

ACTIVITY 3: What Kind of Citizen Will You Be?

Digital citizens participate in online communities in a variety of ways. Sometimes their participation is “passive” (clicking on a website or watching a video, for example), and sometimes it is “all in” (making and posting a video or writing a blog post). The effects of how we participate have bigger consequences than we realize—not just for each individual person but for the broader online community as well. This activity will help your children understand this. It is adapted from an excellent online resource: “Our Space: Being a Responsible Citizen of the Digital World,” a collaboration between The GoodPlay Project and Project New Media Literacies. You can find the original lesson [here](#).

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Youth will...

- Discover that digital citizens can participate in many different ways.
- Understand that how a citizen participates impacts the entire community.
- Recognize that they have a responsibility to think through the possible consequences of their online actions.

INTRODUCING THE ACTIVITY

Ask your children if they know what these three terms mean: **troll**, **lurker**, and **upstander**. Be sure they tell you what they think these terms means in the context of online life. Have them describe the types of actions each type of person described above might take online. For example: A *troll* might leave mean comments. Or, a *lurker* might use the Internet, but never post anything.



Image courtesy Wikipedia

THE ACTIVITY

1. Be sure you both have a good understanding of these terms:

TROLL:

A person who sows discord on the Internet by starting arguments or posting mean comments.

THE ACTIVITY, continued

LURKER:

A person who uses the Internet, exploring or joining various communities, but never posts or comments.

UPSTANDER:

A person who comments positively and stands up for others.

An upstander might even help new members of a community learn the rules, guidelines, and principles of the community.

2. Next, ask your children to consider situations in which the people described above might clash with one another online. For example, *an **upstander** might try to get a **troll** to stop violating a community's rules or principles and then end up becoming the target of that **troll's** mean comments.* Introduce the idea that they should think about the impact of any action they take online—**upon themselves AND upon the larger community**. Encourage your children to weigh these factors before taking any action online.
3. Weighing the impact of one's online actions, or inactions, is challenging. The following scenarios will help your children practice this offline. Give them these scenarios, and be sure to discuss and debate their responses. Remember, online communities are challenging for young digital citizens to navigate. By discussing and debating these possible online scenarios, you will help your children develop critical thinking skills that will guide them when they encounter similar situations online.

GOAL

The goal of this activity is to help your children understand that there are **a variety of ways to participate** in online communities. Thinking through these sample scenarios, and discussing them with you, will help your children decide what kind of community member they want to be.

Reference:

[“Our Space: Being a Responsible Citizen of the Digital World.”](#)

SCENARIO #1

On a social media site you use you notice that someone you follow has posted something that could be offensive to people of a certain race. What do you do?

Here are some possible options:

- You could ignore it.*
- You could post a comment saying you find their post offensive.*
- You could block or unfollow the person who posted it.*
- Or you could do something entirely different?*

1. What do you decide to do? **Explain:**

2. Describe the impact your chosen course of action might have **upon you and upon the larger community**. Is it still the right course of action to take? Explain why or why not:

SCENARIO #2

You are part of a group text in which two of your friends get into a fight. They're really, really angry with each other and harsh comments are exchanged. Many of your other friends are chiming in, making the situation even worse. What do you do?

Here are some possible options:

- *You could continue to follow the situation but say nothing.*
- *You add to the text messages, suggesting your friends talk face-to-face.*
- *You could ask to be eliminated from the group text.*
- *Or you could do something entirely different?*

1. What do you decide to do? **Explain:**

2. Describe the impact your chosen course of action might have **upon you and upon the larger community**. Is it still the right course of action to take? Explain why or why not:

SCENARIO #3

You're playing an online game with people you don't know, and you are wearing a headset. During the game, players use offensive language. Additionally, when they discover that someone playing the game is new to the site they direct most of their offensive language at the new player, and even start to bully the player. You watch and hear this unfold. What do you do?

Here are some possible options:

- You could tell the other gamers to stop.*
- You could suggest to the new player to stop playing the game or to find another group to play with.*
- You could keep playing and not say anything.*
- You could quit the game and try and find other people to play with.*
- Or, you could do something entirely different!*

1. What do you decide to do? **Explain:**

2. Describe the impact your chosen course of action might have **upon you and upon the larger community**. Is it still the right course of action to take? Explain why or why not:

SCENARIO #4

One of your friends sends you a link to a video on YouTube, saying she is really offended by it and just wants to vent to you about it. Naturally, you're curious about what it was in the video that made your friend so mad. If you click the link and watch the video, though, then creators of the video will see that you chose to watch it. Additionally, this means they will receive more video views which could translate to more income for them if they are running ads. Unless you choose to leave a comment or a rating, they won't have any idea what you thought of the video. What do you do?

Here are some possible options:

- You could watch the video and, if you are offended, leave an angry comment.*
- You could watch the video and, if you are offended, give it a thumb down rating.*
- You could watch the video and not leave a comment.*
- You could refuse to watch the video.*
- Or, you could do something entirely different!*

1. What do you decide to do? **Explain:**

2. Describe the impact your chosen course of action might have **upon you and upon the larger community**. Is it still the right course of action to take? Explain why or why not:

SCENARIO #5

A person you don't know, "Jemma," starts an online blog and posts her first article. Unfortunately, her article is really, really bad. In addition, as you read it, you notice it is full of inaccuracies. There's a box where you can post comments at the end. You think that people who are looking for information about the topic she wrote about might consider her information accurate, and this is your opportunity to set them straight. What do you do?

There are many options. Just some of them include:

- In the comment box you could offer constructive criticism and point out the inaccuracies in her post.*
- You could tell others, via the comments, how terrible you think her post is.*
- You could find a different article to read and not comment at all.*
- Or, you could do something completely different!*

1. What does your group decide to do? **Explain:**

2. Describe the impact your chosen course of action might have **upon your and upon the larger community**. Is it still the right course of action to take? Explain why or why not:

SCENARIO #6

You are scrolling through a social media site when you see that one of your friends has posted a link to a news article. Because the headline includes the word “shocking” you immediately click on it. Using your critical thinking skills, you determine that the article is “fake news.” What do you do?

There are many options. Just some of them include:

- You could ignore the article and keep scrolling through your feed.*
- You could confront your friend and ask her why she is posting fake news.*
- You could comment on your friend’s feed.*
- You could alert the social media site to the fact that you detect false information.*
- Or, you could do something completely different!*

1. What does your group decide to do? **Explain:**

2. Describe the impact your chosen course of action might have **upon you and upon the larger community**. Is it still the right course of action to take? Explain why or why not:
