

Succeeding in a digital world



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Introduction and guidance

Introduction and guidance

Succeeding in a digital world is a free badged course which lasts 8 weeks, with approximately 3 hours' study time each week. You can work through the course at your own pace, so if you have more time one week there is no problem with pushing on to complete another week's study.

The course will develop your confidence and skills for life online, whether study, work or everyday life. It explores a range of digital skills and practices, including digital identity, digital well-being, staying safe and legal, finding and using information and online tools, and dealing with information overload. The importance of developing a critical approach to life online is emphasised throughout, whether consuming or creating information. You'll be encouraged to reflect on your own situation and to apply what you learn to real-life scenarios, using a digital skills plan to keep a record of progress.

You'll start with an overview of your own 'digital life'. You'll identify and reflect on your current use of online technologies and think about your level of digital confidence. All these aspects will be explained so don't worry if they seem unfamiliar at the moment. There are case study examples to help with this and you'll get plenty of opportunities to practise your new understanding and skills.

Part of this practice will be the weekly interactive quizzes, of which Weeks 4 and 8 will provide you with an opportunity to earn a badge to demonstrate your new skills. You can read more on how to study the course and about badges in the next sections.

After completing this course you will be able to:

- understand and be confident in your online identity
- choose and use the appropriate online tool for the task in hand
- use technology confidently and critically to achieve your study, work and life goals
- identify your level of digital confidence and any potential steps for further development.

Moving around the course

The easiest way to navigate around the course is through the 'My course progress' page. You can get back there at any time by clicking on 'Back to course' in the menu bar.

It's also good practice, if you access a link from within a course page (including links to the quizzes), to open it in a new window or tab. That way you can easily return to where you've come from without having to use the back button on your browser.

Get careers guidance

This course has been included in the [National Careers Service](#) to help you develop new skills.

What is a badged course?

While studying *Succeeding in a digital world* you have the option to work towards gaining a digital badge.

Badged courses are a key part of The Open University's mission *to promote the educational well-being of the community*. The courses also provide another way of helping you to progress from informal to formal learning.

To complete a course you need to be able to find about 24 hours of study time, over a period of about 8 weeks. However, it is possible to study them at any time, and at a pace to suit you.

Badged courses are all available on The Open University's [OpenLearn](#) website and do not cost anything to study. They differ from Open University courses because you do not receive support from a tutor. But you do get useful feedback from the interactive quizzes.

What is a badge?

Digital badges are a new way of demonstrating online that you have gained a skill. Schools, colleges and universities are working with employers and other organisations to develop open badges that help learners gain recognition for their skills, and support employers to identify the right candidate for a job.

Badges demonstrate your work and achievement on the course. You can share your achievement with friends, family and employers, and on social media. Badges are a great motivation, helping you to reach the end of the course. Gaining a badge often boosts confidence in the skills and abilities that underpin successful study. So, completing this course should encourage you to think about taking other courses.



How to get a badge

Getting a badge is straightforward! Here's what you have to do:

- read each week of the course
- score 50% or more in the two badge quizzes in Week 4 and Week 8.

For all the quizzes, you can have three attempts at most of the questions (for true or false type questions you usually only get one attempt). If you get the answer right first time you will get more marks than for a correct answer the second or third time. Therefore, please be aware that for the two badge quizzes it is possible to get all the questions right but not score 50% and be eligible for the badge on that attempt. If one of your answers is incorrect you will often receive helpful feedback and suggestions about how to work out the correct answer.

For the badge quizzes, if you're not successful in getting 50% the first time, after 24 hours you can attempt the whole quiz, and come back as many times as you like.

We hope that as many people as possible will gain an Open University badge – so you should see getting a badge as an opportunity to reflect on what you have learned rather than as a test.

If you need more guidance on getting a badge and what you can do with it, take a look at the [OpenLearn FAQs](#). When you gain your badge you will receive an email to notify you and you will be able to view and manage all your badges in your [OpenLearn profile](#) within 24 hours of completing the criteria to gain a badge.

Get started with [Week 1](#).

Week 1: Your digital life

Introduction

It is too early to tell whether the Internet's effect on media will be as radical as that of the printing press. It is not too early to tell that there is nothing that happened between 1450 and now that comes close.

(Naughton, 2012)

Why is 'digital' such a big deal? Here are a few reasons. The world is connected in such a way that news is available at our fingertips as it happens. 'Everyday activities – such as shopping, using a telephone and banking – increasingly require interaction with technology' (House of Lords Select Committee on Digital Skills, 2015, p. 6). Children are born into a digital world and exposed to technology from a young age. At work, many routine processes are being automated, and according to some commentators, around 35 per cent of jobs are at high risk of computerisation (BBC News, 2015). Technology is impacting on every area of life and the speed of change is accelerating.

All this has implications for the way people live, work and study. If you are new to life online, it is not always obvious where to start. There is a saying that even the longest journey begins with a single step. This course is designed to help you to succeed in a digital world by starting with a few essential core skills. You have the opportunity to think about your own experience of buying things online or connecting via social media, or managing information on your phone, laptop or perhaps in the cloud. You'll also hear from Manuela, Michael and John – your three companions on this course – as they share their experiences of digital work, life and study.

In Week 1 you will identify your starting point and where you want to get to. To help you keep track of your learning and development, you have the chance to fill in a **Digital plan** (or learning journal) with actions you want to take. You can start it here in Week 1 and then keep adding to it throughout the course. You can use it to note down any insights you gain through studying this course, or perhaps things you want to explore further. It's personal to you and no-one has to see it, if you don't want them to. Now would be a good time to download the document and keep it somewhere safe for future reference.

Download: [Digital plan](#)

If you prefer, you can use another tool for your notes. You may already have a digital space, possibly cloud-based, or you may want to try one out – for example Microsoft OneDrive or Google Drive or a Notes app on your phone. You might prefer to keep a record of your thoughts as audio recordings. Whatever you decide, have a quick look first at the **Digital plan** template that we've provided so you get an idea of the sort of things to record.

Now watch Katharine and Wendy of The Open University (and original authors of this course) introduce Week 1 and the course:

Video content is not available in this format.

Video 1: Introduction to Week 1



At the end of this week you will have:

- identified and reflected on your current use of online technologies
- thought about how confident you are online
- started your **Digital plan**.

The Open University would really appreciate a few minutes of your time to tell us about yourself and your expectations for the course before you begin, in our optional [start-of-course survey](#). Participation will be completely confidential and we will not pass on your details to others.

1 The importance of being digital

Water, water every where,
Nor any drop to drink.

(Coleridge, 1834)

Although technology is all around us, some people are still excluded (The Tech Partnership, 2017). This is often due to lack of opportunities to access the internet or ability to afford the necessary equipment. There are all sorts of benefits for society when people and organisations are able to use the internet to full effect.

- On an individual level, gaining digital skills can reduce isolation, increase career prospects and enable people to access health information.

- For organisations, becoming more digital is likely to increase visibility, efficiency and competitiveness.
- For society in general, being digitally confident empowers people to make their voices heard on issues of importance to them.
- Digital skills are also highly important when it comes to studying.

There is more to succeeding online than just knowing how to do specific tasks. It is also important to be able to judge who and what you can trust, understand the essentials of ethical behaviour online and communicate well with others. Being 'digital' is about using technology to achieve your goals, whether those are related to work, everyday life or study. It involves thinking critically and making the decisions that are right for you and your life.

In the next activity Manuela, Michael and John, your three 'digital companions' on this course, will introduce themselves, and talk about their aspirations and goals.

Activity 1 Starting your digital journey

10 minutes

In the following videos, Manuela, Michael and John introduce themselves and share what they hope to get out of this course.

As you watch, think about whether any aspects of Manuela's, Michael's or John's stories reflect your own experience.

Video content is not available in this format.

[Video 2: Manuela's introduction](#)



Video content is not available in this format.

[Video 3: Michael's introduction](#)



Video content is not available in this format.

[Video 4: John's introduction](#)



Note your own aspirations and goals in your **Digital plan**.

(Remember, you can use a different tool to record your notes, if you prefer, but have a look at the **Digital plan** template provided to give you some guidance.)

In the next section you will identify your starting point for this course, by thinking about what technologies you currently use and what you do online.

2 How digital are you?

The following short activity is designed to provide you with a light-hearted look at how digital you are in everyday life.

In Week 2 you will have the opportunity to explore in greater depth those areas where you'd like to become more skilled and confident.

Activity 2 What type of digital user are you?

10 minutes

There are no right or wrong answers in this quiz, rather, the aim is to get a feel for the extent to which using technology and the internet are a part of your life and what kinds of things you tend to do at the moment. Keep a note of how many As, Bs etc. you choose.

Question 1: Your flat-pack wardrobe came without any instructions and you are stumped. Do you:

- Go to YouTube and find a video that shows you exactly what to do?
- Google it?
- Ring your friend who is really good at DIY and ask them to come over?
- Stop and make a cup of tea – it can wait till another day?

Question 2: You're planning a holiday to Spain and need to book accommodation and flights. Do you:

- Go online and compare prices using comparison websites?
- Email your friends and family who've been there and ask them for recommendations?
- Get hold of a brochure and ring up the hotel and airline you want to use?
- Ask the local travel agent to arrange it all for you?

Question 3: You want to find out the latest football results. Do you:

- Look it up on your smartphone or **tablet**?
- Switch on the television and go to the sports channel?
- Ask your friend, who always keeps up with the latest?
- Buy a newspaper and turn to the sports pages.

Question 4: You've just had some great news. What is the first thing you do?

- Post it on **Facebook** with a photo (**selfie**) of you celebrating?
- Email everyone in your list of contacts?
- Ring your best friend?
- Go out for dinner?

Question 5: You have cousins in America who you are planning to visit this year. You want to discuss arrangements for your stay. Do you:

- Set up a time to have a video call (e.g. Skype) with them?

- b. Email back and forth?
- c. Do it all by phone, on your landline?
- d. Write a letter?

Question 6: You have taken lots of holiday photographs on your phone or digital camera and want to share them with friends and family. Do you:

- a. Store them online on a site where you can share with others virtually?
- b. Save them in a folder on your computer and email them in batches?
- c. Store them in a folder on your computer and show visitors when they come to your house?
- d. Print off the ones you like the best and send them by post to one or two people who you think would be interested?

Question 7: You are watching television and there's an ad break. Do you:

- a. Update your Facebook status on your smartphone?
- b. Text a friend or family member?
- c. Talk to the other people in the room?
- d. Go and make a drink?

Question 8: You've been asked to plan the staff Christmas party at work and you're trying to find the best date for everyone. Do you:

- a. Set up an online poll with some options and get everybody to vote?
- b. Send an email to everybody in the office, responding to each person as they reply?
- c. Go round and ask everybody in person and write down the answers?
- d. Just set a date and tell people when it is – democracy is overrated?

Question 9: Your boiler has broken down and you need to get hold of an engineer quickly. Do you:

- a. Consult the app on your smartphone or tablet for finding a tradesman?
- b. Do an internet search?
- c. Visit your neighbour and ask who they would recommend?
- d. Look through the telephone directory yellow pages?

Question 10: You are applying for a job and the application process is all online. You are not sure how to go about it. Do you:

- a. Look up the Help facility on the relevant website to read more detailed guidance?
- b. Have a go at working it out by trial and error?
- c. Ask a friend or family member who knows what to do?
- d. Decide not to apply – it doesn't seem worth the trouble?

Discussion

Mostly As: 'Appy' and adventurous

You have embraced technology and social media and use it confidently in all sorts of everyday situations. You may sometimes need to be reminded that face-to-face communication is important too.

Mostly Bs: Online and aware

You are aware of the sorts of information you can get from the internet and you are comfortable using email. This usually serves you well and you haven't found it necessary to use social media much (or at all) so far. It would be worth getting to know other ways to use online tools as it could save you time in some situations.

Mostly Cs: Face-to-face and friendly

You like to interact with people face-to-face and so far haven't seen the need to use technology in a big way. Face-to-face is best sometimes, but there may be occasions when talking to someone in person is not an option. It is worth thinking about those tasks and situations that come up regularly where going online could make life easier.

Mostly Ds: Paper-based and pragmatic

You prefer to just get on with life and not waste time going online when it would be easier to find another way round the problem. Sometimes, the pragmatic solution makes most sense. In other cases, mastering the basics of technology and online communication could open some new doors for you.

The technology you use is likely to depend on your individual needs and preferences as well as any requirements of your job, if you are currently employed. It may also be influenced by your family and friends. It could include any or all of the following:

- mobile or smartphone
- mp3 player (e.g. iPod)
- tablet (e.g. iPad)
- laptop or desktop computer
- assistive technology
- games console.

The types of activities mentioned in the quiz reflect some everyday uses of technology. During the rest of this week you will look in more detail at some of the skills involved in these activities, as preparation for the rest of the course.

It's likely that you will only do some tasks once in a while – for example, applying for a job. It may therefore take some time to feel confident about what you're doing and, of course, every site will be slightly different. Succeeding in a digital world is about developing your confidence so that you can take on new challenges as they arise. Like learning a language, this kind of fluency will build up with practice.

Now is a good time to make a note in your **Digital plan** of anything you have come across so far that you want to learn more about.

3 Digital skills for everyday life

The fundamental skills for everyday life include:

- Finding, managing and storing digital information and content.
For example, using a **search engine** to find information and bookmarking useful websites and services.
- Communicating, interacting, collaborating, sharing and connecting with others.
For example, using email, instant messaging or social media.
- Buying and selling goods and services, organising your finances and using digital government services.
For example, ordering shopping online, managing a bank account or booking travel.
- Solving problems and finding solutions using digital tools.
For example, teaching yourself simple tasks using tutorials, or using feedback from other internet users to solve common problems.
- Creating basic digital content in order to engage with digital communities and organisations.
For example, creating a social media post, creating a text document such as a CV, creating and sharing a photo album or creating and sharing feedback about products and services.

(Go ON UK, 2015)

Safety is a really important aspect of life online. It can involve managing your digital identity, assessing the accuracy of sources of information, regularly updating anti-virus software on your computer, using the right security settings, avoiding scams and hoaxes, protecting your privacy, and respecting the privacy of others. You will have the opportunity to focus on safety in more detail in Week 4 of this course.

Skills in finding, evaluating and managing information, communicating and collaborating with others, and managing your digital identity will be covered in Weeks 3, 5 and 6 of the course.

The quiz you took earlier may have got you thinking about how familiar you are with everyday digital skills and how often you use them.

For the rest of Week 1, you will have the opportunity to practise your skills in searching the internet, using social media and solving an everyday problem using online information.

If you have questions about how to get online in the first place, set up an email account, pay for things online or fill in online forms, visit [BBC WebWise Digital skills](#).

3.1 Everyday transactions

Many transactions can now be done online, for example, ordering your shopping or booking your travel. Being able to manage digital information will help you to find what you need quickly, and locate it again easily. This is a big help when carrying out such everyday tasks.

In the following activity you will practise finding information, comparing prices and keeping track of what you have found out. This is laying the foundation for future weeks of the course. The purpose of the activity is to find out how confident you are in doing this kind of online task, rather than to learn how to use a particular website in detail.

Activity 3 Finding a hotel in Majorca

10 minutes

You are planning a holiday in the sun and want to find a reasonably priced hotel in Majorca. For the purposes of this activity you are going to use TripAdvisor.



Figure 1 Woman relaxing on a beach

TripAdvisor claims to be ‘the world’s largest travel site’. It offers advice and reviews from millions of real people on accommodation and places of interest. These reviews provide a useful way of checking if somewhere really lives up to the image presented by the owners. It enables you to find details of holiday accommodation and compare prices quickly.

- Open up a new tab in your **browser** (usually you can do this at the top of the page, next to this tab).
- Go to a search engine, such as Google, and type ‘TripAdvisor’.
- Select the site from the results, <http://www.tripadvisor.co.uk>
- Have a go at finding details of hotels in Majorca. (If you have difficulty using TripAdvisor you will find some advice on how to search in the Feedback).
- It is possible to register with TripAdvisor and save hotels you like the look of to your personal area within the site. However, for the purposes of this activity, save the page for the hotel to your browser favourites. Set up a new folder and give it a name, e.g. ‘holidays’.

Discussion

How did you get on? Did you find what you were looking for?

It is likely that you found a large number of hotels at a range of prices. There are different ways you can cut down the list, for example, by price, by availability, by distance from Majorca city centre or by ranking.

You may have gone through something like the following process:

- From the front screen of the site select ‘Hotels’ and type ‘Majorca’ into the box.
- Enter in the dates you would like your holiday to begin and end and select ‘Find hotels’.
- From the range of options across the top of the page, sort by ‘Price (low to high)’.
- Scan down the page to compare prices.
- Select one of the hotels (ideally with a rating of 4 or more) and view all the available deals. There is no need to go further than this unless you actually want to book a holiday.

In the next section you will explore use of social media.

3.2 Using social media

Communication is one of the most important digital skills. In everyday life it can include:

- keeping in touch using email, instant messaging, video calls and social media
- posting on forums to connect with communities
- communicating with organisations about their products and services.

'Creating' is about using something digital that you have made, to express yourself or communicate with others. It could be words (for example, a text document) or media (for example, images and videos).



Figure 2 Visual definition of social networking

Social media is an important tool for communicating and creating (and sharing what you have created), and will be the focus of the next activity. If you are new to the world of **social networking**, you might wonder why you should get involved with it. The following activity gives you a chance to explore some of the benefits.

Activity 4 Social networking: what's in it for me?

15 minutes

Listen to Michael and Katie describe the social networks they use, and how these help them in different areas of their lives.

As you listen, note down whether any of the sites used by Michael and Katie would be useful to you, and what you might use them for.

Audio content is not available in this format.

When you are ready, select 'Reveal feedback'.

Discussion

Michael and Katie use a range of different networking sites for different purposes. Some of the main benefits of social networking identified by Michael and Katie include:

- keeping in touch with friends and family
- getting back in touch with people you have lost contact with
- promoting events
- sharing information, such as music or professional publications
- establishing and maintaining contacts with other people in your line of work
- keeping up to date at work or with hobbies and interests.

You might have thought of additional benefits relevant to your own life.

You may have identified a number of ways in which social networks could be useful to you. The audio mentioned using Facebook. The Open University has many Facebook pages, some set up by official departments of the University, and some informally, by students. These are both a source of interesting news and a way of giving and receiving support. For students, Facebook communities can be a valuable way of connecting with fellow learners.

An example of a well-used official page is the [Open University Library Facebook page](#). Later this week you will have the opportunity to use it. For now, you may like to visit it and have a quick look at what's on it.

3.3 Problem-solving

The final skill to consider is problem-solving. Online resources and networks can be very useful when it comes to solving everyday conundrums. This includes:

- teaching yourself simple tasks using video tutorials
- using feedback from other internet users to solve common problems
- accessing support services.

The 'What type of digital user are you?' activity you did near the beginning of this week included some of the typical scenarios you might encounter in everyday life, such as putting together flat-pack furniture or doing an online job application. Often, the most useful solution is probably for someone to show you.

Later in this course, you'll explore some of the online tools and applications (apps) that can help you to solve particular problems quickly. You'll also learn how to assess the reliability of information you find online. For now though, you will focus on the potential of videos to help with all kinds of practical tasks, whether that's putting up a shelf or learning to play the ukulele. The following activity gives you the opportunity to solve an everyday household problem using resources available on the internet.

Activity 5 How to make profiteroles

10 minutes

John has been asked by a friend to provide the food for a special birthday party. His friend's favourite dessert is profiteroles, but John has never made them before. He needs to find out quickly as the party is tomorrow.

Your task is to find a video that takes him through the process.



Figure 3 Profiteroles

Discussion

It is possible to find a variety of videos on how to make profiteroles on sites like YouTube. You should have been able to identify one or two suitable ones fairly quickly. The number of times a video has been viewed may be an indication of quality, or just of entertainment value.

In future weeks of this course, you will find out more about how to assess the reliability and trustworthiness of resources you find online. For John's purposes though, high production values are not required.

Problem-solving is not just relevant to these kinds of practical questions. It is also highly important in the workplace. In fact, in John's case, cooking is his profession, so the link is clear. The other skills you have looked at, such as finding and managing information, and communicating and creating, are also applicable at work. All of these digital skills can help you when studying. In Week 2, you will explore in more depth some of the ways in which your digital skills are useful in different areas of life.

4 Reflection

At the end of each week, you will have the opportunity to reflect on what you've learned, and to have a go at a short quiz based on the learning from that week's study.

Before you do this week's reflection and quiz, listen to the audio recording of Manuela, Michael and John (who you were introduced to earlier) talking about what they have learned so far, what they've put in their **Digital plan** and where they want to go next with their digital skills study.

Audio content is not available in this format.

[Manuela's reflection](#)

Audio content is not available in this format.

[Michael's reflection](#)

Audio content is not available in this format.

[John's reflection](#)

Activity 6 Reflecting

Take a moment to think about:

- your own starting point at the beginning of the week
- the most interesting or useful thing you have learned during the week
- one thing you want to learn more about.

Record these in your **Digital plan**.

If you would like to, go to the [Open University Library Facebook page](#) and post a comment there to share something about your experience of this course so far. To help others, remember to introduce yourself and let them know that you are a learner on *Succeeding in a digital world*.

5 This week's quiz

Check what you've learned this week by taking the end-of-week practice quiz. Remember that while optional, working through the quiz can help you see how you're getting on with the course. Your answers are not visible to the other learners, they're just for your own information.

[Week 1 practice quiz](#)

Click on 'Week 1 practice quiz' above to access the quiz. If you open the quiz in a new window or tab, you can come back here more easily when you've finished. It also enables you to refer to the course as you work through the quiz, if you want to.

To open in a new window, right click on the link above and select 'Open in new window'.

You'll get feedback on your answers as you go through the quiz. When you finish the quiz and press 'submit', the system will record that you have finished your attempt, and your score. As this is a practice quiz, this is just for your learning, so you can identify areas you might like to revisit. The score won't be counted towards your badge.

6 Summary

Well done! You have completed the first week of *Succeeding in a digital world*.

This week you have thought about your use of technology and the kinds of things you tend to do at the moment. You have also been introduced to Manuela, Michael and John, your companions for this course, and you have shared their experience.

You have:

- reviewed some basic digital skills for everyday life
- practised using digital skills for finding information, communicating, creating and problem-solving
- started your **Digital plan**.

You have learned:

- the benefits of being able to use the internet
- what the basic digital skills for everyday life are
- how social networking can be useful to you.

Next week you will explore in more depth the skills you need to be successful in a digital world, including university study. You will be using a framework developed by The Open University to assess your level of confidence in five key skills areas. Following this, you will add to your **Digital plan**.

You can now go to [Week 2](#).

Week 2: Getting up and running

Introduction

The importance of digital skills is now recognised at a national level by the House of Lords who held a Select Committee on digital skills in 2015. They stated:

We must aspire for the vast majority of the population to achieve the level of digital literacy needed to fully participate in society.

(House of Lords Select Committee on Digital Skills, 2015)

How can you build the skills needed to succeed in a digital world?

During Week 1 you had an opportunity to think about how you use the internet and social media. You made a note of a few of the online tools and apps you use.

This week you will be finding out about the skills you need to be effective in a digital world. Over the course of the week, you will find out how to improve what you do online and the way you do it, from finding information to communicating and collaborating with other people.

You will be given an opportunity to assess how confident you are in a range of skills. You will also be introduced to resources designed to help you develop your skills, which you can add to your **Digital plan**.

In this video Katharine and Wendy, from Open University Library Services, talk about ways in which people interact with their digital environments.

Video content is not available in this format.

[Video 1: Introduction to Week 2](#)



By the end of this week, you will be able to:

- describe what digital literacy means
- understand how digital literacy can support distance and online study, for example, at The Open University
- identify which skills you need to develop to be an effective online learner.

1 Information in a digital age



Figure 1 Our digital world

You may have heard people say that we're living in an '**information age**'. The 'information age' started around the 1970s and shows no signs of stopping. Indeed, the pace of change is accelerating. The *Collins English Dictionary* defines the 'information age' as:

a time when large amounts of information are widely available to many people, largely through computer technology.

(Collins, 2016)

Computer technology has advanced quickly in recent years. It has changed our lives and continues to do so. This 'revolution' in computing has given us access to information at the touch of a button. We are no longer limited to desktop computers and can access information from anywhere, and at any time, using mobile devices like smartphones or

tablets. Technology has become a significant part of everyday life and has brought information instantly to our fingertips.

Recent advances include voice recognition software on mobile devices that can actually 'talk' to us. We can ask them to find the information we need, and they can tell us what we need to know. Examples are 'Siri' on Apple devices and 'Cortana' on Windows devices. Our phones use location tracking to identify where we are, and provide us with information that they think is relevant. If we're looking for a bank, a smartphone can determine where we are and locate the nearest one.

We can document what we do, by taking photographs or videos, which we can instantly share with family and friends. We can also record and share our thoughts by pressing a button on our phones, computers, tablets and now using 'smart' watches.

If we want to find out how to do something, whether it's how to bake a cake or build a house, it's likely that there will be an online video showing us exactly how to do it.

We are now surrounded by information whether we're at home, at work, or studying.

Activity 1 Your digital environment

15 minutes

You will get a better sense of your own digital environment by reflecting on how you use the internet and social media. Later on, this will help you to identify which skills development activities would benefit you most. The list below gives some examples of activities you might have engaged in during the last month. Pick two activities and provide some details on what you were doing, why you were doing it, how it helped and any issues that came up. Make your notes in the table provided in your **Digital plan**. You can also write about an online activity that doesn't appear on the list.

- Searching for information on the internet (news, holidays, restaurants shopping etc.).
- Passing information on to another person or group (hobbies, clubs, social media).
- Finding out about a current affairs issue.
- Using social media to share news, comments, photographs, and video and audio clips.
- Writing about an interest online.
- Sharing information about yourself on social media.

Discussion

You may have noted down some of the following. If any of them trigger any recollections, add them to your list.

Table 1

What I did	Why I did it	How it helped	Issues raised
Searching for information on the internet (news, holidays, restaurants shopping etc.).	I was looking for some information on inflammatory arthritis because my mother has been diagnosed and I wanted to understand it, and find out how I can help her.	I searched on Google, and got a large number of results.	There were so many results that I didn't know where to start. Some sites were really complex, and the others just seemed too trivial. Then I found that not

Passing information on to another person (hobbies, clubs, social media).	I'm on the town Christmas lights committee. I'm responsible for arranging meetings and telling people about how they can donate or help out. I send out messages on Facebook from our Facebook group.	I'm familiar with Facebook, so I was really pleased that I was able to set up a group.	all the information was the same across the board. I'm never sure how many people are reading the posts. It goes in their news feed, but I'm not sure if they keep track of what's in there. Sometimes we get posts on our wall that I don't think are appropriate. I have to delete them, so no one will get offended.
Finding out about a current affairs issue.	I wanted to know about each political party before I voted in an election. I looked on news sites and also the different political party websites and social media.	I found the news sites very helpful.	I didn't want to follow political groups on Facebook, in case it goes on some kind of record. The campaign seemed to have a lot of mudslinging and I was never sure what the truth was.
Using social media to pass on information.	If I see an interesting post on Facebook, I share it with my friends.	Friends find the information I share interesting and useful. I learn a great deal from information shared by others.	One time I passed on a story without really thinking and it offended quite a few of my friends.
Writing about an interest online.	I've started to share fashion tips on Twitter. I have a few people who follow my tweets, and they seem to like it.	The 'conversations' are really interesting.	I wish I could get more people to read my Twitter feeds and comment.
Sharing information about yourself on social media.	I put some pictures up of a party we had last summer.	There were a lot of comments about what a great night we had.	There was a picture of me dancing on a table. I was a bit worried that my boss might see it.

We hope that you have been able to identify areas you need more advice on. Over this week, we will direct you to resources that can help you to develop the skills you need to be successful in a digital world.

2 Digital skills and digital literacy

When talking about digital skills you might come across different definitions, which range from describing the basic use of a computer or computer software to more advanced technical and programming skills. One term you may hear relatively frequently is 'digital capability'. Another is 'digital literacy'.

The term 'digital literacy' is used as an overarching term for referring to 'digital skills' or 'digital capabilities'. A useful definition of digital literacy comes from Jisc, a national body that champions the use of digital technologies for UK education and research: 'the capabilities which fit someone for living, learning and working in a digital society' (Jisc, 2015).

'Digital literacy' includes the skills everyone needs to be effective online, whether it's searching efficiently, evaluating online information, communicating and sharing, or finding the right digital or online tools to suit particular needs.

These are skills that transfer across all areas of our lives. If you think back to the list you made in Activity 1, many of the things you listed are likely to have been relevant to your everyday or home life. However, the same activities and skills can help you to be more effective at work. In fact, many of the skills you've listed may appear in job descriptions. The ability to work online with members of staff in remote locations, for example, could be an essential skill for a particular job. Digital (literacy) skills are very important if you're studying, and can make a difference to how successful you are at researching, collaborating with other students or writing assignments.

Digital literacy is therefore also about using your digital skills in different contexts and having the confidence to decide what is right for you. One of the aims of this course is to help you develop confidence and skills to be able to ask the right questions of who, and what, you come across online. In other words, to think critically.

You've provided some details about what you do online. In the audio recordings below, Manuela, John and Michael talk about the kinds of skills they think they need to succeed in a digital environment. They'll also talk about how confident they feel.

Audio content is not available in this format.

[Manuela talks about skill to succeed in a digital environment](#)

Audio content is not available in this format.

[Michael talks about skill to succeed in a digital environment](#)

Audio content is not available in this format.

[John talks about skill to succeed in a digital environment](#)

Activity 2 Identifying skills

15 minutes

Reflecting on the skills you use in a digital environment will help you to gauge how confident you are about using them, and identify which ones you would like to improve. Choose one of the environments listed below and think about what skills you might

need to do things effectively online. Use the table in your **Digital plan** to note down your thoughts.

- At home – for example, knowing how to find things on the internet quickly.
- At work – for example, being able to find information for reports quickly to meet deadlines.
- If you're studying – for example, being able to conduct research online.

Discussion

You will probably have made a list of skills that are relevant to your own experience. Table 2 provides a few suggestions.

Table 2

At home, I might need to know ...	At work, I might need to know ...	When I'm studying, I might need to know ...
... where to look for information.	... where to find statistics and research that I can use to get my point across.	... where to find journal articles.
...how to communicate online to get my point across without upsetting anyone.	... how to communicate with colleagues, clients and customers online, including using social media. When writing online, I would need to know who my audience is and be able to adapt what I write for that audience.	... how to write online, especially blogs.
... what and who to trust online.	... where to find reliable up-to-date information, or know the best people to go to for this information.	... how to find trustworthy sources of information.
... how to find reliable information.	... where I can find resources – multimedia or industry information. This includes databases that would be useful in my area of expertise.	... where to find resources for my subject.
... where to go for specific information.	... how to use social media to keep up to date with information on my profession/ industry. ... how to make the best use of video conferencing.	... how to find experts in specific fields.
... how to stay safe online.	... how to use social media to keep up to date with information on my profession/ industry, while maintaining my own privacy.	... how to use online platforms to collaborate with other students online, while maintaining my own privacy.
... how to develop and protect my digital identity.	... how to project a good impression online for clients, colleagues and employers.	... how to keep up to date with my subject.
... how to use social media to connect with friends and family.	... how to find tools and apps that would be useful for my job.	... how to keep up to date and communicate with others in my subject area using social media.

... where to go if I want to learn how to do something.

... how to find places to learn and develop the skills I have – including how to use software packages or online tools.

... where to go to fill the gaps in my knowledge in a subject.

... where I can find free resources – images, audio and video – that I can use without breaking the law.

... where I can find free resources that I can use to create more interesting marketing materials and reports.

... where I can find free resources – images, audio and video – that I can use legally for my studies, particularly within assignments and reports.

You've now thought about the different activities that you engage in when you're online. You may also have identified a few of the issues you have come across while doing this. And finally, you've thought about the skills you might need to make you more effective when you're online.

In the next section, you will get a chance to reflect on how confident you are about different aspects of online activity, and be directed to resources that will help you to develop your skills.

3 A framework for digital skills

A helpful way to understand and develop the digital literacy skills you need to be effective online is to think of them in different categories.

The Open University has created a Digital skills framework, which divides the key skills into five categories:

- understand and engage
- find
- manage and communicate
- evaluate
- collaborate and share.



Figure 2 The Open University digital skills framework

Through this section, you will be looking at each of these areas in turn. You'll be completing some activities to help you to assess how confident you are with skills related to each area. The feedback will suggest resources you might want to look at in the future to develop your skills and boost your confidence. You'll be able to add these to your personal **Digital plan**. Even if you feel that you're really confident at something, remember that it is always worth referring to guidance for additional hints and tips.

If you'd like to explore a different framework, Jisc provides one for digital capabilities. It divides them into six categories: ICT proficiency; digital creation, problem solving and innovation; digital communication, collaboration and participation; digital learning and development; information, data and media literacies; digital identity and wellbeing (Jisc, 2018).



Figure 3 Jisc digital capabilities framework

3.1 Understand and engage



Figure 4 Words associated with understanding and engaging online

In order to understand and engage with your digital environment, you need to know what digital information is and what you can do with the information you find. You also need to be able to find and select the most appropriate online tools, websites and software for your needs. Figure 3 illustrates the words you might use to describe activities in this skills area.

Engaging with a digital environment can also mean being able find people with similar interests to you. If you can do this, you'll be able to communicate with a wide network of people, and avoid anyone who might be malicious.

A very important aspect of understanding and engaging is being aware of how you come across online. You will find out more about this in Week 3.

Activity 3 Understanding and engaging in an online environment

15 minutes

This activity provides you with some practical examples of what understanding and engaging in an online environment involves.

In each of the areas covered, read the description and use the text box to write a sentence or two on how confident you feel in that area.

Then read the feedback, which lists resources you can use to develop skills in that area. Copy any useful links into your **Digital plan**, and make a note of how they might help you. This will be a good reminder when you return to your plan at a later date.

Connecting with others online

How confident are you in your ability to connect with people online, for example on Facebook or other social media? Do you know where to find people with similar interests to your own?

How well do you judge the people you meet online? Can you tell if they are genuine and trustworthy, or if their motives should be questioned? For example do they have commercial interests or malicious intent?

Provide your answer...

Discussion

If you know where to look online for people with similar interests to you, you'll be able to communicate with a wide network of people.

Try to pick up some tips that will help you to avoid anyone who might be malicious.

Resources to help you develop your skills

[Being digital: Deciding what to trust online](#)

[Being digital: Deciding who to trust online](#)

[Being digital: Scams and hoaxes](#)

[Being digital: Communicating online](#)

Your digital identity

How confident are you when it comes to understanding what your digital identity is, and what it says about you? Can you track your digital footprint?

Think about how aware you are of the image you are projecting online and how it affects your online reputation.

Also consider how much you know about what happens to information you put online.

Provide your answer...

Discussion

The term 'digital footprint' refers to any information about you that is available online, for example, photos, comments or personal details. Information that appears online about you could be something you've posted yourself or something someone else has posted about you.

Whenever you write or post anything online, whether it's on Facebook, Twitter or a blog, you need to be aware of who has access to it. You can use privacy settings to control who sees what, and to ensure that you keep your online reputation intact.

Resources to help you develop your skills

[Being digital: My digital identity](#)

[Being digital: Developing a good digital footprint](#)

[Jobseekers' social media 101 \(short video\)](#)

Sources

How confident are you at being able to find reliable information, written by experts, online? Think about whether you know how to judge if information you find online comes from a reliable source.

Do you know how to find out who owns the information?

Would you know where you stand legally if you reuse information that has been provided by someone else?

Do you know what Creative Commons is?

Provide your answer...

Discussion

There are many instances when you might want to contact an expert or find reliable professional information – for work, research, study, or to find a tradesman to do some work at your home.

Developing the ways you search will help you to find the right person quickly, and establish their contact details.

When you put anything online that you've created yourself, your rights are automatically protected. You will find out more about this in Week 4.

There are many reasons for knowing how to find out who owns information. The main reason is to ensure that you don't break the law if you use content or material that have been created by someone else.

We'll be looking at working within the law more closely in Week 4.

Resources to help you develop your skills

[Being digital: Evaluation using PROMPT](#)

[Being digital: Deciding what to trust online](#)

[Being digital: Deciding who to trust online](#)

Media

How confident do you feel about using information in different forms of media? For example, do you know when a video or podcast would be a more appropriate source of information for your needs?

Also think about how confident you are in finding and choosing the right online tools for your requirements. A tool is something that enables you to perform a task or activity. In this case, it could be a search engine, some software or a website. It could be software that helps you to create audio or video, or manipulate photographs.

Provide your answer...

Discussion

It's fairly easy to find a variety of tools that will help you to find, use or create information online. With such a wide range on offer, it's important to know how to assess which one will best meet your needs.

The following resources will help you to identify tools that can assist you in this area.

Resources to help you develop your skills

[Being digital: Selecting the right online tools](#)

[Being digital: The information universe](#)

[OU Help Centre: Making audio recordings](#)

3.2 Find



Figure 5 Words associated with finding information and people online

Finding information is about planning how you search for the information you're trying to find, and knowing where and how to look for it. It's about knowing whether you should use an internet search engine, search specific catalogues or databases, or ask a person. You need to be aware of what sources of information will be most appropriate to your needs. If you can target appropriate sources, your search results will be much more focused, and you'll find what you're looking for much quicker. Figure 4 illustrates the words you might use to describe activities in this skills area.

Your success at finding the information you need can also depend on the words and phrases you use in your search. They tell a search engine exactly what it should be looking for and what to exclude.

Activity 4 Finding information and people online

15 minutes

This activity provides you with some practical examples of what finding online information involves.

In each of the areas covered, read the description and use the text box to write a sentence or two on how confident you feel in that area.

Then read the feedback, which lists resources you can use to develop skills in that area. Copy any useful links into your **Digital plan**, and make a note of how they might help you. This will be a good reminder when you return to your plan at a later date.

Knowing what's online

How confident are you about assessing what you need and knowing where to find it online. Do you know where to find different types of information (news, opinions, experience etc.)?

Provide your answer...

Discussion

If you can assess the type of information you need, you will be able to target your search to sites that provide specialist information. This will result in more focused search results.

Resources to help you develop your skills

[Being digital: The information universe](#)

Searching online

How confident are you at searching online? Can you use keywords and advanced search options to focus your search, or filter a large number of results? Do you know when to stop searching and consider alternative search strategies?

Provide your answer...

Discussion

Most of us choose a couple of obvious terms to put into a search engine and hope that we get relevant results. Your search will be more focused if you know exactly what you're looking for and can choose appropriate keywords that reflect this.

You can refine your search, and get fewer, but more relevant results, by using the advanced search option of your preferred search engine.

Filtering search results quickly is about developing your own judgement and critical skills. Search engines also provide tools that enable you to filter your search results by refining the search criteria you've used. This can save a great deal of time, and avoid restarting your search from scratch.

Knowing when to stop and think about using alternative search strategies to find what you are looking for will save you time, and help you to get to the information you need much quicker.

Resources to help you develop your skills

- [Being digital: Choosing good keywords](#)
- [Being digital: Target your Google search](#)
- [Being digital: Search slips and tips](#)
- [Being digital: Filtering information quickly](#)
- [BBC WebWise: What is a search engine? \(short video\)](#)
- [Digital Unite: how to use Google](#)

Scanning and skimming

How confident are you at scanning and skimming a web page to get to the relevant information quickly?

Provide your answer...

Discussion

You can learn how to scan a series of pages to find the ones that are most relevant to what you are looking for. You can also learn how to skim the content on a page to find the sections that contain the information you need.

Resources to help you develop your skills

- [Being digital: Scanning and skimming a web page](#)

Keeping up to date

How confident are you about keeping up to date with news in subjects that interest you for work, study or personal interest?

Do you understand how to use social media to do this?

Provide your answer...

Discussion

Social media, like Twitter and Facebook, can be valuable sources of information for work and study. They can be used to share up-to-date information on specific areas of interest.

Resources to help you develop your skills

- [Being digital: Keeping up-to-date using online networking](#)
- [Being digital: Making the most of Twitter](#)
- [Being digital: Keeping up-to-date using RSS](#)
- [Being digital pathway: Keeping up to date](#)
- [Common Craft: RSS](#)
- [BBC WebWise: About social networking and blogs \(short video\)](#)
- [BBC News: What are newsfeeds?](#)

3.3 Evaluate



Figure 6 Words associated with evaluating online information

With such a wealth of information available online, it can sometimes be difficult to know who and what to trust. Knowing how to evaluate sources and people will help you to identify good quality information and sources. It will also help you find the most appropriate tools for your needs. Figure 5 illustrates the words you might use to describe activities in this skills area.

We connect with a variety of people and groups online. Trust is an important issue. Being able to assess how trustworthy people are is important, especially if their views have the potential to impact on your own. Sharing opinions, yours or other people's, on social media can affect the way you are perceived by others, so you need to be confident that what you are sharing is reliable.

Activity 5 Knowing who and what to trust online

15 minutes

This activity provides you with some practical examples of what evaluating online information involves.

In each of the areas covered, read the description and use the text box to write a sentence or two on how confident you feel in that area.

Then read the feedback, which lists resources you can use to develop skills in that area. Copy any useful links into your **Digital plan**, and make a note of how they might help you. This will be a good reminder when you return to your plan at a later date.

Evaluating online information

How confident are you at assessing whether an online resource (e.g. web page, blog, wiki, video, podcast, academic journal article) or person is credible and trustworthy?

Provide your answer...

Discussion

With so much information online, you need to be able to assess whether what you've found comes from a trustworthy source. You will sometimes find information online that is misleading or wrong, even on websites that 'look' very professional. It is also important to be able to separate opinion from fact.

Resources to help you develop your skills

- [Being digital: Deciding what to trust online](#)
- [Being digital: Deciding who to trust online](#)
- [Being digital: Evaluating using PROMPT](#)
- [Being digital: Scams and hoaxes](#)
- [Being digital: Using **Wikipedia**](#)
- [Being digital: Selecting the right online tools](#)
- [Being digital: Social networking: is it for me?](#)
- [BBC WebWise: 5 tips for avoiding email scams \(Video\)](#)

3.4 Manage and communicate



Figure 7 Words associated with managing and communicating online

Once you've found useful information, the way you manage it will make a big difference to whether you can find it again easily. Sites like Diigo, Delicious and Pinterest allow you to save links to useful resources in one place. You are able to tag them with words and phrases that you can use to search for resources on particular topics in the future. You can also group resources and share your lists with others. Figure 6 illustrates the words you might use to describe activities in this skills area.

If you are studying, it's especially important to keep a record of useful sites and online articles. If you mention them in an assignment, you will be expected to provide details of the source, and a reference list. There are tools that allow you to keep details of your resources, so that you can reference them later. Two examples are Zotero and Mendeley. Learning how to reference will help you to avoid making it seem as though you are passing off someone else's work as your own.

Being able to communicate in a digital environment is an extremely important skill to have. Whether you are blogging, posting on Facebook or Twitter, or even just commenting on something someone else has written, you need to think carefully about what you write. Written material you have posted online is open to interpretation and can easily offend. What you write will reflect on your digital identity and reputation, and this could have an impact on your everyday life, work, and professional credibility. So it's important to get this right.

Activity 6 Managing and communicating online

15 minutes

This activity provides you with some practical examples of what managing and communicating online involves.

In each of the areas covered, read the description and use the text box to write a sentence or two on how confident you feel in that area.

Then read the feedback, which lists resources you can use to develop skills in that area. Copy any useful links into your **Digital plan**, and make a note of how they might help you. This will be a good reminder when you return to your plan at a later date.

Organising and sharing information

Once you've found information that might be useful to you, how confident are you that you can keep an accurate record of it, so that you can use it again or share it with others at a later date? Do you understand how social bookmarking or specialist software can help you to do this?

Provide your answer...

Discussion

When you find information online it is useful to keep a record of the details, as you might need to provide evidence of where it came from. You may also find that piece of information useful in the future.

There are a number of online tools and software packages that make it easier to keep these records. You may have heard of Delicious or Diigo, two of the more popular tools. These, and sites like them, allow you to save the web addresses and attach keywords to them, so that you can find them easily at a later date. The sites are accessible from any computer, phone or tablet, and you are able to share the information with anyone with similar interests.

Resources to help you develop your skills

[Being digital: Selecting a reference management tool](#)

Staying within the law

How confident do you feel about staying within the law when you're online, and avoiding **plagiarism**? Are you aware of the rights that exist to protect creative content and how that affects what you share with others? Do you know how to acknowledge someone else's work and provide references relating to it?

Provide your answer...

Discussion

The law protects online content and so you are required to gain permission if you want to use someone else's work, for example, someone else's photograph for a poster you're making. You may be required to acknowledge their work. If you fail to do this, you are at risk of plagiarising. This means using someone else's work and passing it off as your own.

If you are sharing files online, you must take care to respect the copyright associated with that file. It's fine if you are sharing files containing work that you have created yourself. There are rights in place to protect your own work. And those same rights come into force if you share or distribute material that belongs to someone else.

Activity 7 Collaborating and sharing in digital environments

15 minutes

This activity provides you with some practical examples of what collaborating and sharing online involves.

In each of the areas covered, read the description and use the text box to write a sentence or two on how confident you feel in that area.

Then read the feedback, which lists resources you can use to develop skills in that area. Copy any useful links into your **Digital plan**, and make a note of how they might help you. This will be a good reminder when you return to your plan at a later date.

Communicating with others online

How confident do you feel about communicating with other people online? This may be on social networking sites or forums. Would you be confident commenting on other people's opinions? Do you understand the importance of observing online etiquette (netiquette)?

How do you feel about your ability to write for different audiences and online spaces, e.g. a web page or blog?

Provide your answer...

Discussion

Communicating online requires us to have a range of interpersonal skills that are specific to digital environments. It can be difficult to have conversations online with people you don't know, who you can't see and who can't see you. You can learn how to improve the way you communicate online, whether in writing or using audio and video meeting software. This will help to increase your confidence in a digital environment.

Social conventions exist which are specific to online communication. These suggested guidelines exist to ensure that online communication is not misinterpreted or taken out of context. They also ensure that a level of respect and courtesy is observed when communicating in online communities.

When you write anything, it's useful to identify who your audience is. You can then adapt your style of writing to be most effective and accessible for that audience. One example is knowing whether to write in a formal or informal style. Your choice of style will also be affected by the medium you choose to communicate in (blog, online article, social networking, etc.)

Resources to help you develop your skills

[Being digital pathway: Communicating online](#)

[BBC WebWise: Social networking and blogs \(Video\)](#)

Collaborating online

How confident are you at working with others online to create a shared document or presentation? Is this something you have tried? Are you confident at using social media?

Provide your answer...

Discussion

Google Docs and Dropbox are examples of online tools that enable groups of people to work together on shared documents and presentations. This can be particularly useful if a group of people need to work on the same project, and avoids duplication of work or content. It also ensures that all members of the group have the opportunity to be involved.

Resources to help you develop your skills

[Being digital pathway: Communicating online](#)

[Being digital: Keeping up to date using online networking](#)

[BBC WebWise: Social networking and blogs \(Video\)](#)

Using a variety of media to communicate and collaborate online

How confident are you at using media-capture devices to communicate or collaborate online? This includes photography or recording and editing audio and video material. How confident would you be at creating and sharing **podcasts**?

Provide your answer...

Discussion

When you want to upload content to an online space it's a good idea to consider delivering it using different media, for example photographs, audio and video. This enables your content to be downloaded to tablets and mobile devices and may be more accessible to people who have time constraints. They can look, listen and watch on the move.

Resources to help you develop your skills

[OU Help Centre: Making audio recordings](#)

4 Digital skills and university study



Figure 9 Being digital

Digital skills are fundamental when it comes to studying at university, and universities strive to help their students to develop these skills. Being digitally competent and confident will save you time and help you to study in a more effective way.

Many academic institutions, like The Open University, offer a range of resources to help students to develop their digital literacy skills – like this course. You've also been introduced to some of the activities from the Being digital website, which are examples of the types of resources the Open University library makes available to its students. Today's online university libraries provide access to a wide range of resources – electronic journals and publications that you can download, advice on developing study skills, support material and online video and audio, to name just a few. If you are studying, it's worth getting to know what your online library offers.

The digital skills you learn while you're studying are the kind of skills that employers are expecting you to have when you apply for jobs. These skills will also make a difference to your everyday life, whether you're looking for a holiday or connecting with people around the world.

Finally, the confidence you gain through developing your digital skills will also prepare you for future challenges in an ever-changing technological world.

5 Reflection

This week has given you an opportunity to improve your understanding of the digital environment and the skills you need to be effective within this environment. You have assessed your confidence on the five main digital skills areas. You now also have a **Digital plan** that you can use to develop your skills in the future so that they are useful at home, at work and for your studies.

Activity 8 Reflection

20 minutes

Listen to Manuela, John and Michael talk about what they have learned and how this has been beneficial in different areas of their lives. As you listen, make some notes in your **Digital plan** on how the skills might be helpful to you too. Identify three resources from your **Digital plan** to try out over the next month. This will help you to progress on your digital journey by reminding you what you've discovered on this course and what is available to explore in the future.

Audio content is not available in this format.

[Manuela's reflection](#)

Audio content is not available in this format.

[Michael's reflection](#)

Audio content is not available in this format.

[John's reflection](#)

6 This week's quiz

Check what you've learned this week by taking the end-of-week practice quiz. Remember that while optional, working through the quiz can help you see how you're getting on with the course. Your answers are not visible to the other learners, they're just for your own information.

[Week 2 practice quiz](#)

Click on 'Week 2 practice quiz' above to access the quiz. If you open the quiz in a new window or tab, you can come back here more easily when you've finished. It also enables you to refer to the course as you work through the quiz, if you want to.

To open in a new window, right click on the link above and select 'Open in new window'.

You'll get feedback on your answers as you go through the quiz. When you finish the quiz and press 'submit', the system will record that you have finished your attempt, and your score. As this is a practice quiz, this is just for your learning, so you can identify areas you might like to revisit. The score won't be counted towards your badge.

7 Summary

This week you have explored the digital skills you need to be successful in a digital environment. You have:

- considered the role of information in a digital age
- reflected on how you use the internet and social media
- assessed how confident you are with a number of digital skills
- built up your **Digital plan** to include a range of resources that will help you to develop your digital skills in the future
- identified three activities to try out over the next month.

You have learned:

- the definition of digital skills and how it relates to digital literacy
- how the skills you need to be effective online are part of a digital skills framework made up of five skills areas
- the importance that universities and employers place on digital skills.

Next week you will be encouraged to think about your digital identity and footprint. You will learn some techniques to help you to present yourself well online and improve your digital profile.

You can now go to [Week 3](#).

Week 3: Making your mark online

Introduction

Would you recognise the 'online you'? Katharine and Wendy discuss this further in the video.

Video content is not available in this format.

Video 1: Introduction to Week 3



During Week 2 you explored the range of skills that contribute to being effective in a digital world. You started to develop your own plan for the skills you want to work on. This week you'll think about your 'digital identity' and your 'digital footprint'. Digital identity is about the way you present yourself online. Digital footprint refers to the permanent collection of **data** about you that is available online.

During Week 3 you'll look at your own and others' digital footprints and discover what you can do to ensure that your digital footprint is 'healthy'. You will also be introduced to some ways you can create a positive impact online to help you achieve your goals, whether they relate to work, study or other aspects of life. Throughout this week we refer to your 'digital profile'. By this we mean how you appear to others online.

You'll start the week by thinking about your own 'digital journey': that is, where you are now and where you want to get to. As you go through the week you'll be able to shift the focus from your own personal **digital identity** to thinking about when you might interact with others online in general, and becoming a 'digital citizen'.

By the end of this week, you should be able to:

- describe the terms 'digital identity' and 'digital footprint'
- identify some steps to help you present yourself well online and improve your digital profile.

This relates to 'Understand and engage' in the Open University digital skills framework and 'Digital identity and wellbeing' in the Jisc digital capabilities framework that you came across in Week 2.

1 Digital me: starting your digital journey

Digital identity has become a very important part of twenty-first-century life. It's about how you present yourself online to ensure you make the impression you want. Even if you don't feel you want to spend a lot of time online, it's still useful to think about what others can see of you. Your digital identity is not something completely detached from the rest of life. It can be a way of expressing who you are in a meaningful and engaging way, to people and communities you want to connect with.

Watch these short videos for some insight into digital identity, and the important role that technology can play in life (make sure you open the links in a new tab or window).

[What is a digital identity?](#)

[Maria's digital journey](#)

Think about your own feelings about technology and your digital identity. What motivates you to get online and be active there?

You will come back to the inspiration for your digital journey later in the course. For now, start by considering your digital footprint.

1.1 Checking out your digital footprint

You may have heard the phrase 'digital footprint'. This is about the traces you leave online. It includes information about you and your online activity such as:

- profiles on social networking sites such as Facebook or **LinkedIn**
- photographs that you or others have posted online
- anything that has been written about you, for example, on discussion boards or Facebook.

Your digital footprint can be shaped by what others put online about you. This may not always be within your control. However, doing this course will show you how you can ensure that your digital footprint is what you would like it to be. The following activity will help you to find out what your digital footprint currently looks like.

Activity 1 Reviewing your digital footprint

10 minutes

Take a moment to think about the places where you have been or are currently active online. Even if you are not very active online, it is still worth doing the activity to establish your starting point for developing your digital identity.

Put your name into a search engine and see what comes up. Any surprises?

Make a note in the box below of anything you want to change or improve.

Look at the feedback when you are ready.

Provide your answer...

Discussion

When you googled your name you may have found:

- evidence of your activity on Facebook or other social media sites
- older information that you had forgotten existed
- material written about you by other people, or referring to events you have attended
- photos that you weren't aware of
- instances of where you have accessed certain websites, for example, when commenting on what other people have written.

On the other hand, you may have found very little about yourself or, depending on how common your name is, you may have found mentions of other people who are not you. This is a good starting point from which to develop your digital profile. In the rest of this week you will have opportunities to think about what is important to you and how you want your digital footprint to reflect that.

1.2 First steps to a good digital footprint

If you are fairly new to life online, it is natural to feel cautious about what you disclose to others. On the other hand, you may be used to sharing quite freely without giving it much thought. By learning a bit more about how to manage your digital footprint, you will be better equipped to stay in control of the information about you that others can see online.

Being in control of your own information is becoming more and more important when applying for jobs. Many employers look at the digital profile of prospective employees and the recruitment process itself increasingly takes place online. One blog author suggests that 89 per cent of recruiters have hired someone through LinkedIn, and that 73 per cent of 18 to 34-year-olds found their last job through a social network (Medved, 2014).

In real life, you probably behave differently with your friends and family than you do at work. Online it's important to think about the image you are projecting to others and who might be reading what you put there. The following activity will help you to see the sort of information that can show up in someone's digital footprint.

Activity 2 Spy file

30 minutes

A private eye has been investigating the digital footprints of Manuela, Michael and John by searching for their names on the internet to see what she can find out about them. This is not unlike the sort of research an employer might do on a prospective employee.

- Read each of the reports to find out what our detective uncovered.
- Make your own notes about whether you think the information revealed is positive, should have stayed private, or is broadly neutral.
- Select 'Hear the reaction' to find out what each of them thought (transcripts are available).

Manuela

Read the report:

- Manuela is mentioned a few times in her children's Facebook posts and Instagram pictures.
- Her name comes up in a blog post that one of her motor-racing friends wrote following an event they both attended
- She once did a parachute jump for charity and a video of the occasion was made; a search for her name retrieves this.

Hear her reaction:

Audio content is not available in this format.

[Manuela's reaction](#)

Michael

Read the report:

- Michael has a page of 'liked' videos on YouTube. These include funny football 'fails' (e.g. people falling over), his 5-year-old granddaughter performing in her school play, and one about how to service his boiler (Michael wants to change career to become a trainer and his son is a British Gas engineer). This page comes up under a search for his name.
- Photos of him at a recent football match have been shared by his son on Twitter.
- His name comes up on Pinterest in a set of images his wife put together for her brother's 50th birthday.

Hear his reaction:

Audio content is not available in this format.

[Michael's reaction](#)

John

Read the report:

- A lot of his Facebook posts come up, not all of them showing him in a positive light; as well as photos of John and his friends out and about in pubs, clubs and at parties.
- There are some mentions of someone with the same name who lived in America in the last century.
- John has a LinkedIn profile that a careers adviser suggested he set up but he's never added much to it, so it is not up to date.

Hear his reaction:

Audio content is not available in this format.

[John's reaction](#)

All the information about Manuela, Michael and John is freely available online. Think about how this relates to your own experience of googling yourself.

Discussion

You may find the idea of someone checking out your online activities in this way a bit alarming. However, in the same way that other people can 'check you out' online, you can also check someone's digital footprint, for example, if you want to establish the credentials of someone you come across who you do not know in real life. You will return to the subject of how you can know who and what to trust online in later weeks of this course.

In the next section, you will think further about how you can learn online and interact with others while maintaining your privacy.

2 Openness versus privacy

It is possible to find all sorts of material freely available online. Using digital technology and media, you can learn what you want, when you want. The opportunities are immense, both to build up your own knowledge and to share what you've found with others.

Open collections bring together particular types of resources. For example, **YouTube** is a large collection of videos and **Flickr** contains hundreds of thousands of photographs, uploaded by many different people. Anyone can view and add material. It is also possible to interact with other users of these resources.

Free educational resources are known as open educational resources or OERs. These are often provided by reputable institutions, like universities. Examples include OpenLearn, FutureLearn and, indeed, this free course. Individuals are now able to license their own work easily and at no cost. You will be learning more about this in Week 4 of this course. Online communities of learners may form around OERs or subjects of study. These provide valuable opportunities to learn together and benefit from peer support.

There is, however, a downside. One of the things you will be realising as you explore your digital footprint is that your actions online may be visible to others in ways that you did not realise. There is a tension between learning and sharing openly online and maintaining an acceptable degree of privacy. Part of the aim of this course is to equip you with the knowledge and skills to make the choices that are right for you, whilst gaining maximum benefit from online learning and communities. Activity 3 will help you to develop your digital identity and keep control of your digital footprint.

Activity 3 Shaping your digital identity

10 minutes

Manuela, Michael and John have been working on improving their digital profiles. They have tried to make sure that the information they want to be public portrays them in a good light and that they protect the information they would like to restrict to more private circles.

Listen to Manuela, Michael and John and make some notes in your **Digital plan** on:

- ways in which you can create a positive digital footprint
- what actions you could take if you have a negative digital footprint.

Audio content is not available in this format.

[Manuela talks about improving her digital profile](#)

Audio content is not available in this format.

[Michael talks about improving his digital profile](#)

Audio content is not available in this format.

[John talks about improving his digital profile](#)

Look at the feedback when you are ready.

Discussion

You may have come up with some or all of the following:

- build up a profile on LinkedIn
- connect with others in your field of interest through Twitter
- set up a blog
- connect with others through open online study
- check privacy settings on social media sites
- delete old accounts and old social media posts / photographs that don't show you in the best light
- switch off location/GPS settings on your mobile phone
- ask other people to remove (or not post) photos of you that you don't wish to be shared
- do not publish your personal and contact details on social media sites or blogs.

It's possible you have thought of other things too, for example, remember that Google will remove your information if you request it under the '**right to be forgotten**'.

You will have the opportunity to put what you have learned into practice in the next activity. In the meantime, add anything you want to follow up to your **Digital plan**.

2.1 On the road

Now that you've looked at some examples of digital footprints it's time to take action. Before you do the activity, watch the video about improving your digital footprint.

Video content is not available in this format.

[Video 2: Ten top tips to improve your digital footprint](#)



Developing a good digital footprint



Activity 4 Developing your digital footprint

20 minutes

- Using the notes you made for the last activity, remind yourself of the steps Manuela, Michael and John have taken to reduce the negative impact of their digital footprint and to create a positive image, particularly for career purposes.
- Note one or two things you want to achieve when you're online, for example, keeping up with friends and family, developing your business, keeping up to date with your interest or study topic.
- In your **Digital plan**, make a note of three things you can do to develop your footprint.

If you would like to, you could also go to the [OU Library Facebook page](#) and provide a tip on how to improve your digital footprint.

It is worth thinking about who is shaping your digital footprint – is it you or your friends?

In the next section, you will explore what is meant by digital citizenship and how you can contribute positively online.

3 Digital citizens

We live in a global society, where it is increasingly possible to connect across continents and cultures using technology. As well as being confident going online, it's important to show awareness of the needs and feelings of others, and to be sensitive to cultural differences.

Citizenship in general refers to the way in which individuals contribute to society. The term 'digital citizenship' has now entered everyday language and is defined as:

A person who develops the skills and knowledge to effectively use the Internet and other digital technology, especially in order to participate responsibly in social and civic activities.

(Dictionary.com, 2015)

Digital citizenship includes:

- handling yourself appropriately and ethically in a digital environment
- being aware of the impact of your actions on the digital communities you are part of
- contributing to the community in a mature and responsible way.

It is part of the 'understand and engage' aspect of the Digital skills framework you were introduced to in Week 2.

As a good digital citizen, it is important to treat your **digital footprint**, and the digital footprints of others, with respect. Bear in mind that:

- your potential audience may be far bigger than you think
- once information about you or others is out there on the web it generally stays there.

Another essential aspect of digital citizenship is being able to communicate online. The notion of 'netiquette' refers to the guidelines for appropriate behaviour when communicating with others online in writing. The conventions are likely to vary, depending on the context in which your online communication is taking place. You may find it helpful to observe how others are interacting before you launch in. There are also some general principles to bear in mind:

- Ensure that what you say is appropriate to the context, clear, relevant, to the point and courteous.
- Present your opinions sensitively and acknowledge the other person's point of view, even if this is different to your own.
- Think about who you are communicating with and adopt the appropriate tone, for example, a friend, colleague or an official in an organisation.
- Communicate your emotions – this can help other people understand your perspective. This is particularly important for written communication where others cannot see your face or body language to gauge your mood. Many online environments have smileys or **emoticons and emoji** you can use to show how you are feeling, which might be appropriate to use in informal communications.
- Be aware of cultural differences, particularly when communicating with people from other countries. Check whether there is anything in your words, or the way you communicate, that could cause offence.

- Remember not to write in capitals, as this comes across as shouting.

These principles essentially boil down to treating others as you would want them to treat you.

Activity 5 Communicating online

10 minutes

The following activity is designed to test your understanding of the above principles. Look at the list of statements about good communication and select all those that apply to written communication online:

When you are ready, look at the feedback.

- Don't fire off a hasty reply if someone sends you an email that upsets or annoys you
- Smile and make eye contact.
- Keep your communications brief and to the point.
- Don't write in capital letters.
- Acknowledge what other people say in their messages or posts.
- Keep in mind who you are communicating with.
- Acknowledge others' points of view when disagreeing with them.
- Be aware of who may be reading what you write.
- Use appropriate body language.

Discussion

Some of the suggestions in the quiz require participants in a conversation to be able to see each other, which of course isn't possible with many forms of online communication. This is why it's really important to be clear in what you say and to think about how the communication will be received. If you don't know who will read it, imagine how someone relevant to the context would respond, for example, your boss, client or best friend. Edit it if you think that person would not understand your sentiment.

If you wish to learn more this area, you may like to look at the ['Communication Skills' section](#) in another badged course, [Succeed with learning](#).

Digital citizenship is about using technology for positive benefit. Social networks and online communities can be powerful forces for good, for example, **citizen science**, **crowdsourcing** and **online campaigns**. These initiatives enable ordinary people to contribute to knowledge and public good, and to bring about change. If you are interested in learning more about these kind of online communities, you may like to explore some of the following resources:

[Citizen science](#) – Wikipedia entry for citizen science explaining how members of the general public actively contribute to scientific research, often using online networks. You can study this further with another badged course, [Citizen science and global biodiversity](#).

[Crowdsourcing.org](#) – a site that brings together information, tools and resources for harnessing the power of online communities to get solutions and feedback to all sorts of problems.

[Causes](#) – a site where you can find out about, support and organise campaigns on issues that are important to you.

Record anything you want to follow up in your **Digital plan**.

4 Reflection

It is worth bearing in mind that everyone's digital journey is different. Just as your personal identity may change over time as you have different experiences and learn new things, the same is true of your digital identity. Learning new skills may encourage you to become active online in new ways, shape your digital identity and enable you to move forward in your digital journey.

Also, as you have seen, it's not just about 'digital me', it's about 'digital us'. What we each do online has an impact on other people. Even if you found that your digital footprint has room for improvement, be reassured that, over time, you can take control of your life online and develop the digital profile you would like.

At the beginning of this week you thought about sources of inspiration for your digital journey. Have these changed at all as you have gone along? If the answer is yes, make a note in your **Digital plan** of any actions you want to take as a result.

During the week you have been making notes in your **Digital plan** of how you want to develop your digital footprint. Now is a good time to review your plan and prioritise what you will do first. Putting these steps into practice will help to ensure that your digital journey is enjoyable and goes in the direction you would like.

5 This week's quiz

Check what you've learned this week by taking the end-of-week practice quiz. Remember that while optional, working through the quiz can help you see how you're getting on with the course. Your answers are not visible to the other learners, they're just for your own information.

[Week 3 practice quiz](#)

Click on 'Week 3 practice quiz' above to access the quiz. If you open the quiz in a new window or tab, you can come back here more easily when you've finished. It also enables you to refer to the course as you work through the quiz, if you want to.

To open in a new window, right click on the link above and select 'Open in new window'.

You'll get feedback on your answers as you go through the quiz. When you finish the quiz and press 'submit', the system will record that you have finished your attempt, and your score. As this is a practice quiz, this is just for your learning, so you can identify areas you might like to revisit. The score won't be counted towards your badge.

6 Summary

This week you have looked at the area of digital identity and how to ensure your digital footprint reflects you in the best light. You have:

- thought about what inspires your digital journey
- reviewed your own digital footprint
- looked at examples of other people's digital footprints
- considered how you can keep control of your digital identity in a world of open online resources and sharing
- thought about the elements of good communication online
- identified some steps to help you present yourself well online and improve your digital profile.

You have learned:

- what is meant by digital identity, digital footprint and digital citizenship
- why digital identity and footprint is important, particularly for employment purposes
- the benefits of digital citizenship.

In the next week you will look more closely at e-safety, security and other aspects of digital well-being. You will also learn how to stay within the law when using other people's original work, and how you can protect your rights when sharing your own material online.

You can now go to [Week 4](#).

Week 4: Staying safe and legal

Introduction

How safe do you feel when you're online?

Last week while exploring your digital footprint and identity, you identified techniques to help you create the 'right' image online. You are now aware of your presence and impact in a digital environment. In addition to this, you also need to know how to protect yourself online and stay within the law. This is all part of **digital well-being**.

Over the course of this week, you will be introduced to some key strategies to help you keep safe online. Being aware of possible threats and understanding how to deal with them will go a long way towards increasing your confidence when you're online.

In this video, Wendy and Katharine talk about the importance of keeping safe online and identify some of the potential pitfalls.

Video content is not available in this format.

[Video 1: Introduction to Week 4](#)



Protecting yourself is also about looking after your own digital property (content) and respecting content owned by others. It is useful to know how your content is protected

legally and how that works for anything you create and share online. If you decide to reuse someone else's content, you should only do this with permission from rightsholders (those who are in control of the rights you need) or by making use of your country's legal defences – such as Fair Dealing in the UK.

In the first section you will be exploring passwords and finding out how to protect yourself online.

By the end of this week, you should be able to:

- make sure that your online experience is safe and constructive
- begin to consider and improve your digital well-being
- use and create online information without breaking the law.

This relates to both 'Manage and communicate' and 'Understand and engage' in the Open University digital skills framework, and both 'Digital identity and wellbeing' and 'Information, data and media literacies' in the Jisc digital capabilities framework that you came across in Week 2.

1 E-safety

Although the internet is a wonderful resource, it also has a potentially dark side, which can make us feel vulnerable at times. The good news is that there are some simple steps you can take to ensure your safety in this digital environment. Before you begin to explore these, think about how safe you feel when you're online.

Activity 1 How safe do you feel online?

10 minutes

Identifying where you feel vulnerable online will help you to focus on what you need to do in order to feel safer. In the audios below, Michael, Manuela and John talk about how they feel about online safety. As you listen, think about your own situation.

Audio content is not available in this format.

[Manuela talks about online safety](#)

Audio content is not available in this format.

[Michael talks about online safety](#)

Audio content is not available in this format.

[John talks about online safety](#)

Use the box below to make some notes on how safe you feel online. Have you, or anyone you know, ever had a bad experience, for example, being scammed or dealing with a **virus**? Make a note of these experiences and jot down how that made you feel.

Provide your answer...

Discussion

Your response to this activity will be personal to your own situation. Bad online experiences can often make people wary about using the internet. Some of the reasons why people feel unsafe are:

- the risk of being scammed
- finding out that your personal information has been lost or stolen
- lack of trust in internet companies
- not knowing what happens to your information when you are online
- not knowing how to protect yourself against viruses
- having an unpleasant exchange with someone on social media
- being offended by what you see on social media
- finding out that a video or photograph has gone viral, in other words, been shared beyond your immediate circle of friends.

In the next few sections, you will be given guidance on the basic steps you can take to ensure that you are safe online.

1.1 Passwords

We use passwords for everything – email, banking, shopping, social media – the list is endless. When you are asked to create a password, you are advised to use a mixture of numbers, characters and letters, making up a combination that would be hard to guess. Think about how you go about creating a password. Do you have a strategy? Do you use different passwords for different things? If so, do you have a strategy for remembering which password you've used? Thinking up a strong password can be difficult, especially if you are trying to create something unique. It's a good idea to assess the strategies you use to do this.

Activity 2 Improving your cyber security

30 minutes

Without writing them down (in order to keep them secure), think about the some of the passwords you use, such as email, social media and online banking.

Now watch the video below, which provides some tips for improving the strength of your passwords.

Video content is not available in this format.

[Video 2: Paul Ducklin: Cyber security](#)

SOPHOS

Consider your passwords again, and try to improve on them by following the advice in the video.

You can find lots more advice online about passwords and other aspects of cyber security. Take some time to look over these resources (make sure to open the links in a new tab/window):

<https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/blog-post/secure-home-working-personal-it>

<https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/cyberaware/home>

<https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2019/dec/31/get-cybersecure-for-2020-cybersecurity-passwords-smartphone>

Discussion

Use your **Digital plan** to make a note of the techniques you can start using immediately to make stronger passwords (but don't make a note of your actual passwords!), and any other steps you could take to upgrade your internet security.

Software for **hacking** passwords is getting more sophisticated and can find your password by repeatedly attempting to log in to your account. A computer program, using an algorithm, can work through thousands of dictionary words and letter combinations in a matter of minutes. This is why it is so important to ensure that your password is hard to guess. An additional measure is to change your password every few months.

For some kinds of information, such as online banking, even strong passwords aren't secure enough. Passwords alone can be subject to attack and leave your information vulnerable.

A number of companies, including Facebook, Google, Microsoft, Apple and eBay, support a system known as '**two-factor authentication**'. This is where the user is required to enter two pieces of information before they can log in. Two-factor authentication is called different names by different websites, for example, Facebook calls it 'login approvals'. If you are a Facebook user, you may have come across this when logging into Facebook from a new computer.

It is worth finding out whether two-factor authentication is available on sites you use. In general, if a site requires a strong password or offers two-factor authentication, it is more likely to be trustworthy.

2 How to protect yourself

Cybercrime is a term that refers to criminal acts perpetrated on computers or via the internet. In 2020, Easyjet fell victim to a "highly sophisticated" cyber attack in which the personal details of approximately nine million customers were breached, including some bank details (BBC News, 2020).

At the beginning of the week, you were asked to note down how you felt about online safety. You may have expressed concerns about your personal data being taken, or you may have been worried about **viruses** on your own computer. Using strong passwords and two-factor authentication are good first steps towards protecting yourself, but there are other measures you can put in place to improve your confidence when exploring the internet.

There are a number of reliable websites that provide advice on how you can stay safe and teach you what to do if you do fall victim to cybercrime.

- [Get Safe Online](#) is the UK's leading source of unbiased, factual and easy-to-understand information on online safety.
- [National Cyber Security Centre](#) contains guidance for individuals and families as well as for businesses.
- [Cyber Aware](#) provides advice from the UK government about how to stay secure online.
- [Staying safe online](#) – advice from Age UK.
- [Guide to internet security](#) from Digital Unite.
- Reliable information about current scams and hoaxes at [Hoax slayer](#).

Although Age UK and Digital unite are primarily aimed at older people, the advice they provide does apply to everyone.

Knowing how to protect yourself online is one step towards improving your **digital well-being**. The next section looks at this in more detail.

Over the next few sections, you will be finding out how to protect yourself in four different areas. As you read through, use your **Digital plan** to make a note of any advice or websites that will be useful to you, either now or in the future.

2.1 Protecting yourself from viruses and malware



Figure 1 Viruses and malware

Viruses and **malware** are pieces of computer code that gain access to your computer system, often without your knowledge. They are designed to corrupt or destroy data on your device. This might sound quite terrifying, but there are simple steps you can take to prevent this from happening.

To combat **cybercrime** and prevent harm to your computer, it is sensible to ensure that you have a **firewall** in place. A firewall is a piece of software that prevents any unauthorised access to your computer system. It will alert you if it thinks a program or person is trying to access your data without your permission. Most computer systems come with a firewall built in, but you may decide to buy your own.

Antivirus software can detect any existing threats from **viruses** and malware and will attempt to isolate or destroy them. It can also block any potential threats. New viruses emerge over time, and the software works on lists which are updated on a regular basis. It's important to keep your antivirus software up to date.

2.2 Avoiding online scams and hoaxes



Figure 2 Scams and hoaxes

You may already be aware of email scams, such as emails claiming to be from banks or those that ask for personal details. These hoax emails can look genuine but often contain links that lead to unsafe websites or attachments that contain viruses. You can also be scammed through social media, for example, through a Facebook quiz that requires access to information held on your Facebook account.

Remember to:

- Be vigilant and trust your gut instinct on suspicious emails.
- Be critical. Look at the style of writing. Is it stilted? Does it contain bad spelling and grammar?
- Think about who has sent the email. If it comes from people you know, consider whether this is something they would send.
- Look carefully at what information apps or quizzes require access to, and think about how comfortable you are about agreeing to this access.

Next week, you will explore, in greater detail, who and what you can trust online.

2.3 Protecting personal data

An increasing number of services conduct business online. They all involve providing personal data over the internet such as name, address, credit card number and salary in relation to shopping, banking or even a job application process. In May 2018, the **General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)** came into effect and although an EU policy, its relevance for the UK is expected to continue even when the UK is no longer a member of the EU. GDPR places the obligation of keeping personal data safe with the person or company processing the data. However, it makes sense for you to do what you can to protect your own personal data yourself, as well as that of others. You can find a full guide to GDPR online (GOV.UK, 2018).

Ensure that the webpage is secure by looking out for these features:

- secure sites will have a web address that begins https://
- some sites may provide a padlock in the address bar
- use websites that are trustworthy – you'll be finding out how to judge how trustworthy a website is in Week 5.



Figure 3 Personal data

There are a number of free tools that can warn you if a site you are accessing is considered unsafe before you access it. We've provided some examples below, but you might want to search for your own.

- [WOT \(Web of Trust\)](#) – a free browser extension for Chrome that helps you decide which websites you can trust based on other users experiences.
- [McAfee Site Advisor](#) – free download that gives ratings to signal when to click and when to skip.
- [Avira Browser Safety](#) – a free browser extension for Chrome that blocks harmful sites, protects your privacy and finds deals while you shop.

Ensure you have permission from the owner, for example before you upload photos of them or their family to social media. You might think, for example, that you can post your photos of your grandchildren online, if you want to. However, think again! In one case, a grandmother was ordered to delete Facebook photos under GDPR or face being fined (BBC News, 2020).

2.4 Agreeing to terms and conditions



Figure 4 Terms and conditions

If you are uploading, storing or sharing anything online, like a photo to Facebook or a file to **Dropbox**, you will be placing it on a server owned by a company or organisation. They will ask you to agree to their terms and conditions. This is legally binding.

Read these terms and conditions carefully before you agree. You need to ensure that the rights you have to material you've created are not compromised in ways that make you feel uncomfortable. Some companies may stipulate that they have access to and ownership of whatever you upload. This involves you agreeing to them using, moving or modifying your content. In most cases this is just to ensure that they are able to improve the service they are offering.

Later this week, you will be finding out more about **copyright** and protecting what you create.

3 Digital well-being

Digital well-being is all about feeling comfortable, safe and confident when you are using technology in an online environment. It is about feeling in control in a digital world that can sometimes seem overwhelming. It is also about maintaining positive relationships with others online, and avoiding unwanted behaviour such as cyberbullying. Most importantly, it concerns the balance between your online and offline worlds.

According to Ofcom (2019) an adult typically spends 25.3 hours online per week – that's over a day a week online! In addition, adults now estimate they spend more time online when they are out and about, and rather than using a computer, around one in ten adults say they only use a smartphone to go online. So, if you do spend time online, it's worth taking steps to ensure your own personal safety.

In this section you will think about connecting and communicating safely with others online.

Activity 3 Your typical week online

20 minutes

It would be interesting to compare the Ofcom statistics with your own experience. We often do not realise just how much time we are online or connected. For example, if we keep our mobile phones or tablets on all the time, we can potentially be connected 24 hours a day. Estimate how much time you spend online in comparison with other areas of your life using our [Time calculator](#). Click to download.

Make a note in the box below about how your online time compares to your offline time. How happy are you with the balance?

Provide your answer...

Discussion

Your results will be personal to your own situation. The activity should give you an idea of the proportion of time you spend online. If you are unhappy about the balance with your offline life, you may want to make a few changes to the way you do things.

Being online in itself can sometimes be stressful. It can also have an impact on other aspects of your life and your relationships with people around you. Your digital well-being can have an impact on your physical and mental health. Schools, universities and workplaces are very aware of this and provide guidelines to ensure the digital well-being of students and staff.

Activity 4 Improving your digital well-being

20 minutes

The video below provides some guidance on how to improve your digital well-being in five key areas. In your **Digital plan**, make a note of three tips you would want to try.

Video content is not available in this format.

Video 3: Improve your digital well-being



Your digital well-being



Discussion

Again, your response to this activity will be personal. You may have identified a number of things you would like to change. Here are some suggestions.

- Turn my phone off when I'm with other people (restaurant, pub) – or at least put it on silent, in case of emergencies.
- Don't answer text messages when I'm with other people, or in the middle of a conversation with someone else.
- Take some time away from electronic devices. Build in some 'me' time to relax.
- Take up a hobby that doesn't involve being online.
- Unsubscribe from emails notifications and newsletters I don't need.

Some apps allow you to '**synchronise**' on multiple devices. This means that whatever you do on one device will be updated on all your other devices. See if your apps allow this.

The Open University [Skills for Study: Managing stress](#) website provides some good advice on managing stress. Although this is aimed at students, you may find it useful in other areas of your life.

Good communication skills and wise online behaviour will help your online interactions with others to be positive and beneficial. You will explore this in the next section.

3.1 Connecting and communicating safely

There are many ways to connect and communicate with people online. You have probably communicated with people online through social media services like Facebook and

LinkedIn. You may also want to keep in touch with people you know or connect with people from around the world who have similar interests to you. Social media provides a perfect opportunity to share useful information and learn from others.

Communicating online can be tricky because you can't see people's visual cues or reactions. There are a set of rules for online behaviour. You may remember from Week 3 that this is referred to as 'netiquette'. Of course, the conventions may vary depending on the context. If you are unsure, observe how others are interacting before joining the conversation.

In the audio clips, Manuela, Michael and John provide some advice based on their own experiences.

Audio content is not available in this format.

[Manuela's advice](#)

Audio content is not available in this format.

[Michael's advice](#)

Audio content is not available in this format.

[John's advice](#)

When you are communicating with others, it's important to ensure that you protect yourself by limiting the amount of personal information you provide. The tips below will help you.

- If you are communicating with people you do not know personally, try to find out some information about them. Read their profile or look up their digital footprint as you did for yourself in Week 3. Assess how trustworthy they are, especially if they are providing you with information.
- Be aware of what you are sharing. Think carefully about who you are sharing personal information with and avoid giving away any details that you would prefer to remain private.
- Be aware of your safety when you are on social media. For example, if you post information about where you are, it can make you and your home vulnerable.
- If you are concerned, use an image to represent you rather than a picture of yourself. You may even decide not to use your real, or full, name.

If you are sharing information about other people, ensure that you have their permission and take steps to protect them. Remember GDPR.

4 Keeping it legal

One of the exciting things about the internet is that you can create, **remix** and share content. These are things that are increasingly easy to do, even for people who are relatively new to technology. In some cases you will create something new, from scratch. In other cases you may use something that you find.

If you want to use someone else's material (often referred to as third party content), you need to think about getting permission to do so. This might be done in different ways: by contacting the **rightsholder**, through an exception such as **Fair Dealing**, or a Creative Commons license.

When you share your own original material online, you should also think about how you can best protect your own copyright and avoid confusion by any potential users of your content.

Activity 5 Starting to think about copyright

15 minutes

Look at the following examples and decide what needs to be considered.

Example 1

Remixing means taking existing material and reworking it for your own purposes. It is very easy to do and you may have seen videos on Facebook or YouTube where people have used films or famous songs for their own videos. The video below is an example – it was made to teach the scientific method and uses the music Gangnam Style by Psy.

View at: [youtube:MyFi6BQfDik](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MyFi6BQfDik)

Example 2

Writing a blog and posting ideas for cooking or lifestyle, for example, is relatively popular. To make the blog more appealing to its audience, attractive photos are often used.

The blog cookingonabootstrap.com is an example (make sure to open in a new window/tab).

Example 3

In a work context, you might create a website to promote your own business. To attract potential customers, you might want to include photos, videos and quotes from existing customers.

You can find an example website of a business using such an approach here:

[Celebrate personal training](#) (make sure to open in a new window/tab).

If you need to contact the rightsholder to seek permission, make sure you allow plenty of time for a response and explain the context of your use and the media in which you want to reproduce their content.

For the remainder of this week you'll be finding out more about copyright law and how it is used. You'll also learn about **Creative Commons** licences, which offer a quick and easy way to protect your own rights when you share original material, as well as Fair Dealing.

4.1 What is copyright law?

Intellectual property refers to anything unique that someone has created and may want to protect. This might include written content, images, photographs, sound recordings and video.

Copyright is an Intellectual Property Right (IPR) protected in statute in the United Kingdom under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act (1988). Other countries have their own legal systems for protection of copyright works. The law of copyright prevents the unauthorised copying of original content (often referred to as 'works') in any medium and in any territory.

Copyright in the UK offers legal protection automatically to original works and comes into force as soon as a work is created (authored) and put in writing or otherwise (fixed). There is no need to register or apply for copyright to exist. This was agreed by the Berne Convention, which also agreed to protect each country's copyright works in their own country. The convention enables countries to trade and be secure that their copyright is protected from any unauthorised use worldwide. This is particularly important when working with the internet and seeing content on other sites which may be hosted in places other than the UK. There are further details on the Gov.uk

[How copyright protects your work](#) website.

Most copyright works are legally protected either from 70 years from creation (recordings for example) or 70 years after the death of the creator (books and music composition for example). This means that you need to seek permission for use of any work (or large extract) which is still in copyright unless you are making use of any provision/exception in any country you intend to use the work or extract.

Useful resources

Copyright Licensing Agency (n.d.), [What is copyright?](#) provides helpful explanations of copyright.

Intellectual Property Office (2014), [How copyright protects your work](#) provides a table showing the length of copyright protection for different types of original work.

4.2 Copyright responsibilities

Given the ease with which online material can be reused, whether it belongs to you or someone else, it is very important to be aware of the implications for copyright owners and users.

Copyright holders

The **copyright holder** is usually the person who has created an original work. This might be a picture, photograph, song, text or a piece of software. As long as it is saved in a fixed

form, they control the rights to that content. As you've already discovered, the author's rights are automatic from the time the work is created.

If you create something entirely original yourself and are therefore the copyright holder, it is often a good idea to record ownership of the work. You can do this by using the copyright symbol, ©, on the work itself, for example '© Jane Bloggs (date)'. You should also consider in what ways you would allow use of your work without asking for your permission. You can add this to your work using Creative Commons licences for example. It is a good idea to add on your contact details so that users can contact you to request permission which is not covered.

Copyright users

If, however, you use someone else's original work, you are then a **copyright user**. It's easy to find material online, but just because you find it online, you should not assume that you have the permission of the copyright owner to reuse it. Unless the rightsowner has specified permission on their work, you will need to seek permission to copy it and share it online or distribute it further.

As a copyright user, you have the responsibility to:

- contact the copyright owner to ask permission to reuse their material, unless a permission exists on their work such as a Creative Commons licence to copy and share their work
- **credit** the original creator of the work in the form of an **acknowledgement**. This will state the name of the work you copied, the author, the url or page numbers (if applicable) and the date of the original publication. There are different styles for doing this, one example is: 'extract from Burns-Booth, K. (2020) 'Cheese and lentil slice', *Lavender & Lovage*, 25 April [blog]. Available at <https://www.lavenderandlovage.com> (Accessed 15 May 2020)

Activity 6 Acknowledging someone else's work

10 mins

Find a photo or extract from an article that you might want to use in a lifestyle blog. Assuming you have managed to contact the owner, how would you acknowledge it? Have a look at [Week 4 Acknowledgements](#) in this course for an example of how to do them.

Exceptions

There are a number of exemptions under copyright law such as **Fair Dealing** in the UK and Fair Use in the US. These are 'defences' which mean that, while there is provision to use content without permission, this use can be challenged by rights owners if they do not agree with the interpretation of Fair Dealing.

Exemptions under Fair Dealing are:

- criticism, review and parody
- news reporting

- personal study and non-commercial research
- education (personal study and other limited provision).

The exemption for education allows students and academic researchers to access and copy the work of others as long as that original work is properly credited and the use is fair. Students and researchers use a **reference list** and **bibliography** to credit the contributions of others in the development of their own ideas. Note that it is not usually considered fair to use a whole work.

Creative Commons licences provide a means for establishing specific rights without the need to contact the copyright owner. This is explained on the next page.

4.3 Creative Commons (CC) licences

Copyright laws are all about **protecting** the (mostly) economic rights of the individual creator and **preventing** unauthorised use. They provide a legal framework for copyright owners to pursue those who copy or use their material without credit, which is known as **plagiarism**.

Copyright laws have been in existence for many years and can be slow to change. Digital technology, such as the internet, provides the means for rightsholders to share their works more easily. However, many rightsholders wanted to share their works (and at the same time benefit from others sharing) but were concerned about protection of their works and needed assurance that they were only going to be used in ways that they agreed with.

Creative Commons (CC) was founded in 2001 and provides a set of licences which are guaranteed by the rightsholder to be non-revokable providing the user abides by the licence terms.

Rights owners can make their works freely-available under an appropriate CC licence and any rights not granted still rest with the copyright holder (rights owners). In this way their copyright is protected as well as being shared. A rightsholder may withdraw their work from a CC licence at any time. However, those works already accessed and being used still enjoy the non-revokable licence.

The video below was made by Common Craft and illustrates the benefits of the licences.

Video content is not available in this format.

[Video 4: Benefits of licences](#)



4.4 How do Creative Commons (CC) licences work?

You will have seen from the video that **Creative Commons** (CC) licences work within existing **copyright** laws to protect digital property. They make it easy to share and reuse online content, and ensure the terms and conditions are clear. The distinctive badging means that potential users of any online content can see immediately what they are allowed to do with it. It saves time because you don't have to find the owner and ask permission unless your use is not covered by the licence.

If you are trying to protect your own work, or looking for something you can reuse legally, then you need to understand what the different licences mean. It won't take you long to recognise the symbols when you see them online.

The best way to explore the different licences is to visit the [Creative Commons website](#). You can also download this [Creative Commons licences and contexts](#) document. This explains each licence and shows how they might apply to Manuela, John and Michael.

Activity 7 Choosing a Creative Commons (CC) licence

20 minutes

You should now have a good idea about how CC licences work. The best way to illustrate how these work in practice is to try to set one up for yourself.

Imagine that you have taken some wildlife photographs. You're so proud of the results that you would like to share them online. You'd like to allow people to use them for free, but you don't want them to be modified in any way. You also want them to

acknowledge you as the photographer. You don't want your photos to be used commercially.

Go to the [Creative Commons Choose a Licence](#) page. Work through each of the steps and generate a licence. Make a note of the licence you were advised to use in the box below.

Provide your answer...

Discussion

The correct licence in this case would be Attribution-NonCommerical-NoDerivs (CC-BY-NC-ND).

You might want to try some other scenarios that are more relevant to you.

5 Reflection

At the beginning of this week, you explored issues around your online safety. In your **Digital plan** you made some notes on steps you can take to stay safe online. You now also realise the importance of your **digital well-being** and maintaining a good balance between your online and offline activities. You have been given good advice on how to communicate online and you've been introduced to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

You should also now have a better understanding of how copyright and Creative Commons (CC) licences work. You can use your knowledge to protect your own rights and stay within the law when you use someone else's material. When you want to find resources you can use freely, look for ones displaying a CC licence. If you upload your own work to the internet, think about protecting your rights with a CC licence.

Activity 8 Next steps

15 minutes

Reflect on the lessons you've learned about protecting yourself online. In your **Digital plan**, note down three steps you can take within the next month to improve your online safety.

6 This week's quiz

Check what you've learned so far in the course by taking the quiz. If you would like to earn a digital badge on completion of this course, you will need to do this quiz. However, you can continue on the course without completing the quiz and without obtaining a badge, if you prefer.

[Week 4 badge quiz](#)

Click on 'Week 4 badge quiz' above to access the quiz. If you open the quiz in a new window or tab, you can come back here more easily when you've finished. It also enables you to refer to the course as you work through the quiz, if you want to. At the end of the quiz press 'submit'. This enables the system to provide you with a badge at the end of the course if relevant.

7 Summary

We are now at the end of the week. In addition to feeling more confident about e-safety and **digital well-being**, you should also have a greater understanding of how to protect your own work and respect the rights of others.

This week you have considered your online safety and well-being, and explored **copyright** and **Creative Commons**. You have:

- assessed how safe you feel online
- built up some strategies to create passwords and protect yourself online
- reflected on your digital well-being and the balance of your online and offline activity
- developed the ways you communicate with people online
- gained an understanding of how copyright and Creative Commons protects the work you create and share online
- established how to reuse the work of others legally.

You have learned:

- how to protect yourself online
- how to communicate with people online
- how to manage the time you spend online and connecting with other people
- how to use Creative Commons licences.

Next week, you will learn how to search online for reliable information, and find what you need quickly. You will also find out how to judge who and what to trust when you are in a digital environment.

You are now half way through the course. The Open University would really appreciate your feedback and suggestions for future improvement in our optional [end-of-course survey](#), which you will also have an opportunity to complete at the end of Week 8. Participation will be completely confidential and we will not pass on your details to others.

You can now go to [Week 5](#).

Week 5: Critical consumption

Introduction



Figure 1 Montage of headlines

There are often bizarre stories on the internet.

‘Pigeons can identify cancerous tissue on x rays’

‘Why the internet is made of cats’

These are just two stories that have appeared in the media recently. Some are more plausible than others and we’ll be returning later to the question of which are true or not. In previous weeks, you have been introduced to the idea of the information age and have explored some of its characteristics. The internet is teeming with information, on every conceivable subject and from many different sources (the image above shows a few headlines that have appeared in the media recently). These sources include an ever-increasing quantity of freely available user-generated information, and from an increasing number of online communities. There are advantages and disadvantages to this abundance. It is not hard to find information, but judging its reliability is less straightforward. Online social networks can be very beneficial, but how do you establish whether someone is telling the truth or not?

In Week 4 you considered what you can do to stay safe online and protect your privacy. This week, you will have the opportunity to think about which information sources are most relevant to you in your own context (also referred to as your ‘information landscape’) and learn techniques to deal with **information overload**. You’ll also find out how to develop a critical approach towards the people and information sources you encounter online. This is all part of making technology and the internet work for you, and helping you to stay in control of your digital life.

Video content is not available in this format.

[Video 1: Introduction to Week 5](#)



By the end of this week you should:

- have thought about which information sources are most relevant to you
- know how to find reliable information online quickly
- be able to judge how trustworthy online sources are.

This relates to both 'Find' and 'Evaluate' in the Open University digital skills framework as well as to 'Information, data and media literacies' in the Jisc digital capabilities framework that you came across in Week 2.

1 Your information landscape

You may not have thought of yourself as having an 'information landscape'. The term is used to refer to the range of information used in everyday life, at work and for study. Everyone is different and therefore information landscapes vary. It is likely that your information landscape will reflect your interests and relate to different parts of your life.

Not every source in your information landscape will be online. For instance, at work your colleagues are likely to be an important source of information. There will be shared understandings about what information means and how it is used in particular workplace settings, for example, healthcare or law. You'll think about your information landscape as a whole before considering in more detail your online information landscape. This will help you to set the context for your digital life.

The image below includes words describing different categories of information.



Figure 2 What makes up your information landscape?

This next activity helps you to think about your information landscape, both digital and real-life, and relate the categories of information to different parts of your life.

Activity 1 Getting orientated

5 minutes

Below are four different areas of life, each of which might form part of your information landscape. For each heading, some categories of information are suggested. The list is not exhaustive.

As you read about the categories of information listed under each heading, note down which ones you use. Are there others, not listed, that you would add? Make a note of these.

Select 'Reveal feedback' when you are ready.

You

- **Ideas and opinions:** your own and those of your family and friends.
- **Research:** you have done yourself (for example, on the internet).
- **Experience:** your own, and your family and friends.

Your local community

- **News:** local newspapers, local television, radio.
- **Ideas and opinions:** local media and community groups.
- **Research:** public library (physical or online resources).
- **Facts and figures:** local library or council, local club meetings and community groups.
- **Historical information:** archives of local organisations or the local press.
- **Experience:** local support groups.

Your workplace, college or university

- **News:** noticeboards, meetings, emails, social media, colleagues, meeting minutes, company intranet.
- **Ideas and opinions:** colleagues and discussion groups.
- **Research:** journal articles held in the library, project reports, product test logs.

- **Facts and figures:** from the information department, or any information systems you have access to, project specifications, orders, contract orders, technical data sheets, product manuals.
- **Historical information:** notes, records and archives.
- **Experience:** refer to colleagues, clients and customers, tutors, teachers, and fellow students.

Your world view

- **News:** the media (newspapers, TV, radio) or the specialist press, social media.
- **Ideas and opinions:** broadcast media, conferences, information from experts and relevant organisations, social media.
- **Research results:** national libraries, specialist organisations, relevant journals.
- **Facts and figures:** national libraries, government statistical services.
- **Historical information:** records offices and national libraries.
- **Experience:** national support groups, specialist charities.

Provide your answer...

Discussion

In practice, most of these information sources exist in digital form. National and international news is generally digital these days and breaking news is often shared on social media such as Twitter or Facebook before it reaches broadcast media.

To use some information sources effectively, especially in more local contexts, a two-way conversation is needed. For example, in the workplace, when asking a work colleague about their experience of a particular job area or issue, you will probably want to clarify and ask further questions depending on the response. This might be by email or in person. Without this clarification, misunderstandings can occur. Information and communication go hand in hand, there is dialogue involved and shared understandings evolve over time.

Information landscapes are therefore not fixed. They change as your circumstances change, as you move into new areas of life and as you engage with new communities. There may be overlap between different parts of your information landscape. In the next activity, you will think about your information landscape and how it has changed.

1.1 Exploring your information landscape

To see what someone's information landscape might look like in practice, let's hear from Manuela, Michael and John.

Activity 2 Mapping your information landscape

20 minutes

Listen to the audio recordings of Manuela, Michael and John talking about the sources of information they regularly use.

Make some notes in your **Digital plan** about the kinds of areas their information landscape covers.

Now reflect on your own information landscape – what are your most important sources, and how has this changed for you over the last six months?

Use your **Digital plan** to note key features of your information landscape:

- six months ago
- now.

Select 'Reveal feedback' when you are ready

Audio content is not available in this format.

[Manuela's sources of information](#)

Audio content is not available in this format.

[Michael's sources of information](#)

Audio content is not available in this format.

[John's sources of information](#)

Discussion

Manuela's information landscape is fairly focused on the local community, though she does get involved in the wider world through her interest in Formula One. She uses her local public library, her children's school website and her local further education college website. So far her digital information landscape does not include much that's relevant to work or formal education. That is changing as she works through this course and explores options for further study.

John's landscape is also a mixture of local (what gigs are on in my town) and national/international (BBC Food, chef blogs, Bandcamp and Soundcloud).

So far, he has not considered work or study as part of his information landscape, but the self-study he does of recipes, cooking techniques and the work of other chefs, is taking him in that direction.

Michael doesn't feel he has an information landscape – it's more of a backyard really. Apart from following the sports news (which his son shows him on his smartphone), his sources of information are mainly personal. For example, he has one or two colleagues he turns to when he needs to get the low-down on new procedures at work. However, his desire to change career has prompted him to venture into new places, including an online course. He's not very confident he has the skills to keep up with an online course – it all looks a bit daunting – and hopes this course will help.

How did your own information landscape compare to those of Manuela, Michael and John? You may have found it includes similar elements, however, it will also be unique to you. You might have found some overlap between different areas of your landscape,

for example, your own experience of a particular issue (say, parenting) is reflected in an online community you belong to that is open to people nationally and internationally. You may also have noticed some changes in your information landscape over the last six months. This might reflect changes in your life (for example, starting a new job or course of study), or it could be that other people have introduced you to new sources of information that you find useful.

2 Searching

Now that you have thought about your current information landscape, it is time to look at how you can navigate it. For the following activities, you will use Google to search for information on a topic. You may like to also try using another **search engine** and comparing the results.

Activity 3 Searching for information on Facebook privacy

10 minutes

- Open [Google](#) in a new tab or window and search for information on how to set your privacy options on Facebook. (You may be able to speak instructions for your device to search using a digital **personal assistant** such as **Siri** or **Cortana**, as an alternative to typing it.)
- Find two resources: one text explanation and one video explanation.
- For each resource, establish: who put the information there, when it was added and how well it seems to match what you are looking for.
- Reflect on the search process you have just been through: what words did you use, and how long did it take you to find the relevant information?

Discussion

A search of this nature will most likely bring back several hundred million results. Text-based resources provided by the Facebook Help Centre will probably appear at the top of this list. This guidance is a sensible place to start, but if you read a bit further down the list, you will find guidance produced by other people. Some of these other resources may give you a more complete view of Facebook privacy settings. Be aware that Facebook changes its appearance and functionality (what users can do) quite frequently, so any guidance more than a few months old may not be accurate any more.

To find videos, you may have typed the word 'video' or 'YouTube' or a combination of the two, into the search box, or you may have selected 'Videos' from the options at the top of the search screen.

The words 'Facebook privacy settings' are enough to bring back the right kind of information. However, bear in mind that in this case it is very important that information is up to date, so adding the current year to your search words may help you get what you want more quickly. It's likely that you scanned quickly through the results you had found to see which ones looked most promising.

Whether text or video is more useful to you will depend on your personal preference and the topic. Sometimes it can be really helpful to watch a demonstration of what to do, for example, if you want to learn how to do something. At other times written guidance or instructions are preferable.

There is widespread agreement that it is relatively easy to find information online. In fact, information overload is likely to be more of an issue. The problem is not so much finding information in the first place, as in pinpointing the right information quickly. There are a few tricks you can learn to help you feel more in control.

2.1 Refining your search

According to statistics, very few Google searches get past the first page of results. This means that most people accept the first few results they find and don't go any further. The search you have just carried out may have been sufficient to get you the information you wanted, if it was available on that first page. However, there are some useful techniques for refining your search that will save you time.

In the last activity you may have used Google's 'videos' filter (across the top of the page) to restrict your results to videos. Other information types you can use to filter a search include News, Images, Books, Shopping, Maps, Flights and Apps (note that some of these categories may vary depending on the internet **browser** and version of browser you are using). As well as **filtering** by information type, it is possible to refine your search in other ways.

The next activity is an opportunity to use some of these techniques.

Activity 4 Refining your search

10 minutes

Some of the following actions will help you to refine your Google search. Read through the list and note those that you think will help you to focus your search more precisely. Try out the techniques you have chosen and make a note of how successful they were in refining your search.

- **Adding more search terms** to make your search terms more specific. Google automatically links your terms together with AND, which means it will search for websites where all your search terms are present. The more specific you are, the more likely you are to find relevant information. Note that the order in which you type your search terms will affect your search results.
- **Using 'OR' to link your search words.** Searching using 'Facebook OR privacy' will bring back all websites in which the word 'Facebook' is present, and all websites in which the word 'privacy' is present (regardless of whether they were about Facebook privacy). If you wanted to find sites in which all these words are present at the same time, you would need to take out 'OR' from your search.
- **Using quotation marks to enclose your search terms.** Also known as a phrase search, this will make your search more precise. For example, "complete guide to Facebook privacy settings 2015" as opposed to 'complete guide to Facebook privacy settings 2015'. It may exclude some sites you would be interested in though, such as 'Facebook privacy settings' or 'Here's how to use Facebook's mystifying privacy settings...'.
• **Using an asterisk *.** This will expand your search rather than focus it, as it is used as a placeholder for any unknown or wildcard terms. For example, priva* will increase the number of results you find by looking for 'privacy' and 'private'. In this case, it may also bring up organisations named 'Priva', which you don't want.
- **Using specialist or specific search terms related to the subject of your search.** This can be helpful, especially if you are doing research for academic study. Look for terms used within the field you are researching that help to focus your search more clearly.

Discussion

Adding or substituting search terms is one way to hone your search. Phrase searching using quotation marks can also be helpful. Knowing the specialist vocabulary used for the subject you are looking for will increase your chances of success. Think about how your subject might be described on the kind of site you are hoping to find. Note that these tips and tricks may not work in other search engines.

Google's advanced search screen provides a range of options to help you target your search, for example narrowing your search to include specific keywords. You can also filter results to only include those updated within a specific date range or with text in a particular language.

Another option that you may find useful in light of what you learned in Week 4, is the option to narrow your search by usage rights to only retrieve resources that are free to use or share.

You can access the advanced screen by going to 'Settings' at the bottom of the screen and selecting 'Advanced search' – or by googling 'Google advanced search'. It is worth exploring how the advanced search can help you.

If you really want to get up close and personal with Google, you may like to visit the '[Search operators](#)' page, which tells you how you can use punctuation and symbols to refine your search.

Despite being able to refine your searches, you may still find the amount of information overwhelming. You will find out some tips on how to tackle this in the next section.

2.2 Dealing with information overload

Being able to handle information efficiently is a skill which will stand you in good stead, both when studying and at work. Information overload is a very real problem, which – as discussed in Week 4 – can affect morale and well-being if not acknowledged and tackled.

So far, you have looked at the search process and found out how you can refine your search using some of the options in Google. Making full and efficient use of search engine functionality can be a useful tool to help you deal with information overload, but human input is required too. In your initial search, you selected a couple of results. This involved **filtering**.

Filtering is a mental process involving skim-reading, evaluation and a series of quick judgements about what to do next. When faced with a screen full of search results, you can get a feel for which ones might be relevant by looking at the headings, highlighted keywords, type of site, URL and date.

Having decided to investigate a site further, you can get a quick overview by employing some **scanning** and **skimming** techniques.

Scanning involves looking quickly down the page to locate relevant words, phrases or images that you are interested in. This will help you to decide whether you should read further and how useful the website or document might be. You can scan:

- headings and subheadings
- images and artwork
- the body text itself, e.g. for authors' names
- the sitemap.

Skimming the text quickly involves:

- getting an indication of the scope and content of the information
- looking at the first sentence of each paragraph to see what it's about
- noting the key points in any summaries.

Of course, information overload is not just about information you find on the web when you are looking for it – it can also come from our inboxes. It is easy to sign up for information from various sites, such as retailers or restaurants, and then find your inbox overflowing with frequent messages that aren't necessarily useful.

Activity 5 Tackling information overload

10 minutes

It's time to hear from Manuela, Michael and John about some of their experiences of information overload and how they dealt with it. As you listen to the audios, think about your own situation and make a note of any tips you want to remember. Add these to your **Digital plan**.

Audio content is not available in this format.
[Manuela talks about information overload](#)

Audio content is not available in this format.
[Michael talks about information overload](#)

Audio content is not available in this format.
[John talks about information overload](#)

The 5 Ds (Caunt, 1999), that Michael referred to, are a useful technique to help you be more decisive when handling information that comes to you. They can be summarised as:

1. Discard
2. Deal with (Do It Now)
3. Determine future action (SIFT it – Schedule It now For Tomorrow)
4. Direct / Distribute it (think about why you are directing it and what you expect the recipient to do with it)
5. Deposit it (file it).

All of the techniques considered so far are part of the broader ability to take a critical stance towards what you read. This is about knowing what questions to ask, so that you can determine not only what information is relevant to you but also who put it there, what their viewpoint might be and how far it can be trusted.

Critical thinking is a skill of great value for academic study and beyond. It will also help you to stay in control of your digital life, rather than feeling it is controlling you. In fact, it is probably the number one skill you can develop.

3 Asking the right questions



Figure 3 Kilauea Volcano at Mauna Ulu

In December 2015, a new article posted on Facebook claimed that ‘a single eruption from a volcano puts more than 10,000 times the amount of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere than all of mankind has produced’. On the face of it, this is a plausible statement. However, it is actually false. The estimated annual amount of CO₂ generated by human activity is 135 times higher than the annual amount released by volcanoes (Evon and Kasprak, 2015). This is just one example of ‘fake news’, which has been an increasingly significant term in recent years (Carson, 2019).

Have you ever been convinced by information that later turned out to be untrue? Maybe you even passed it on to someone else, believing it came from a reliable source? Some stories and videos on the internet are clearly untrue but in other cases, it may not be so clear-cut and you are unsure whether to believe what you see or hear. In some cases this may not matter. However, if government policy decisions or guidance to citizens were to be based on faulty information, there could be serious consequences. But how can you know what is reliable or not?

It helps to know what questions to ask of what you read or see or hear online. There are various frameworks that provide you with a good starting point. Here are two that The Open University has come up with, **CAN** and **PROMPT**. The abbreviations are designed to help you remember the criteria when you need them.

CAN – can I trust this information?

C – Credibility: How much do you know about the person or organisation providing the information? What sort of authority do they have for any statements or opinions they put forward? How do they back up opinions or facts? What sort of language do they use? Language that is either emotionally charged or vague can be a danger sign.

A – Agenda: Can you detect any bias or agenda? Who has put the information there? Do the authors state clearly the viewpoint they are taking? Can you detect any vested interests, for example, a particular political viewpoint or a product that is being promoted? You may need to dig deep to uncover these: this could include scrutinising the ‘About’ information on

the website, and doing some research to find out more about the organisation or people who put the information there.

N – Need: What is your need or requirement in this particular situation? Think about what you are planning to do with the information. How important is it that the source is trustworthy?

This framework is useful for the sort of quick evaluation you might do in everyday life. It reminds you that the extent to which you scrutinise an information source may depend on what you plan to do with it. Sometimes, you just want a quick idea of what a topic is about, or a sense of what others thought about something you are interested in (e.g. a holiday home or new gadget). In this case, a high academic pedigree is not necessary. Wikipedia is one source that many people use to get a quick overview. Social media is also a source of news and information. Use CAN to do a quick reality-check, for example, when someone shares a sensational sounding story on Facebook. Ask CAN I trust this?

PROMPT – evaluating information

P – Presentation: Is this information clear and well-communicated? Is it succinct? Can I find what I need here? If it's a website, is it easy to use and navigate?

R – Relevance: Does this information match my needs right now? What is it mostly about?

O – Objectivity: Are opinions expressed? Are there sponsors? What are you being 'sold' here (a particular product, or corporate view)? What are the vested interests or hidden agendas?

M – Method: If statistical data is presented, what is this based on? How was the data gathered? Was the sample used really representative? Were the methods appropriate, rigorous, etc.?

P – Provenance: Is it clear who produced this information? Where does it come from? Whose opinions are these? Are they a recognised expert in their field? Do you trust this information?

T – Timeliness: Is this current? When was it written and produced? Has the climate or situation changed since this information was made available? Is it still up to date enough?

The PROMPT framework offers a structured method for evaluating any information you find online. It is more detailed than CAN, and is especially useful when studying, for example, if you are looking for trustworthy sources to support arguments in an assignment. You can use it to evaluate both academic articles and freely available information on the internet. It can also be very helpful in a work environment, for example, if you need to find material for a project or report. Rigorous evaluation is particularly crucial when business decisions are being made on the basis of information you provide. You may not need to go through the whole checklist each time you evaluate something, but it provides a useful reminder of what to look for. With practice over time, you will find that asking these kinds of questions becomes second nature.

You can download the [CAN and PROMPT checklist](#) to refer to later.

In the next activity you will think about how far you already ask critical questions of the online sources you come across in your 'information landscape'.

Activity 6 Evaluating resources

Identify some situations where you have needed to find information on the internet.

How did you decide what to trust?

Note down the sort of process you go through and the questions you ask. How far do they reflect the CAN or PROMPT criteria?

Record in your **Digital plan** any points you want to remember for the future.

Both these frameworks can be used and adapted for all kinds of information. You can also use them when deciding who to trust online. While your 'gut reaction' should not be ignored, it is good to go beyond initial first impressions of how a person comes across online. It is worthwhile doing a search to find out more about their background, who they are linked with (for example, particular professional or political groups) and what they do and say online. As mentioned in Week 3, many employers do an online search when considering whether to interview or appoint someone.

3.1 Useful starting points



Figure 4 Finding the starting point

There is an old saying: 'If I were going there, I wouldn't start from here'. Although using a general search engine such as Google may sometimes be the best approach when looking for resources online, there are other alternative starting points that can save you time.

You have four options:

- freely available online resources
- resources available via subscription
- specialist search engines
- social networks.

Of freely available resources, some are produced by organisations such as universities and may be licensed under Creative Commons for anyone to use, share and (sometimes) adapt. Others are contributed by individuals or created by members of online communities.

Freely available resources

Wikipedia is well-known example of a freely available resource created by many different people. When searching for information on the web, you will often find that references to Wikipedia articles appear near the top of your list of results. Opinions on Wikipedia are often divided, as many people are sceptical about the quality of information held here. The best advice when assessing the accuracy of an article is to find out about the author and

look at the references listed at the end. You could also keep an eye out for who has edited the page, how many times it has been edited and any conflicting agendas on the part of the editors. You can find this out by clicking on the 'View history' tab of any Wikipedia entry. Wikipedia is useful for getting a quick overview of a topic, but it is always wise to double-check what you find against other sources.

If you are looking for a particular type of media, you may find it useful to go to a site that brings those resources together. Some examples include [YouTube](#) for videos, [SoundCloud](#) for music and podcasts, and the [onlinenewspapers.com](#) site which provides access to newspapers from around the world. It is often possible to interact with others on these sites by commenting on, rating, sharing or liking resources.

Open Educational Resources (OERs) have already been mentioned. This course is an example of an OER on the OU's OpenLearn platform. The [OER Commons network](#) lists a large number of OERs provided by many people around the world.

The Open University Library also provides a list of good-quality [publicly available online resources](#) that anyone can use. These resources cover a wide range of subject areas and are worth exploring if you have time.

Subscription resources

An important resource for students doing degree courses is their college or university library. The [Open University Library](#) is completely online, free to OU students and staff, and provides access to a wide range of high-quality resources, including books, journals, images, videos and music.

It is also possible to take out your own individual subscription to online journals and magazines for a fee.

Specialist search engines

Specialist search engines can be useful. For example, Google Scholar is useful for tracking down academic articles and books, though the results aren't always comprehensive, and the full text is not always freely available. [Wolfram Alpha](#) is a specialist search tool for finding data. If you are concerned about privacy, [DuckDuckGo](#) is a general search engine that (unlike Google) doesn't track your personal information or provide you with personalised search results.

Online social networks

Online social and professional networks can be useful resources for information research. LinkedIn is one example. Not only can you put your own profile and CV on there, but you can also find other people in the field you are interested in, identify potential jobs and learn from the discussions that happen in special interest groups. Some online networks are informal, such as Facebook groups set up by groups of students to support each other. Universities, including The Open University, have many such groups. You will also find groups set up for particular communities, like the Facebook pages for the [Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences](#) and the [Open University Library](#).

3.2 Developing your 'trustometer'



Figure 5 Barometer

Often, you are taking a calculated risk when deciding whether or not to trust someone or something online. What you decide to do may depend on how much time you have available and what is at stake. Developing your research and evaluation skills will enable you to weigh up the 'pros and cons' more quickly and make good decisions. You could think of the decision-making process as a kind of barometer which changes in response to a variable set of factors – your 'trustometer'. For the penultimate activity this week you are going to put some of what you have learned into practice.

Activity 7 What would you do?

Manuela, Michael and John are facing some predicaments in their digital life. Listen to the audio recordings and note down the advice you would give to each one of them.

Audio content is not available in this format.

[Manuela talks about her digital life](#)

Audio content is not available in this format.

[Michael talks about his digital life](#)

Audio content is not available in this format.

[John talks about his digital life](#)

Discussion

Manuela now knows that her bank would never ask for her PIN by email in this way. The site that she was taken to looked convincing and professional. However, on closer examination the URL was not quite right. The email itself began 'Dear Sir or madam' and contained several grammatical and spelling errors, which would not have occurred in a real communication from the bank, as these are usually carefully proof-read. A useful site that lists scams and hoaxes to be aware of is [Hoax Slayer](#).

Michael could have done a search for information on treatments for coeliac disease, to establish the facts and research behind the article. Using the PROMPT framework would help him here, as it would encourage him to ask questions about the provenance and accuracy of some of the figures quoted. An update to the article Michael read was later published, clarifying that the NHS food prescription bill was for all special diets, not just sufferers of coeliac disease (Daily Mail, 2015).

John could have done an image search using the 'Usage rights' filter in Google advanced search, to search for images that are free to use or share. Or he might have

found something suitable in an online collection of images licensed under Creative Commons, such as Flickr.

Manuela, Michael and John are generally becoming more sceptical about information they find online, or that comes to them via email. At the same time, they are becoming more open about the possibilities of learning through the many online resources available to them.

Knowing what questions to ask is giving them confidence that in future they will be able to avoid being taken in. As you encounter different information and people online, keeping those questions in mind will enable you to live wisely and safely in a digital environment. Developing a critical mindset helps you to avoid the 'potholes' in your information landscape and make the most of life online.

4 Reflection

During this week you have been learning how to ask the right questions and develop a critical mind-set towards what you read online.

Activity 8 Asking the right questions

Have a go at evaluating one or both of the stories below, using the techniques you have been introduced to. (Look back at [3 Asking the right questions](#) if you need a reminder.)

Scan the article to get a feel for the headlines and key points of the story. Make a note of the process you follow in each case and any questions that arise. For example, how do you decide if someone is who they say they are? If scientific claims are being made, how can you check what they are based on?

- **Article 1:** [Pigeons can identify cancerous tissue on x-rays...](#) (Brait, 2015) (or watch the YouTube clip: [Pigeons as Trainable Observers of Pathology and Radiology Breast Cancer Images](#)).
- **Article 2:** [Why the internet is made of cats](#) (Potts, 2014) There is no need to read the whole article, the section entitled 'Allen-Alchian Explains Why the Internet is Made of Cats' and the conclusion should give you enough to go on.

Discussion

The story about pigeons being able to identify cancerous cells is based on bona fide scientific experiments. For some of the research behind the headline see [Pigeons as Trainable Observers of Pathology and Radiology Breast Cancer Images](#) from Plos.

The birds proved to have a remarkable ability to distinguish benign from malignant human breast histopathology after training with differential food reinforcement; even more importantly, the pigeons were able to generalize what they had learned when confronted with novel image sets.

(Levenson et al., 2015)

Article 2 argues that 'cute shapes the internet' (with particular reference to Grumpy Cat). The author uses the Allen-Alchian theorem, or the 'third law of demand' to model quality on the internet.

The article makes some assumptions, which may make sense to those immersed in the field of economics, but are open to question from other perspectives. It is up to you if you buy the argument or not!

Add to your **Digital plan** one or two top tips for evaluating information that you would like to remember. Also make a note of any ways in which your information landscape has changed as a result of what you have learned, for example, useful new sources or networks you have discovered.

5 This week's quiz

Check what you've learned this week by taking the end-of-week practice quiz. Remember that while optional, working through the quiz can help you see how you're getting on with the course. Your answers are not visible to the other learners, they're just for your own information.

[Week 5 practice quiz](#)

Click on 'Week 5 practice quiz' above to access the quiz. If you open the quiz in a new window or tab, you can come back here more easily when you've finished. It also enables you to refer to the course as you work through the quiz, if you want to.

To open in a new window, right click on the link above and select 'Open in new window'. You'll get feedback on your answers as you go through the quiz. When you finish the quiz and press 'submit', the system will record that you have finished your attempt, and your score. As this is a practice quiz, this is just for your learning, so you can identify areas you might like to revisit. The score won't be counted towards your badge.

6 Summary

This week you have focused on your information landscape and how to navigate it. You have been introduced to:

- some ways of finding information quickly
- some approaches to dealing with information overload
- criteria for judging who and what can be trusted
- some useful starting points when searching for information.

You have learned how to:

- search effectively
- filter, scan and skim to get to the information you want more quickly
- ask the right questions of online sources.

You have had the opportunity to put what you have learned into practice using real-life scenarios and stories that have appeared in the media.

The key point from this week is the importance of thinking critically about sources of information, whether online or not. The relevance of all this to the workplace has been highlighted throughout.

Week 6 will continue with the theme of how to make technology work for you rather than you for it. As part of this you will have the opportunity to use your critical thinking skills to evaluate online tools and **apps**.

You can now go to [Week 6](#).

Week 6: The right tool for the job

Introduction

Have you ever wondered whether there was more to life than deleting unwanted email, or if there's a better way to timetable those music practices or football matches? This week will give you the opportunity to think about online **tools** that can help you in your everyday life, whether that's for work, home or study.

So far in this course you have been introduced to the idea of the information age and you have thought about your own digital presence and identity. You have also been given tips on how to stay safe online. You will also have gained a better understanding of how to find, evaluate and use online materials in an ethical way that respects the other people's content.

Week 5 introduced you to the concept of your 'information landscape' and helped you think about what information sources are most relevant to you in your own particular environment. You were introduced to filtering and evaluation techniques to help you deal with information overload, and some critical approaches to evaluating the information and people you encounter online.

This week develops the idea of your information landscape and asks you to consider how this relates to the tasks you carry out in your everyday life at home, for work, or when studying. You will explore ways that you can do these more efficiently and effectively by either moving the task online or by using a better online tool for managing the task.

You will use similar evaluation techniques to those developed in Week 5 to help you choose the best tool for the job.

Video content is not available in this format.

[Video 1: Introduction to Week 6](#)



By the end of this week, you should be able to:

- find the right online tools for your needs
- identify the best tools for working with others online.

This relates to 'Collaborate and share' in the Open University digital skills framework, and both 'Digital communication, collaboration and participation' and 'ICT proficiency' in the Jisc digital capabilities framework that you came across in Week 2.

1 Everyday life; everyday tasks

We all have things that we need to do regularly as part of our everyday lives. These can include:

- doing the shopping; running the household finances
- fulfilling routine appointments, like the children's football training
- less routine appointments, like visits to the dentist and hairdressers
- keeping up with family – local and further away
- socialising
- checking personal email.

These things are all important, but can sometimes get on top of us. We can miss things like friends' birthdays, or even dentist appointments. Keeping on top of our email lists can seem to take forever.

Activity 1 Everyday tasks; thinking about your own 'taskscape'

15 minutes

A **'taskscape'** is a made up word to describe all the things that you routinely do, like those listed above, some very frequently and others less so. Sometimes we are too busy doing everyday tasks to be able to see how we can do them better. This activity helps you take a fresh look at your taskscape and to start to think about areas you might want to do better.

In the audios below, Manuela, Michael and John talk about the routine things they do and which of these they find the most annoying or frustrating.

As you listen, make a note of some of the routine tasks that populate your everyday life in your **Digital plan**. The examples deal with home life but you may want to think about the tasks you routinely do as part of work or study.

Then add some details about:

- how you manage your everyday tasks at the moment
- what tools you use (e.g. pen and paper, scrawled lists, project management software at work, shared calendars, spreadsheets)
- which tasks take longer
- which tasks you do less well than other people
- which tasks get in the way of other things you'd like to do with your time?

Audio content is not available in this format.

[Manuela talks about her routine](#)

Audio content is not available in this format.

[Michael talks about his routine](#)

Audio content is not available in this format.

[John talks about his routine](#)

Select 'Reveal feedback' when you are ready.

Discussion

Your own responses to the activity will be relate to your own situation. The notes below are observations relevant to Manuela, Michael and John.

Manuela talks a lot about organising her children and the family budgets. She didn't mention her hobbies to do with the Formula One racing so I think she feels in control of those. Maybe her desire to run the household better stems from her awareness that these things can get chaotic and that collaborating with children and friends in order to get to appointments and social events takes time and can sometimes go wrong. Manuela might find that mobile banking provides her with better tools for managing the household budgets, like downloading monthly accounts in a spreadsheet format; or that tools for collaboration with other parents might ease the organisational burden of lift sharing to the teenage commitments.

Currently **Michael's** attitude to his information use and gathering is a bit haphazard. He doesn't really seek out information, rather he lets it come to him. He watches

Sports Scene on a Saturday, reads the match reports in the Sunday papers or listens to the mid-week radio when his wife, Margaret, lets him turn over from Radio 2.

Michael's admission that he thinks he should get involved a bit more with the household budgets is interesting; he realises that if he got more involved he'd know more about what's going on. It reflects his approach to gathering his information. In order to feel more in control he needs to get himself organised.

John's interest in cookery has encouraged him online, together with his love of music. So much music is shared online these days and events are advertised through bands' Facebook pages. His lack of time management could be a problem though, and although he's keen his employers might lose patience if he turns up to work too late too often. John might find time management tools useful and a better way of managing his online recipe lists could save him time whenever he wants to revisit a recipe.

You'll revisit your own notes as you progress through the week's activities.

1.1 'There's an app for that'



Figure 1 Apps

You may have heard this phrase a lot over the last few years. In fact it's been used so many times that Apple – who first used it in 2010 as part of an advertising campaign – have actually been granted sole use of the phrase as a commercial trademark.

Apple might have the monopoly on the use of the phrase 'There's an app for that', but they don't have the monopoly on apps themselves. Apps are created for each platform, such as Apple's own OSX and iOS, Android systems and Windows-based platforms. Most apps use the internet to retrieve or share data.

During this week, the terms app and tools are used to mean the same things. So let's take a moment to look at exactly what they mean.

'App' is short for an application, which is a computer program designed to fulfil a very specific function, such as retrieving data from Facebook to your smart phone. The implication is that an app will do one thing very well, although many do more than one thing. Although they are commonly used on mobile devices, whether tablet or smart phone, they are also used on a desktop PC or laptop.

'Tool' has broader definitions, but in computing terms, Google define it as:

a piece of software that carries out a particular function

(Google, n.d.)

It is generally defined as an implement to help with a particular task. Within this next activity we use the term 'tool'.

Activity 2 Thinking about your own use of apps

20 minutes

Many people use particular apps or online tools to help them get more organised. This activity helps you reflect on the online tools you currently use and to start thinking about areas where you might want to explore some new apps.

In your **Digital plan**, use the table to help you think about the different areas of work, study and home life where you might currently use apps to help you. Use the questions below to help you complete the table.

- How often do you use the app?
- What do you find particularly useful about it?
- What do you find particularly annoying about it?

You might be surprised when you complete this table at just how many online tools you currently use.

Select 'Reveal feedback' to compare your responses with John's.

Discussion

John has thought about the different areas of his life in which he currently uses apps and has completed parts of the table.

John's app list

Function: what are you doing online?	Which app? Which device?	Work/study/ daily life? (Can be more than one.)	How often?	What do you like about the app? What do you not like?
Money management				
Online banking	Website based online banking; PC.	Daily life	Once or twice a week	Remembering all the complicated passwords! But much better than going into a branch.
	Pingit; phone.	Daily life	Rarely	Added to help a mate out who'd lost his bank card. Don't really need it at the moment.

Leisure – music, video and games

Music online	iTunes; phone.	Daily life	Daily	Syncing is useful.
	Soundcloud; phone.	Daily life	Weekly	Great for dance stuff and free music that you can't get on iTunes
	Bandcamp; phone.	Daily life	Weekly	Having to create an account was a bit annoying but you need to do that to get band updates.
Games	Temple Run; phone.	Daily life	Weekly	Adverts are annoying with free version.
Video and audio	iMovie; phone.	Daily life; work	Weekly/monthly	Really easy to use; just got a friend to video me while cooking!
Audio	Recorder for iPhone; phone.	Daily life; work	Monthly	Recorded tunes for adding to video.
Video editing	iMovie; phone.	Daily life; work	Monthly	Use this for adding sound to my videos before uploading to YouTube.

News

BBC news and weather	Free BBC apps or PC based website; PC and phone.	Daily life	Daily	I have set the font size higher so it's easier for me to read. I like the videos and audio rather than having to read all the time.
Picture and video sharing	Snapchat; phone.	Daily life	Weekly	This was funny at first but now the app keeps freezing. I haven't used it in a while.
Instant messaging and group chat	Facebook and Facebook messenger; PC and phone.	Daily life	Daily	Great free messaging tool; group chat great for nights out. Not dependent on platform like some messaging tools.
Bloggng software	Blogger; phone.	Daily life; work	Weekly/monthly	I've only recently started my blog, this was fine to get me started but already I want to embed video. I am thinking I might want to do more than this app will enable.
Text to speech software	OS X; phone.	Daily life; work	Daily	Love this: helps me digest text differently when the dyslexia is slowing me down a bit.

Organisation

Travel	Google maps; phone and PC.	Daily life; work	Weekly	What's not to like? It's like having a free sat nav!
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Your table will look different according to your individual circumstances. When John was thinking about what he liked about these apps and how frequently he used them, he decided to uninstall a few as he realised he didn't use them very often. He also found alternatives for apps he found annoying.

Did you feel the same about some of the tools on your list? Are there any apps that you have heard of, thought might be useful but have never found the time to explore? Are there any that you have come across while studying this course that you would like to explore?

You will build on this activity and your answers to some of these questions as the week goes on.

1.2 What can apps and tools do for you?

So far this week you have looked at those areas of work, study or home life where you feel a bit disorganised, or where you might be aware that there could be better ways of doing things. You have also had a chance to think about the sorts of tools you already use to help you get things done.

There is now a bewildering array of apps and tools available that can be used in many different areas of life. We are now going to look at some tools and applications that you might not be aware of.

Have a look at this [The Internet in Real-Time](#) infographic (Penny Stocks Lab, n.d.) which shows the estimated amount of data generated in real time by the most commonly used apps; it can give you a real sense of the scale of activity.

Same tools: different uses

You'll have seen from the definition of an app that they are designed to do one thing very well.

Perhaps that is a bit of an oversimplification, because people usually discover that they can use them in all sorts of different contexts and situations. One app will be used differently by people, depending on their situations and circumstances. Take the teenagers who use a Facebook group chat to complain about their maths homework, but who then use that same chat to work through how to do that difficult homework by working collaboratively.

The first use of this Facebook group chat is purely social. The second, with largely the same group of people, is helping them study. The ability to communicate and collaborate with lots of people who are all engaged on a similar task can help understanding and completion of that task.

Using apps you can agree meeting times, book a work visit, review hotels, book hotels, book flights and other transport, review and book restaurants, and then share that information with colleagues around the world. You could even meet online using video conferencing if you couldn't get together in the real world. This can be useful not just at work, but also for social activities. You could use exactly the same tools to plan your business meetings or sales conference, as you would to plan a holiday itinerary with friends.

1.3 What are apps doing with your personal data?

It's important to be aware that apps can only do many of these wonderful things if they can access, store and sometimes share your personal data. In Week 4 you learned about the importance of reading, then thinking about the terms and conditions of a service before you sign up to it. Some services like Facebook own the copyright of any data that you post to their site; they will very rarely use or share that data with anyone, but you need to be aware that you sign away complete control of any information you share in Facebook.

Mobile device users may find their location information is constantly monitored by some apps and sometimes shared with advertising services. Free apps are more prone to sharing location data than other types of apps, because of their need to generate revenue through other means.

Activity 3 A judgement call

5 minutes

It's important to be more aware of the personal data that mobile devices harvest from us. This activity helps you think about the typical judgement call you would make when choosing an app.

In this scenario you have found a free app that helps you manage your photos. This app enables editing, curation and the sharing of photos through social media. The terms and conditions state that this app needs access to your location data, and that by signing up you agree to your location data being used by the app.

Take a moment to consider the implications of accepting those terms and conditions, and then decide whether you would still want to use that service. Click 'Reveal feedback' to see what we thought about the issue.

Discussion

There is no right or wrong answer to this question. Whenever you are thinking about using an app or online service you will need to consider the value of the service offered and whether it is worth the inconvenience of agreeing to some of the terms and conditions. Many of us accept a little invasion of our privacy to share things with friends online and adjust our privacy settings in social media according to personal preference. Location data is often necessary for some apps to function: geolocation services like travel and direction finders could not work without location data. Restaurant booking services and hotel finders need such data to work better.

Ultimately these decisions are up to you, but you need to be aware of the implications of your choices. Don't be put off using apps but do use them in full knowledge of what you might be agreeing to.

You might like to read this recent online article, ['Apps snoop on your location way more than you think'](#) that appeared in *Wired* magazine (2015).

2 Which apps might be for me?

Now you'll think about which tools might help you at work, at home or in your studies.

Activity 4 Same tools different uses

10 minutes

Thinking about apps and tools by their different functions, and where those functions overlap, can help you evaluate their potential use. It can also help you think more creatively about the possibilities they provide.

The following video sets out some of the ways you can use apps and tools to help you in different areas of daily life, such as work, home or study. The apps are grouped under four categories:

- tools for communicating/connecting
- tools for creating
- tools for collaborating
- tools for managing information/keeping up to date.

As you watch the video, think about the apps described, and how well they fit into these groupings. These groupings are one way of thinking about apps. What are some other ways? How would you group them? Note your ideas in the box below.

Video content is not available in this format.

[Video 2: Useful apps and tools](#)



Useful apps and tools

Provide your answer...

Discussion

Here are some of the different groups:

- some apps that can help us in all three of our contexts (work, study and home life). You might have grouped them in this way.
- you might group apps by whether they can be used across lots of different platforms, or whether you can 'sync' them on all your devices
- you might have grouped them by the type of information they work with: text, image, data, finance and so on.

Apps are great enablers, they allow us to accomplish all sort of things.

2.1 Finding apps

In the next activity you will explore an app store to get a sense of the breadth and scale of apps written for different purposes. Many of these are free to download.

There are three main app stores. The one you choose to use will depend on which mobile device or smartphone you use.

- [Google Play store](#): You would use this on Android devices (like Samsung, and HTC)
- [Apple online store](#): You would use this for Apple devices (iPad, iPhones, Macs)
- [Microsoft Windows store](#): You would use this for Windows devices (like Windows smartphones, tablets and Xbox).

All three stores are available on desktop or laptop computers.

Activity 5 Exploring app stores

20 minutes

Go to the app store for the device you use. If you don't have a mobile device or smartphone, use Google Play, as you don't need to be registered to search for apps.

Search for two apps that might appeal to your own particular interests or requirements. Some ideas are:

- an app that will allow you to set up task lists
- a calendar/diary app
- an app that provides up-to-date sports scores
- a news app
- an app that turns your phone into a torch
- an app that tells you about restaurants in your location
- a navigation app
- an e-reader app.

Think carefully about the keywords you use when you search.

When choosing each app:

- read the description to get further details about them

- read one or two of the reviews to get a sense of potential glitches or bugs which other users might have experienced, or features they particularly liked
- check their terms and conditions. Do they suit your needs?

In the box below, make a note of the two apps you chose. For each of them, briefly write down what they do and any issues reported by other users. If you are a Facebook user, you might like to share one of the apps you recommend on the [OU Library Facebook page](#).

Provide your answer...

Discussion

You should now know where to find new apps for downloading and how to navigate your way round online app stores. You will also have begun to look at ways of evaluating apps by reading product reviews by other users.

2.2 Communicating, creating, collaborating, managing

Some examples of common apps that fit under the four functional categories you thought about in Activity 4 are explained below. We have provided downloadable sheets explaining what they do and how they can help you. Click on the document names within the text below to see the lists.

Read one or two of the descriptions under each of the headings within these tables and think about some of their possible uses. You might want to download and store these documents somewhere for future reference. The sheets also have some empty spaces at the bottom where you can add any other useful apps that you discover.

You might be able to see a different use for these apps. Depending on the area you work in, you might have a use for Facebook in your job, or you might run a Facebook page to advertise your company or want to set up a closed group for colleagues.

Tools for communicating

The tools on the [Tools for communicating](#) sheet provide different ways of communicating with others online.

Tools for creating

Creation tools help you create, edit and share different types of content. The different applications described on the [Tools for creating](#) sheet help you create presentations, visualise mathematical data, video, screencasts, record and share audio, and curate images.

Be aware that all sites with video capabilities might contain some pornographic material. If you wish to avoid that content, you can set limits on your searches or choose not to use a particular service. Different services provide different ways of limiting searches.

Tools for collaborating

All the social media tools already listed on the 'Tools for communicating' sheet also enable collaboration. Many of the tools and apps listed here on the [Tools for collaborating](#) sheet rely on **cloud storage** to enable collaboration. You will need to carefully consider whether cloud storage is suitably secure for the type of material you are sharing. Do your documents contain personal data or contain commercially sensitive information? In these cases you might need to use other storage options.

Tools for managing information

The tools within the [Tools for managing information](#) sheet are most likely to be used by those pursuing study; some, like Twitter and Reddit, are also used for more social purposes.

You might be able to see a different use for the apps in the documents above. Depending on the area you work in, you might have a use for Facebook in your job, for instance, to run a Facebook page to advertise your company or to set up a closed group for colleagues.

3 Reflection

This week has introduced you to the wonderful world of apps. You have been encouraged to think about them in terms of what they can do for you, as well as what you need to be aware of when using them. You have already begun to think about some of the important questions you need to consider when using an app, like whether charges apply, or whether terms and conditions require access to too much personal data.

Use the mnemonic **ACCEPTS** to help you evaluate all aspects of an app:

Access – how will you access it? Laptop, phone, iPad, etc.? Different devices?

Collaboration – how collaborative is this tool? How easy is it to share information, or control privacy?

Cost – many tools start off free then require payment later, or offer a base application free with a fuller version that you need to pay for.

Ease of use – how long are you willing to spend learning how to use this tool? Will it be intuitive?

Purpose – how much functionality do you need?

Trust – does the app look trustworthy? Who produced it? Who else is using it? What personal data are they harvesting?

Shelf-life – is it important that it's still there in three, six, or twelve months? What would happen if it disappeared?

Activity 6 Evaluating apps

20 minutes

When choosing apps for real you will need to evaluate them before installing to make sure you understand what you are using. This activity helps you practise evaluating apps.

At the beginning of this week, you thought about some areas of your life where you would like to feel more organised or where you would like to be doing things a little differently, and noted them in your **Digital plan**. Review them now, then go back to the app store you were using in the previous activity and look for three apps that you might find useful. Make sure that one of the apps you select has collaborative uses.

- [Google Play store](#): You would use this on Android devices (like Samsung, and HTC)
- [Apple online store](#): You would use this for Apple devices (iPad, iPhones, Macs)
- [Microsoft Windows store](#): You would use this for Windows devices (like Windows smartphones, tablets and Xbox).

All three stores are available on desktop or laptop computers.

It might be that your particular function is more likely to be based on a laptop or PC; if that is the case you might want to search Google for applications or software that fit your chosen task.

You do not need to download the apps, you can read the summaries of their functionality on the app store together with the product reviews provided by users. You could also search for review articles by bloggers and journalists as they are often useful to help you evaluate apps and services.

Critically evaluate each of the three apps/tools you chose according to the ACCEPTS mnemonic that you'll find in your **Digital plan**.

Then think about the different criteria for evaluation within the ACCEPTS mnemonic. How useful was it to use this framework to evaluate your chosen tools? Make some notes in your **Digital plan** on which criteria were the most useful. Would you have used different criteria?

Select 'Reveal feedback' when you are ready.

Discussion

The framework provides a set of questions to ask of each tool. What an app does, how complex the functions are and how important it is to you in your work, study or daily life, will affect how important each of the criteria are for you. If you are downloading a free Sudoku game to while away your daily commute, then you will worry less about its functionality and shelf-life than a tool that is managing all the citations in your dissertation or helping you project manage your house extension.

You may also have thought about reliability, and whether the checklist ought to include this. Reliability is hard to measure without downloading and using the tool yourself for a period of time. Reading other users' reviews can help you gauge reliability.

One of the most compelling reasons for choosing to use an online collaborative tool is because other people that you know are already using it; this is not included in the evaluation criteria in the ACCEPTS framework. This criterion is an important one when most of the tools we use have a collaborative element; as we cannot collaborate with others if we are not part of their conversations.

