

Do Elementary Students Need a  
Technology Driver's License?

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Do elementary students need a technology driver's license? Aren't older, secondary students causing most of the serious problems? The answer to question one is yes. The answer to question two is no. We believe the problems of technology misuse and abuse begin at an early age. While it might sound like an absurd idea, we believe that elementary schools should require a digital citizenship license.

What is digital citizenship? *Digital citizenship can be defined as the norms of behavior with regard to technology use.* Misusing and abusing technology is becoming a major problem in schools. In our opinion, teachers should issue a digital citizenship license to each student as they begin to learn how to use technology.

What would a digital driver's license quiz look like? The following 9-item digital citizenship license/quiz will give you an idea. The questions for each theme can be found in the literature. The nine major themes include: (1) digital etiquette, (2) digital communication, (3) digital education, (4) digital access, (5) digital commerce, (6) digital responsibility, (7) digital rights, (8) digital safety, and (9) digital security (self-protection). (For more information on digital citizenship see <http://coe.ksu.edu/digitalcitizenship>.) Following the quiz, you will find the answer for each question with a brief explanation.

### **Digital Manners (Etiquette)**

1. Having your cell phone turned on during school hours is:
  - a. a bad idea because it disturbs others.
  - b. necessary to keep in touch with my parents.
  - c. not a big deal because everyone else does it.
  - d. something I do every day

### **Digital Messages (Communication)**

2. How many people should you have in your IM (Instant Messaging) Buddy List?
  - a. as many as I can get.
  - b. none.
  - c. only many as my close friends and family.
  - d. anyone who will talk to me.

### **Digital Learning (Education)**

3. When learning about technology in school, it is important for you to know:
  - a. what the rules are for using technology.
  - b. how to work with others when using the technology.
  - c. understanding different technologies and how they are used.
  - d. all the above.

### **Digital Inclusion (Access)**

4. Students with disabilities (those who aren't able to see, can't hear, aren't able to walk):
- can't use technology.
  - should have the same opportunities as others to use technology.
  - are not able to understand and learn about technology.
  - shouldn't have opportunities to use technology.

### **Digital Business (Commerce)**

5. If your parents allow you to buy things on the Internet, you should protect yourself by:
- doing nothing because all internet sites are safe and protected.
  - doing nothing because your friends do it and that makes it ok.
  - not telling anyone that you are buying things from the Internet.
  - checking to see if the site is safe and secure (i.e., see if it has a privacy policy) when buying something.

### **Digital Trust (Responsibility)**

6. When using graphics and text from the Internet, you should:
- use as many as possible.
  - give the information to as many people as possible.
  - give credit to the author of the information in the project.
  - never use anything from the Internet.

### **Digital Privileges (Rights)**

7. When using technology, you should:
- do what ever you want because no one ever checks.
  - ask teachers and parents about what can done.
  - not ask permission because parents and teachers always say no.
  - ask your friends because they know about technology.

### **Digital Protection (Safety)**

8. How you work with technology (i.e., sitting, laying, stooping at the desk, floor, or sofa):
- doesn't matter as long as I am comfortable.
  - depends on where I am.
  - isn't something that I need to be concerned about.
  - is important because poor posture can cause physical problems later in life.

### **Digital Precaution (Security: Self-protection)**

9. When dealing with people online, giving personal information is:
- okay as long these people live far away.
  - never a good idea, no matter the reason.

- c. fine as long as the people are nice.
- d. nothing to worry about.

## **Conclusion and Implications**

Digital citizenship should become a top priority for schools. Here are some questions to stimulate further discussion:

### **Why the Driver's License Metaphor?**

The driver's license metaphor implies that using technology is a privilege and not a right. There are rules to the road, and you must obey the law. Speed limits, stoplights, safety belts, etc. are part of being a good citizen on the road. The same is true for navigating with technology.

### **Where Should Digital Citizenship be Taught in the Curriculum?**

Digital Citizenship should be taught at all levels in the K-12 curriculum and integrated in all subjects. This quiz in this article is focused on elementary age students. As sophisticated use of technology increases, so does the complexity of misuse and abuse. A secondary level driver's license can be found at: <http://coe.ksu.edu/ribble>.

### **What Areas Should the Digital Citizenship Cover?**

Technology use, abuse, and misuse can be categorized under nine main themes that make up digital citizenship. These include: (1) digital etiquette (2) digital communication, (3) digital education, (4) digital access, (5) digital commerce, (6) digital responsibility, (7) digital rights, (8) digital safety, and (9) digital security (self-protection). Each of these themes needs to be explored at every grade level.

### **When Should We Start?**

Now. There is overwhelming evidence that technology misuse and abuse is widespread and can be found inside and outside the school. While Acceptable Use Policies (AUPs) are important, they are not enough. Students must understand what is appropriate and inappropriate and that comes through discussion and dialogue—not just following a set of rules.

### **How Do We Start?**

Make digital citizenship a priority. Everyone including administrators, board members, teachers, parents and students need to be heavily involved in the dialogue about the appropriate use of technology. Remember, the next time that you hear a cell phone ring in a movie or in school, ask them if they have a technology driver's license. It is never too early to learn how to use technology appropriately.

*#1 - Correct Answer: A Many schools are allowing students to have cell phones in schools for safety, but are requiring that they be turned off or silenced during the school day. This keeps students focused on doing the right things in school.*

*#2 - Correct Answer: C There are many students who use IM at home and at school. Students need to be aware of who they are talking to (and what information they are giving) when using this communication method.*

*#3 - Correct Answer: D Technology affords many opportunities for students to learn beyond the classroom. But there must be an understanding of how to use the technologies first.*

*#4 - Correct Answer: B Students with disabilities should have opportunities to work and learn with technology. Some students may need special technology tools to provide this opportunity (e.g., screen readers, special input devices, speech to text converters).*

*#5 - Correct Answer: D Purchasing goods and services online needs to be taken seriously. People can gain information about you and your family from information that you provide. Make sure the site is secure by checking it over (e.g., does it have secure access only, ask only questions that are appropriate for the purchase, have alternate ways to contact the company).*

*#6 - Correct Answer: C Students need to realize that when "borrowing" anything from the Internet that its use is restricted by the owner (unless stated otherwise). All content taken from the web should be cited appropriately.*

*#7 - Correct Answer: B All users have certain rights and responsibilities when using technology. It is important to know what is appropriate and what is not appropriate before using technology.*

*#8 - Correct Answer: D Users often don't think about safety physical habits until they hurt themselves. How you use technology today can have a big impact on how you are going to be able to use it in the future.*

*#9 - Correct Answer: B It is easy to act differently online than face-to-face. Students need to make sure that private information remains private.*

## References

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