **Location** Leave off your street address, town, and school name.
- ☑ **Phone number** Avoid listing your area code in particular; it can reveal your general location and leave you vulnerable to phone scams.
- ☑ _____

STEP 2
Keep your personal information secure/protected from cyberthreats:

- ☑ Make sure your username and password meet maximum security standards.
- ☑ Don't publicly share your birthday.
- ☑ Don't use location tags in social media posts; avoid sharing your location publicly.
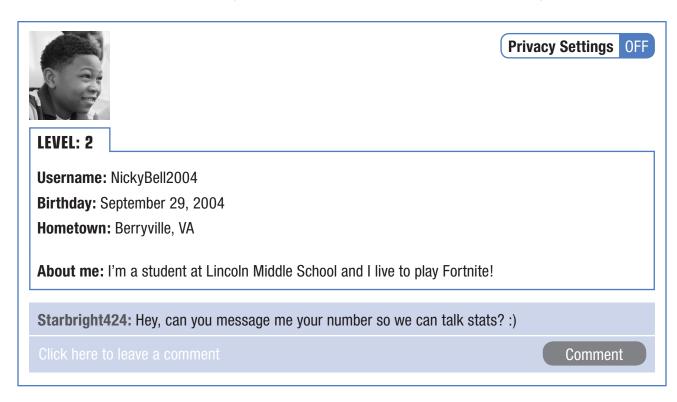- ☑ Avoid saving your password for auto login; avoid staying logged in.
- ☑ _____

STEP 3
Outsmart hackers on the hunt for vulnerable profiles:

- ☑ Check your privacy settings to make sure your profile info is restricted to who you want to view it (i.e., your close friends or family).
- ☑ Restrict access to your profile info, photos, posts, and other personal information.
- ☑ Never approve friend requests or add people you don't know in real life.
- ☑ Be careful about in-app purchases or clicking on pop-up links.
- ☑ Disable location sharing on social media apps so other users can't track you.
- ☑ _____

Name _____

Find the Security Holes! 🔓

Attention, online gamers! Cyberthieves are looking for ways to steal your personal info—and even sell your account. Study the sample profile below and identify any red flags that could make it easy for your account to be hacked. Using the chart below, describe each issue you spot and write in a possible security fix.

Privacy Settings | OFF

LEVEL: 2

Username: NickyBell2004

Birthday: September 29, 2004

Hometown: Berryville, VA

About me: I'm a student at Lincoln Middle School and I live to play Fortnite!

Starbright424: Hey, can you message me your number so we can talk stats? :)

Click here to leave a comment | Comment

❗ What raised a red flag?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

🛡 Suggested security fix

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
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