Look at [Manuela's completed checklist](#). She was particularly interested in exploring collaborative sharing of documents to help with car sharing rotas for the children's activities, so her evaluation also considered the ease of use for others within her circle; the app chosen would have to be easy enough to ensure everyone's involvement.

4 This week's quiz

Check what you've learned this week by taking the end-of-week practice quiz. Remember that while optional, working through the quiz can help you see how you're getting on with the course. Your answers are not visible to the other learners, they're just for your own information.

[Week 6 practice quiz](#)

Click on 'Week 6 practice quiz' above to access the quiz. If you open the quiz in a new window or tab, you can come back here more easily when you've finished. It also enables you to refer to the course as you work through the quiz, if you want to.

To open in a new window, right click on the link above and select 'Open in new window'.

You'll get feedback on your answers as you go through the quiz. When you finish the quiz and press 'submit', the system will record that you have finished your attempt, and your score. As this is a practice quiz, this is just for your learning, so you can identify areas you might like to revisit. The score won't be counted towards your badge.

5 Summary

This week you have focused on your own taskscape and how tools and applications (apps) can help you. You have:

- been introduced to the wide range of tools and apps that exist
- thought about the personal data that applications use
- thought about different ways of categorising tools and apps
- considered different criteria for evaluating those tools.

You have learned:

- how to search for apps
- how to evaluate them using a framework.

You have had the opportunity to put what you have learned into practice using real-life scenarios and your own experience. The key point from this week is the importance of thinking critically about applications and online tools, whether at work, at home or for your studies, so that you can choose the best tools for the job.

Next week you will reflect on how digital skills relate to everyday life, study and work.

You can now go to [Week 7](#).

Week 7: Being digital: making it work for you

Introduction

Over the last six weeks you have been encouraged to reflect on the ways you interact and succeed in a digital world. You have also been given an opportunity to develop your skills and knowledge. You've been accompanied on your journey by Manuela, John and Michael.

This week you are going to find out how the course has helped Manuela, John and Michael, and what impact it has had on their lives. This will remind you of your own experience of the course and help you to think about how you might apply your learning to work, study or everyday life.

Video content is not available in this format.

[Video 1: Introduction to Week 7](#)



By the end of this week, you should:

- have had the opportunity to think about how your digital skills relate to everyday life, study and work.

This relates to all categories in the Open University digital skills framework and all categories in the Jisc digital capabilities framework that you came across in Week 2.

1 Manuela's progression through the course



Figure 1 Manuela

Since starting the course, Manuela has noticed a great improvement in her confidence online. She has recognised that what she has learned will have a great impact on her career and home life.

Manuela now keeps an eye on her digital footprint and feels more confident about being able to improve it.

To help her in her career, Manuela has learned how to harness social media to showcase her professional skills, knowledge and experience. She plans to use LinkedIn to do this and to connect with a wider community. She has set up Twitter account to keep up to date with the motor sport industry and she has started writing a blog.

At the beginning of the course, Manuela felt vulnerable online, particularly when it came to providing personal or financial information. Knowing how to assess who or what to trust, and understanding what she can do to protect herself, has improved her confidence. She now uses strong passwords and she learned how to protect her computer from viruses.

When she searched online, Manuela used to feel quite overwhelmed with the amount of information available. This course has taught her how to search more effectively and filter information. This has been invaluable when she's been searching for jobs in the motorsport industry.

1.1 Finding the right information

Manuela's primary motivation for learning more about digital skills is to help her pursue a career in marketing for the motorsport industry. She knows that as well as looking for job opportunities, she also needs to understand exactly what the job entails and find out what skills she will need.

Much of the information she needs can be found online, however, finding it can take time. Developing her skills in finding information, such as those listed below, will result in being able to search far more effectively.

- Keywords: using focused words and phrases for her search.
- Filtering her results by location.

- Filtering her results by time.

With so much information available online it is also important to know which sites are the most trustworthy. The most reliable websites will be those belonging to:

- reputable organisations/companies/industries
- government departments
- training and skills organisations
- industry specialists or experts.

A great deal of information can also come from connecting with people online and hearing about their own experiences and advice. Manuela could benefit from a more human angle, but would need to be aware that these will be opinions, rather than fact.

In the following activities you are asked to offer Manuela some guidance on searching for reliable careers information online.

Activity 1 Choosing the right keywords and phrases

20 minutes

Manuela is about to start some online research into Formula One careers. She's particularly interested in marketing and needs to work in the UK. How would you advise her on:

- the most useful search terms she might use
- how she can limit her search?

You might find it useful to jot down a few notes in the box below before reading the feedback.

Provide your answer...

Discussion

You may have mentioned some of the following search terms:

- marketing
- 'formula one'
- 'motor sports'
- careers.

You might have included 'jobs' in the search terms. This is likely to generate job opportunities, rather than advice on careers.

Manuela could use an advanced search to limit her search to:

- a particular time period – she would want to find recent information so could limit results to the past six months or year
- a particular location – she could limit the search to UK websites
- she could exclude words – Formula One is usually known for racing or engineering careers. She could exclude 'racing' and 'engineering' from her search.

Activity 2 Knowing what information to trust

30 minutes

Manuela has found three websites that she thinks might help:

- Autosport forum – <http://forums.autosport.com/topic/192442-one-does-not-simply-get-a-job-in-f1/>
- Careers guide – the motorsport industry association – <https://the-mia.com/page/careers>
- Job in F1 – <http://jobinf1.com/>

Have a look at each of the sites and offer some advice on:

- what type of information each site offers
- how trustworthy that information is
- how helpful the information is to Manuela in researching careers.

You might find it useful to jot down a few notes before reading the feedback.

Provide your answer...

Discussion

The three websites all offer different types of information and vary in relation to how trustworthy they are:

Autosport forum

There might be some useful information here, but Manuela needs to remember that this is a forum and contains opinion, rather than fact. Some of the information might not be as trustworthy as it could be, as we don't know how much experience the people in the forum have. The site is also over a year old and things might have changed since the comments were posted.

What do I need for a career in Motorsport?

This document provides comprehensive information on careers in the motorsport industry. It has been provided by the Motorsport Industry Association, which is the trade association for motorsport in the UK. This is a reliable source of information and would help Manuela to focus on what she needs to do in order to pursue a career in the sector. It provides helpful guidance and links to relevant websites.

Job in F1

Closer inspection of this site reveals that it is a private blog. The writer claims to work as a senior engineer in Formula One. However, they do not provide a name or any credentials which would allow us to confirm this. The information may well be relevant, and is worth reading. It is very comprehensive and the author has obviously put a lot of effort into writing the blog. They provide a number of links to other sites which might be useful. However, there is no obvious indication of when the blog was written, so it is not possible to know how old it is. Also, it seems to offer a lot of information related to engineering and may not mention careers in marketing.

2 John's progression through the course



Figure 2 John

At the beginning of the course, John was unsure how much it could help him, as he felt very confident about his ability to succeed in digital environments. He was hoping it would teach him how to do things more efficiently.

John was a bit embarrassed about his digital footprint. Not everything portrayed him in a good light. The course has taught John to improve this, and he's now deleted old posts on Facebook and Instagram and unfriended people he doesn't know well. He's also tightened up security on his account, to ensure that his posts are only visible to family and friends.

John is keen to progress professionally, and has recognised the power of LinkedIn to network and to promote himself to potential employers.

When it comes to safety, the course has helped John to realise where he could make improvements. Like Manuela, he now uses strong passwords and two-factor authentication. He has also installed a firewall and antivirus software to make sure that he protects the many recipes and cooking videos he has created and saved on his computer.

John is eager to share his recipes online as this would improve his online professional reputation. He feels that what he's learned about Creative Commons and copyright will go a long way towards helping him to stay within the law, and protect his own creative rights.

John's taskscape focused on his cookery activities, social events and interest in music. He thinks he could be more organised in terms of time management and has now been introduced to apps and tools that can help him to do this. The course has also taught him how to manage and keep track of the information he finds online. He'll hopefully never lose track of those important recipes again.

2.1 Using social media

John is keen to take forward the skills and knowledge from this course in terms of improving his career prospects and professional development. He would also like to become part of a wider professional network and find opportunities to showcase the skills he does have. LinkedIn is one of the world's largest professional networks and offers the ideal opportunity for John to do this.

The two videos below provide some information about LinkedIn and how to get started. As you watch them, think about how they might help John to improve his professional profile.

Video content is not available in this format.

[Video 2: What is LinkedIn?](#)

what is LinkedIn?

Video content is not available in this format.

Video 3: Top tips for getting started on LinkedIn



LinkedIn is often seen as an online CV. It should be as complete and as detailed as a CV, and should be kept up to date. Other ways LinkedIn can help with your career include enabling you to:

- connect with others in your industry or profession
- find jobs
- be part of professional groups and discussions
- find connections through other people.

Companies and employment agencies use LinkedIn to recruit staff. They will be searching for specific keywords, so it's essential to include those keywords within your profile. Think about what recruiters are likely to search for. If you're unsure, look at job specifications or advertisements for essential skills.

Activity 3 Making the most of LinkedIn

30 minutes

Think about how you would advise John on making a professional impact using LinkedIn. What kind of information should he include on his profile and who could he connect with?

You might find it useful to make some notes on your ideas in the box below before reading the feedback.

Provide your answer...

Discussion

LinkedIn will give John a good professional presence online. When people search for him, they will find his LinkedIn profile. Employers will be able to find out about his experience, passion and commitment. He will also benefit from making connections with chefs around the country, and finding new people with similar interests to connect with. He can join LinkedIn groups and look for jobs.

John will make an impact if he comes up with a strong summary that highlights his skills and enthusiasm. He needs to treat LinkedIn like an online CV and include all his experience, training and skills. By choosing appropriate terms to describe his skills, employers will be able to find him when they search for people with those specific skills.

John's profile needs to have a good headline and information on the industry he is in. He should choose an appropriate and professional-looking photograph that portrays him in a professional light.

John should initially connect with people he already knows. These might be people he currently works with, or people he's worked with in the past. From there, he can make new connections through his own contacts or special interest groups on LinkedIn.

3 Michael's progression through the course



Figure 3 Michael

Before starting the course, Michael was aware of what the internet had to offer and reasonably comfortable with email. However, he felt that his online experience was very minimal. At that time he had not found it necessary to use social media.

The course has highlighted the benefits of social media, and Michael has now learned how it can help him to connect with others and stay in touch with people. He has now joined a special interest group of engineering trainers. This has made it easier to receive industry news and share good practice.

When presented with the variety of tools and apps available online, Michael was amazed to find out that there were a number that could help him save time in certain situations. For example, using his phone to view his Facebook page saves powering up his computer all the time. He's also thrilled with bookmarking sites that allow him to track and manage the information he finds online. This makes it much quicker to find things again when he needs them.

Michael is very keen to find courses and free learning that would help him to learn the skills he needs to become a trainer within the field of railway engineering. The internet has proved to be a treasure trove in this respect. The course has taught him how to search the internet more effectively and he now feels confident at being able to filter his searches to find more specific courses and resources. The course has also helped to build the skills he needs to study online.

3.1 Investigating study

Michael's confidence in the digital world has improved very quickly throughout the course. He now wants to move forward to progress with his studies in the most efficient way.

The **Open Educational Resource (OER)** movement began in the early part of the twenty-first century and has seen substantial growth over the ensuing years. Open Educational Resources are resources (content, documents, tools and media) that can be used freely for teaching, learning and research.

Today, those who want to develop skills can find courses and materials which cost nothing and can often be studied flexibly.

A number of websites have been developed to offer these courses in meaningful ways, and many offer some kind of reward or recognition for completion.

OERs are an ideal opportunity for universities and educational organisations to provide tasters of the learning they have available. [OpenLearn](#) and [FutureLearn](#) are examples of

OER websites from the Open University. Studying in this way can introduce you to the material on offer, help you to prepare for study and give you an opportunity to experience study for yourself. If you are new to study, or have not studied for a long time, these free courses are ideal preparation.

More informal learning material can be found on more informal websites like YouTube. Universities also use YouTube and iTunes U to showcase their learning materials. Have a look at:

- [The Open University on YouTube](#)
- [The Open University on iTunes U](#)

In the activity below you are asked to provide Michael with some advice on how to find courses and resources that can help him to progress in his career.

Activity 4 Finding online courses

30 minutes

In Week 5 you explored your information landscape. Use this knowledge to advise Michael on how to find free courses and resources that could help him to progress in his career as a trainer.

- Look at what is available on [OpenLearn](#). Search the site to find resources and courses that might help Michael to pursue his goal to become a trainer in the engineering sector.
- Search online for free courses and recommend three sites which Michael can visit to find courses he might be interested in.
- Search YouTube for videos that might help him find out how engineers are trained in the UK and across the world.

Use the box below to make some notes.

As you search, use your **Digital plan** to make a note of any sites you find that you think would be useful to you, either now or in the future.

Provide your answer...

Discussion

We recommend that you access the links below by opening them in a new window or tab. You can do this by right-clicking with your mouse or holding the Ctrl key, or Cmd key on a Mac, when you click on the link.

- OpenLearn** You may have searched for resources and courses that focused on Michael's own study requirements. A couple of examples include:

- [Succeed in the workplace](#)
- [Succeed with learning](#)

You may have searched for resources and courses that focused on Michael's aim to be develop as a trainer. Some examples include:

- [Learning to teach: Making sense of learning to teach](#)
- [Teachers sharing resources online](#)
- [Learning and practice: Agency and identities.](#)

b. **Free courses** You may have found some of the following websites that either provide or direct people to free learning:

- [MOOC List](#)
- [Futurelearn](#)
- [Udacity](#)
- [Coursera](#)
- [Khan Academy](#)
- [edX](#)

c. **YouTube** YouTube is a great place to find resources that can show you how engineers are trained across the world, and highlight good practice. A few examples:

- [Inside Amtrak's engineer training school](#)
- [Railway training videos](#)
- [Network Rail](#)
- [The Open University on YouTube](#)
- [The Open University on iTunes U.](#)

4 Reflection

This week you have had a chance to use your skills to help Manuela, John and Michael to:

- develop the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in a digital world
- apply their learning to different areas of their lives – work, study and everyday life
- improve their confidence when engaging with an online environment.

This will hopefully have helped to remind you of the things you've learned over the last six weeks.

Activity 5 Your digital skills: how confident are you now?

15 minutes

Think about your level of confidence at the beginning of the course. Has your mindset changed since then through studying this course? Take a look at these questions about your digital footprint to gauge your online presence, and how you feel about it.

There are three questions, along with a list of possible responses – see which apply to you and which don't. There are some response boxes where you can add your own particular footprint details before revealing some discussion points.

Where do you make your footprint?

- I surf the web
- I use email
- I have a Facebook / Twitter / LinkedIn account
- I use my phone to update my social networking accounts
- I own and maintain a website about me

Provide your answer...

Discussion

If any of these apply to you, you definitely have a digital footprint! Almost everyone visits websites and although it may not seem like you're leaving a footprint when you visit a site, corporations may be tracking your visit for marketing purposes.

Social networking sites are also an important part of your digital life. Facebook tends to be for social interaction, LinkedIn is related to employment and people use Twitter for both business and social purposes.

Lastly, a website all about you is a significant project that takes time and effort. But if you do it well, it can become a personal portfolio to help market you to future employers!

Who else is shaping your footprint?

- My friends mention me on Facebook, and/or we use services like Foursquare
- My friends take photos at social events and post them online
- I know all my social networking friends in real life

- My friends sometimes log into each other's accounts and post fake status updates as a joke

Provide your answer...

Discussion

By now, you have probably realised that your digital footprint can be influenced by others. Posting online about the fun you're having in real life is one of the best parts of social networking. Sometimes you might know when someone is posting something about you, but sometimes you may not. If you do not know all your social networking friends in real life, you should carefully consider how much information you share with those people.

It's also important to choose passwords your friends can't guess, and keep your passwords private. Now that you know how important and permanent a digital footprint can be, treat your friends' digital footprints with respect. The internet is an open stage for the world, not a place to play even a friendly prank.

Are you in control of your footprint?

- I was shopping online, and soon afterwards, realised that the web ads were targeting the choices I had made.
- I've used Google or other search engines to see what information is out there about me.
- My social networking profile picture is a photo of me.
- My social networking profile is a photo I would be willing to show my grandmother.
- I include personal information, such as my birthday or address, in my social networking profile.
- I've tagged or untagged a photo of myself because I liked or didn't like what it said about me.
- I had a fight with a friend, or broke up with my boyfriend/girlfriend online.
- I've deleted a social networking account because I wanted to get rid of what I said or what was said about me.

Provide your answer...

Discussion

Now that you know all the ways that you and others are shaping your digital footprint, it's important to be vigilant about keeping your footprint in shape. Have you ever realised how closely marketers are watching you online? Does it bother you and would it affect the kinds of things you might shop for online?

Searching for yourself on a search engine is a quick way to see what information is out there about you. You may find a number of people who have the same name as you – and some of them might have a digital footprint you wouldn't want for yourself. How will you make yourself stand out in the crowd of people who may seem to be you?

Using an appropriate photo of yourself in your social networking profiles is an important start. Think carefully about posting your contact information or birthday. As

fun as it is to get birthday messages, you may also get targeted by marketers or even identity thieves.

We all have good days and bad days, but remember that what goes on the Internet is public and long-lasting. Do you want everyone, including your future employers, to see your personal business, including fights and breakups?

And if there are some parts of your digital footprint that you are not proud of, don't be afraid to untag a photo, ask a friend to take something of yours down or even delete an account. These 'fixes' are not absolute, but they can help to keep your private business private.

Your responses throughout this activity will be personal and specific to you. The important thing is to know how to identify areas where you have improved.

Reflecting on your learning at different stages can also help you to see how far your knowledge and skills are developing. This goes a long way towards improving your confidence.

[Discussion](#)

5 This week's quiz

Check what you've learned this week by taking the end-of-week practice quiz. Remember that while optional, working through the quiz can help you see how you're getting on with the course. Your answers are not visible to the other learners, they're just for your own information.

[Week 7 practice quiz](#)

Click on 'Week 7 practice quiz' above to access the quiz. If you open the quiz in a new window or tab, you can come back here more easily when you've finished. It also enables you to refer to the course as you work through the quiz, if you want to.

To open in a new window, right click on the link above and select 'Open in new window'.

You'll get feedback on your answers as you go through the quiz. When you finish the quiz and press 'submit', the system will record that you have finished your attempt, and your score. As this is a practice quiz, this is just for your learning, so you can identify areas you might like to revisit. The score won't be counted towards your badge.

6 Summary

This week you have had the chance to see how the course has helped Manuela, John and Michael. You have been reminded of:

- how they have improved their skills and confidences across the course
- the relevance of digital skills to work, everyday life and study.

You have also had the chance to use your own learning to advise Manuela, John and Michael on how to move forward and use what they've learned to achieve their goals.

You have also had a chance to reflect on how your own confidence has improved since you started the course.

Next week you will have a chance to reflect on your own learning in greater detail.

You can now go to [Week 8](#).

Week 8: Continuing your digital journey

Introduction

Welcome to Week 8, the final week of *Succeeding in a digital world*. You are almost at the end of the course and your badge is within reach!

Last week you considered what advice you would give Manuela, Michael and John as they move forward. This week is all about reviewing your own **Digital plan**, identifying the key things you have learned, and putting in place some practical steps to take over the next few months.

You will also have the opportunity to think about what you will do next in terms of learning opportunities, with a view to continuing your journey as a learner in a digital world.

Watch Wendy and Katharine as they introduce the final week of study.

Video content is not available in this format.

[Video 1: Introduction to Week 8](#)



By the end of this week, you should have:

- reflected on your journey over the eight weeks of this course

- identified, as part of a personal development plan (your **Digital plan**), some steps for moving forward.

This relates to all categories in the Open University digital skills framework and ‘Digital learning and development’ in the Jisc digital capabilities framework that you came across in Week 2.

1 Taking stock

During this course you have had the opportunity to engage with various aspects of life online.

In Week 1, you thought about the technology and the digital skills you use in everyday life. You also started to develop your **Digital plan**.

In Week 2 you used the Open University’s Digital skills framework to assess your confidence levels across a range of skills relevant to study and work. You identified the resources that are available to help you in areas where you feel less confident, and prioritised three activities to try out.

During Week 3 you thought about your digital identity and how you can ensure you have a good digital footprint. You reflected a little on your digital journey and what it means to be a digital citizen.

Week 4 tackled the important topic of e-safety and ethical behaviour online, including the rights and responsibilities relating to material that you or others put online. The topic of ‘digital well-being’ was introduced and you thought about how you can maintain the right balance between your digital and ‘real’ life.

In Week 5 you explored your information landscape. You were introduced to some techniques for smarter searching, dealing with information overload and judging the trustworthiness of online sources, whether those are people or information.

Week 6 was all about choosing and using apps to help you in all areas of life. In particular, you thought about how apps can help you with communicating, connecting, creating, collaborating, keeping up to date and managing information.

In Week 7 you read about how this course has helped Manuela, John and Michael. You were asked to advise them on how they can use their new digital skills to achieve their goals. Now you’ll do the same for your own situation.

In the next few sections, you will reflect on each part of the course and apply what you have learned to your own life. Make sure you have your **Digital plan** to hand as you do so.

2 Skills development

In Week 1 you thought about the major role technology plays in contemporary society and why it is important to 'be digital'. You were introduced to some of the digital skills that are important in everyday life, and that you may already be using. You applied a few of these skills to some typical real-life scenarios such as booking a holiday (Activity 3) or finding a recipe (Activity 5). You were also made aware of the [BBC WebWise Digital skills resources](#), which can help you to fill in any gaps in everyday computer skills, for example, how to set up an email account, fill in online forms or pay for things online.

The aim of Week 2 was to introduce you to the Open University's Framework for digital skills. This focuses on the kind of digital skills you need for study. You can learn online through free short courses such as this one, by researching a topic yourself, or by doing formal study at a university or college. In all cases, your digital skills will be of benefit when doing research and academic writing. They will also help you to get organised and manage your time well, for example, by keeping track of sources you have found. Being able to communicate and present yourself well online means you will find it easier to connect with other learners and work together. This is applicable to any kind of university study and particularly important in a distance learning environment.

Many of these skills are also relevant to the workplace. You had the opportunity to reflect on how far you use and feel confident with the skills in the framework. In order to help you develop skills in those areas where you feel less confident, you were encouraged to pick three activities from the Open University's [Being digital](#) collection and add them to your **Digital plan**. The Being digital resources are freely available and you can return there at any time to learn new skills.

Now you will review the activities you identified, to see what difference they have made in practice.

Activity 1 Your digital skills: progress so far

15 minutes for this activity, plus 30 minutes if working through the activities from Being digital

If you have not yet had the opportunity to work through the activities you identified in Week 2, do so now. Think about how what you have learned will help you in specific situations in your life. Make a note in your **Digital plan**.

If you have already done the activities, how have they changed the way you do things?

In the next few sections you will have the opportunity to reflect in more detail on key areas covered by this course. You will also find out more about how these skills are relevant to online learning.

3 Making your mark online



Figure 2 Footprint in the sand

In Week 3 you considered how you appear to others online (your digital profile), how you present yourself (your digital identity) and the traces of activity you leave online (your digital footprint). Digital identity and digital footprint are important for career purposes as many employers will look online to see what they can find out about prospective employees.

You learned how you can keep control of your digital footprint, while making the most of free learning opportunities. You were introduced to the concept of ‘digital citizenship’, a term that is becoming part of everyday language. Being able to communicate well online is a key skill when learning and sharing with others online and to be a good digital citizen in general.

The process of looking at the ‘footprints’ of Manuela, Michael and John and reviewing your own digital footprint highlighted how each person’s digital footprint is different. Your digital identity and digital footprint will change as you become more active (or active in new ways) online.

Studying online

Becoming a student can have an important positive influence on your digital identity. It will introduce you to new interests and new communities of learners, both formal and informal. As you move through your chosen course, the new knowledge and skills you gain can be added to your digital profile. You may find that your contact with fellow students is mainly online. If you are able to interact confidently and sensitively in online spaces such as forums or social media, you will not only reap personal benefits, but you will also encourage fellow learners. For example, you may find yourself able to take a lead in initiating online conversations, when previously you would have held back.

You will also find members of academic staff active on social media. This helps them to share their work widely and to enhance the reputation of the institution they belong to. Searching for relevant academics online will help you to establish more about their work and perhaps even make personal contact with them. Being able to learn from experts in your field is one of the advantages of the internet and social media.

Connecting with others, whether fellow students or staff, can reduce feelings of isolation, provide a means of giving and receiving support and help you to better understand what you are studying. For distance learners in particular, it is a way of broadening your horizons and keeping in touch with people.

You have seen how Manuela, Michael and John have moved forward in their digital journeys. For example, Manuela is using social media to help her pursue her goal of developing a career in marketing. Michael has become more active on Facebook, something he thought he would never do. John has taken steps to take down old

information that doesn't reflect him in a good light, and he has improved his LinkedIn profile.

Activity 2 Digital identity and digital footprint

10 minutes

In Week 7 you found how John has been developing his digital identity and managing his digital footprint. In particular, he is using LinkedIn to improve his digital profile, in order to increase his career prospects.

Think about the advice you gave him on building up his LinkedIn profile in [Activity 3 Making the most of LinkedIn](#). Does any of this advice apply to you?

Make a note in your **Digital plan** of anything you plan to do to continue developing your digital identity or to improve your digital footprint.

Next, you are going to review what you have learned about e-safety, ethical behaviour and 'digital well-being'.

4 Copyright and Creative Commons (CC)

The internet offers exciting possibilities to find, use and remix all sorts of media, for example, images, videos or music. In Week 4 you found out how you can use Creative Commons (CC) to protect your own and other people's rights when creating, sharing and re-using online material in public spaces.

Knowing how to find and use freely available resources licensed under CC will enhance your study by enabling you to introduce a wider range of information and media into assignments and projects, safe in the knowledge that you are staying within the law. As you become more confident in creating your own digital content, CC licences provide an easy way to let everyone know you are happy for them to use your work. It is also a way of making others (including employers) aware of the knowledge and skills you have gained as a result of study.

For study

Getting in the habit of **acknowledging** others' work is very good preparation for academic writing. When you make clear reference to the sources you have used, you are signalling clearly what you have based your arguments on. Readers of your work can follow up these sources for themselves as they engage with your writing. Good **referencing** also helps you to avoid **plagiarism**. Plagiarism is when you use the work of other people to gain some form of benefit (for example, a good essay grade) without formally acknowledging that the work came from someone else. It does not just occur in academic assignments. It may happen when you pass on information in online forums or other social networking sites without acknowledging where it came from.

In Week 4, you learned how to use the work of other people safely. The following activity is an opportunity for you to reflect on how this skill might help you.

Activity 3 Creative use of others' resources

20 minutes

John is publishing his online recipe collection under a CC licence, which is having the added benefit of enhancing his digital profile. Michael has really enjoyed producing his own materials (Christmas cards, leaflets and posters) using images licensed under CC. Manuela has used photographs and music for a presentation on repairing bikes. She has even been the star of an online video, which she made available under a CC licence.

- Think about your own interests and hobbies and identify something you would like to share with others online.
- Find a relevant image online that represents your interest and is free to use or share under Creative Commons. For example, if your interest is walking, it might be a picture of a pair of walking boots. If your interest is sport, it could be an image of the particular sport you do or follow.
- Note down where you found it and why you chose it (i.e. how it represents your interest or hobby and how you know that you can use it freely).

- Optional: If you wish to, post the image on the [OU Library Facebook page](#) with a short explanation of why you have chosen it.

Make a note in your **Digital plan** of anything you plan to do to develop your skills in this area.

5 Staying safe online



Figure 3 Protecting yourself online

In Week 4 you focused on e-safety and how to protect yourself online (including creating strong passwords). You were introduced to the concept of digital well-being and the need to balance your digital life against your real one. Spending too much time online can result in stress, so making time for 'offline' activity is important. You also thought about how you can ensure your safety and that of others when communicating online.

Manuela and Michael started out feeling quite cautious about going online because of safety considerations. Knowing how to stay safe online has encouraged them to branch out in terms of what they do online and who they share with. John, who has grown up using technology as part of everyday life, was more confident, but has become much more aware of how he appears to others online and ways in which he can positively influence this.

All three now feel much more in control of their digital life. They have also gained the knowledge and skills to put some of their own material online and are able to make greater use of others' work in what they create.

Managing your study

When it comes to online learning, being aware of some of the pitfalls can help you stay in control of your study and your life in general. This includes knowing how to manage your time online, taking regular rest breaks from technology and generally paying sufficient attention to your physical and mental health.

Although there are many benefits to connecting with others in a study community, there are also risks in sharing too much of your life online. It is also possible to feel pressured by others' achievements and have a sense that you are missing out. It can help to remember that even those people who are very active on social media are generally only sharing selected parts of their lives.

6 Critical consumption



Figure 4 Information overload

In Week 5 you explored your information landscape. As part of this, you learned some tips and techniques for finding and filtering information quickly, and dealing with information overload. You were introduced to two frameworks (PROMPT and CAN) which help you ask the right questions of information and people you come across online. Some useful starting points were highlighted, including Wikipedia. Although Wikipedia is not regarded as a reliable academic source, it can give a helpful overview of a topic. You just need to be aware of its limitations.

You had the opportunity to apply your learning to some real-life scenarios faced by Manuela, Michael and John. Throughout this course they have each been developing their own ‘trustometer’: the ability to decide which sources you can trust in any particular context.

In Week 7, you found out how the information landscape for Manuela, Michael and John has evolved through doing this course. They are using some of the same sources as before, but in different ways. For example, they are making more use of social media to keep up to date with things they are interested in. They are also using their research skills to move forward with their career aspirations.

By putting into practice the frameworks for evaluating information, they have also become more confident about deciding who and what they can trust online.

Research online

Being able to carry out research online is a very useful skill and part of learning to study independently. It will help you when preparing assignments and to back up your arguments when discussing study topics with others, whether that’s online or face-to-face.

In this course, you have mainly focused on searching the internet. However, not all information is freely available on the open web. Some of it is hidden in company intranets or online subscription resources.

If you decide to study at university, your university library is a key place to find information. Online libraries, such as the Open University’s, make available articles, books, images, music and videos, as well as many other types of resources on all kinds of subjects. By getting to know your online library you can:

- find information for assignments from a variety of sources that you would not otherwise be able to access
- find different viewpoints on a subject
- read the full text of the books and articles that might not be freely available on the internet
- be confident that the information you find is of a high standard, because it has been written and reviewed by experts in the field.

A US survey of teachers (Purcell et al., 2013) found that 91 per cent of teachers surveyed reported that 'judging the quality of information' is the top digital skill students need for the future.

In earlier weeks, you learned how to evaluate information you find on the web. Although the quality of information you'll find in a university library is high, you should still always question what you read. As you progress with studying and get to know your subject, you will become aware of different schools of thought and develop your own opinions. Your critical thinking skills will help you to question what you come across in all sorts of other situations too, including the workplace.

Activity 4 Developing discernment and expanding your information landscape

20 minutes

Think about the advice you gave to Manuela and Michael in Week 7 on finding information and resources to help them move forward with their career aspirations. Is there any advice you could use to help your career? Make a note of the advice and decide how you could put it into practice.

Provide your answer...

Does any of this advice apply to you?

Refer back to the evaluation criteria (CAN and PROMPT) you were introduced to in Week 5 and the notes you made in your **Digital plan** at the time about points you wanted to remember.

The CAN and PROMPT evaluation criteria are designed to remind you of the key questions to keep in mind when judging the quality and reliability of information. Now that you have worked through this course, you may have formed your own ideas about how to question the sources you come across online. Have a go at creating your own set of evaluation questions, with a suitable abbreviation that you will remember.

Provide your answer...

7 The right tool for you

Week 6 was an opportunity to explore some of the online tools ('apps') that can make life run more smoothly and aid collaboration with others. You thought about your 'taskscape' and how using apps to help you manage routine tasks can save you time. This applies to all areas of life, whether everyday life, work or study, and some apps provide a way of linking different parts of your life more seamlessly.

You were introduced to some examples of apps that enable you to communicate and connect, create content, collaborate and keep up to date. You had the opportunity to think about the questions to keep in mind when choosing an app. As with evaluating other online sources, it's a case of being clear about how you want to use the app and knowing the right questions to ask.

It is worthwhile establishing what apps can help you with study. This could include:

- blogging apps to help you share your thoughts and ideas with others (e.g. Blogger)
- file management apps that enable you to capture, store and synchronise text, image and video files across multiple computing devices (e.g. Evernote)
- tools for storing files and sharing them with others (e.g. Dropbox)
- sites that help you to collect together useful information and images, and discover other people's collections (e.g. Pinterest)
- apps for sharing presentations (e.g. Slideshare)
- apps that help you to manage your references (e.g. Mendeley).

You may find apps developed by universities, such as OU News (up-to-date information from around the University) or OU Alive (the OU Undergraduate Prospectus brought to life with videos of real students talking about their experience of studying with the OU).

In Week 7, you found out how Manuela, Michael and John are using online tools and apps. In some cases they have become more adventurous, and in others, more discerning. All three are now able to think more critically about how these kind of online tools can best help them manage their life, whether that is booking a restaurant or collaborating on a work project.

There are still areas of life where they would like to be better organised and more efficient. Maybe you feel the same. The following activity gives you an opportunity to reflect on your own use of online apps.

Activity 5 Using apps

15 minutes

At the end of Week 6 you chose three apps to help you in areas of life where you would like to be more organised or do things a little differently.

Take a moment to review how useful these apps have been. Make a note in your **Digital plan** of where they have made a positive difference in the area of life you identified.

If you have not had the opportunity to try them out yet, do so now.

If any of the apps have not lived up to expectations, see if you can find another app that is more suitable for your needs.

If you are planning to do further study, you may want to look for apps that help you to manage your information.

8 Reflection

Now that you are almost at the end of the course, it is time to do one last piece of self-assessment before you take the final quiz and gain your badge. The following activity is designed to help you to review your digital skills development as a whole.

Activity 6 Moving forward

30 minutes

Your **Digital plan** has been specifically designed to provide you with a record of your learning throughout this course.

Take some time to review your **Digital plan** now, thinking about your starting point, your goals for life, work and study and what you hoped to get from the course.

- What are the three most valuable things you've learned?
- How will you apply these three things to your own situation?
- What would be your top tip to a fellow learner on 'Succeeding in a digital world'?

Provide your answer...

9 This week's quiz

Check what you've learned over the course by taking the end-of-course quiz. If you would like to earn a digital badge on completion of this course, you will need to do this quiz. However, you can finish the course without completing the quiz and without obtaining a badge, if you prefer.

[Week 8 badge quiz](#)

Click on 'Week 8 badge quiz' above to access the quiz. If you open the quiz in a new window or tab, you can come back here more easily when you've finished. It also enables you to refer to the course as you work through the quiz, if you want to. At the end of the quiz press 'submit'. This enables the system to provide you with a badge at the end of the course if relevant.

10 Summary

Congratulations! You have completed *Succeeding in a digital world*.

As you have progressed through the course, you have had the opportunity to explore different aspects of digital life and develop your skills and confidence. It may be that you feel pretty familiar with some areas by now. You have also followed the digital journeys of Manuela, Michael and John, and learned from their experience.

In Week 8, you have reflected on what you have learned throughout the course and what your next steps might be. You have reviewed:

- your digital skills as a whole and what your priorities are for development
- what your next steps might be in developing your digital profile (you looked at how John is using LinkedIn for career purposes)
- how freely available material (licensed under Creative Commons) can help you enhance material you produce in a variety of situations
- the questions to ask when evaluating online sources (including creating your own mnemonic) and how you can make that part of your approach
- your use of apps to help you be more organised or do things differently, perhaps enabling you to link better between different areas of life such as home and work.

All the skills you have been introduced to in this course are relevant not only to everyday home and work life, but also to study. By engaging with life online, you are laying strong foundations for any courses you may do in future, whether freely available, like this one, or formal study, such as online distance learning with the Open University.

Throughout the course you have been building your **Digital plan**. This document is for you to take with you and keep adding to in future. You may also want to share it with other people. Although the course is at an end, your digital journey will continue.

If you've gained your badge you'll receive an email to notify you. You can view and manage your badges in [My OpenLearn](#) within 24 hours of completing all the criteria to gain a badge.

Wishing you all the very best for the future and every success in your digital life!

Get careers guidance

The [National Careers Service](#) can help you decide your next steps with your new skills.

Tell us what you think

Now you've come to the end of the course, we would appreciate a few minutes of your time to complete this short [end-of-course survey](#) (you may have already completed this survey at the end of Week 4). We'd like to find out a bit about your experience of studying the course and what you plan to do next. We will use this information to provide better online experiences for all our learners and to share our findings with others. Participation will be completely confidential and we will not pass on your details to others.

Glossary

Browser

Short for web browser, a program used to navigate the internet by connecting to a web server, allowing the user to locate, access and display web content.

Facebook

A popular free social networking website, used by millions of people around the world.

Search engine

A programme that enables users to find information on the internet.

Selfie

A self-portrait in the format of a digital photograph, most commonly taken with a camera or mobile phone held at arm's length. Posting selfies is popular among users of **social networking** sites like **Facebook** and Instagram.

Social media

The blanket term for online sites and applications which allow a large number of users to interact and share information digitally, for example **social networking** sites like **Facebook** or Twitter or media sharing sites such as **YouTube**.

Social networking

In this context, the use of internet-based **social media** sites and applications to connect with friends, family, colleague and other personal contacts.

Tablet

Tablets are mobile computing devices which are operated by a touchscreen. For example, iPads and Microsoft Surface.

YouTube

A free video sharing site where anybody can watch online videos, and also upload videos they have created themselves.

Information age

A time when large amounts of information are widely available to many people, largely through computer technology.

Plagiarism

Using the work of other people to gain some form of benefit, without formally acknowledging that the work came from someone else.

Podcast

A digital audio recording made available on the internet, usually as part of a series and released at regular intervals. Podcasts can be listened to online or downloaded to a computer or portable media player.

Wikipedia

A free encyclopaedia, written collaboratively by the people who use it, using a website called a wiki which can be easily edited by anyone.

Citizen science

A term describing scientific research carried out by members of the general public, often under the supervision of scientists or organisations. It is often used for basic analysis of vast sets of data provided online for people to work through on behalf of scientific researchers, facilitated by 'Citizen Science' websites. An example of **Crowdsourcing**.

Copyright

The legal provision which protects the rightful creator of an original work or concept from plagiarism and intellectual theft by others.

Creative commons

An organisation whose philosophy and work are focused on promoting a variety of copyright licences which allow creators to grant more generous and flexible levels of usage of their work by others.

Crowdsourcing

A term that refers to the largely online practice of asking for input from a large number of people on a specific project. **Citizen science** is an example of crowdsourcing.

Data

Facts and statistics collected together for reference or analysis. In an online context, data refers to information stored and transmitted electronically for others to see.

Digital citizenship

A person who develops the skills and knowledge to effectively use the internet and other digital technology, especially in order to participate responsibly in social and civic activities. (Dictionary.com, 2015)

Digital footprint

The trail or traces that people leave online.

Digital identity

How a person presents themselves online.

Emoticons and emoji

A method of conveying emotional tone and intention, either online or in text messages, using characters or small images. It began by using simple punctuation, e.g. the classic 'smiley' :-), but has evolved to include many different formats of small pictures, commonly called emoji.

Flickr

A **social media** site for sharing photographs and videos – it was one of the biggest sources of photography on the internet in the 2000s. Some content can be downloaded by anyone under **Creative Commons copyright** licences.

LinkedIn

A social networking site designed specifically for the business community, which enables registered members to connect and create networks with others they know and trust professionally.

Online campaigns

Using electronic communication technologies such as social media to engage in activism, advocacy, marketing, and online petitions, especially by citizen movements. An example of an online campaigning site is change.org.

Right to be forgotten

The right to have information about you on the web removed from **search engines** so that it no longer comes up in search results.

Search engine

A programme that enables users to find information on the internet.

Social media

The blanket term for online sites and applications which allow a large number of users to interact and share information digitally, for example social networking sites like Facebook or Twitter or media sharing sites such as **YouTube**.

YouTube

A free video sharing site where anybody can watch online videos, and also upload videos they have created themselves.

Acknowledgement

When you credit someone else's work by stating their name, the title of the piece of work, the date of its publication and its source.

Antivirus software

Software designed to protect computing devices from **virus** attacks.

Bibliography

A list of other people's work that may have influenced your own work, perhaps an essay as a student, but which you haven't directly quoted from or provided a summary of. The list provides the title of each piece of work, the date of their publication, source and author's name.

Cloud storage

A public or semi-public space online where data can be stored and accessed from anywhere.

Copyright

The legal provision which protects the rightful creator of an original work or concept from plagiarism and intellectual theft by others.

Copyright holder

The person or organisation who usually created the piece of work and has the right to control its reuse or reproduction.

Copyright user

Someone who uses someone else's work.

Creative Commons

An organisation whose philosophy and work are focused on promoting a variety of copyright licences which allow creators to grant more generous and flexible levels of usage of their work by others.

Credit

When using someone else's work and you make it clear that it is not your own work.

Cybercrime

Criminal activities carried out computers and a network like the internet. This includes computer-related crime, such as hacking, and traditional crimes conducted through the internet, for example, hate crimes or identity theft.

Digital well-being

Ensuring that digital technologies do not impact negatively on safety, relationships or mental and physical health.

Dropbox

A personal **cloud storage** service often used for file sharing and collaboration.

Fair dealing

Also known as fair use. Using someone else's copyright material without acquiring permission from the rights holders, under one of the following exempt conditions: criticism, news reporting, personal research or educational purposes, parody. The term 'fair use' is more used in the US, and 'fair dealing' in the UK.

Firewall

A system designed to prevent unauthorised access to or from a private network such as your computer.

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

This is an EU policy which sets rules for businesses and individuals who collect and process information so as to protect privacy and personal data.

Hacking

When someone gains unauthorised access to data in a system or computer.

Malware

Software that is specifically designed to disrupt or damage a computer system.

Plagiarism

Copying or using someone else's material without crediting them.

Reference list

A list of other people's work that you have quoted from or referred to in a summary, perhaps in an essay as a student. The list provides the title of each piece of work, the date of their publication, source and author's name.

Remix

Take existing online material and rework it for your own purposes.

Rightsholder

The person or organisation who own the legal rights of a piece of work.

Synchronise

or sync – link all your computers and mobile devices together so that you can easily access your information from anywhere.

Social media

the blanket term for online sites and applications which allow a large number of users to interact and share information digitally, for example social networking sites like Facebook or Twitter or media sharing sites such as YouTube.

Two-factor authentication

describes gaining access to an online account using two pieces of information such as a password and a code sent to your mobile phone for example.

Virus

A computer programme that is capable of copying itself and typically has a detrimental effect such as corrupting the system or destroying data.

The 5 Ds

A system for dealing with information overload. The 5 Ds stand for: Discard, Deal with it, Determine future action, Direct / Distribute it, Deposit it (i.e. file it).

Apps

Abbreviation of 'applications', usually meaning programs that run on a computer or mobile device.

Browser

Short for web browser, a program used to navigate the internet by connecting to a web server, allowing the user to locate, access and display web content.

CAN

A framework developed by the Open University for evaluating information. The letters CAN stand for Credibility, Agenda, Need.

Cortana

A virtual intelligent **personal assistant** created by Microsoft for Windows devices. Cortana can be set up to work on your PC (personal computer) and phone, enabling you to keep track of information and events wherever you are.

Data

Facts and statistics collected together for reference or analysis. In an online context, data refers to information stored and transmitted electronically for others to see.

DuckDuckGo

A **search engine** that does not track your online activity and therefore protects your privacy.

Filtering

Dealing with large amounts of search results by using the options in a search engine and / or reading quickly through to focus on the most relevant.

Information overload

Difficulty or stress caused to someone by the presence of too much information.

Personal assistant

In the context of life online, a personal assistant is a kind of virtual secretary who will do tasks for you such as scheduling appointments, organising travel arrangements, or just waking you up in the morning.

PROMPT

A framework developed by the Open University for evaluating information. The letter PROMPT stand for Presentation, Relevance, Objectivity, Method, Provenance and Timeliness.

Scanning

A technique to help you read large amounts of text online to decide whether you should read further.

Search engine

A programme that enables users to find information on the internet.

Search operators

Punctuation or characters that you can use in a **search engine** query to narrow or widen the focus of your search.

Siri

A built-in **'personal assistant'** computer programme on Apple devices (iPhones, iPads and iPods) that enables users to speak voice commands in order to operate the mobile device and its **apps**.

Skimming

A technique for reading online text quickly in order to get an overview.

Viral

To 'go viral' describes the way a piece of online content can quickly be seen and shared across the world by a large number of people via the internet.

Wolfram Alpha

A specialist search engine for finding **data**.

App

Abbreviation of 'application', usually meaning programs that run on a computer or mobile device.

Cloud storage

A public or semi-public space online where data can be stored and accessed from anywhere.

Remix

Take existing online material and rework it for your own purposes.

Sync

Or synchronise - link all your computers and mobile devices together so that you can easily access your information from anywhere

Tags

Where web pages, blogs and other online resources can be labelled with names that allow users to easily search for similar or related content.

Taskscape

A term invented for this course, to describe the sorts of everyday tasks that make up our lives, ranging from the daily and the mundane to the less frequent but still important things we need to get done.

Tool

A digital programme or **app** that enables you to carry out a particular function.

Open Educational Resource (OER)

A resource (such as a document, tool or video) which is made freely available via the internet for educational use.

Acknowledgement

When you credit someone else's work by stating their name, the title of the piece of work, the date of its publication and its source.

Plagiarism

Using the work of other people to gain some form of benefit, without formally acknowledging that the work came from someone else.

Referencing

Giving credit to other people's work that you have quoted from or referred to. The reference list provides the title of each piece of work, the date of their publication, source and author's name.

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Week 3

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Week 6

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Week 7

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Week 8

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[Week 1: Your digital life](#)