

Discussion Guide

Tech Confidential: Before You Hit Send

Overview

After a brief class discussion about communication and technology, students read and discuss the pamphlet *Tech Confidential: What to Know Before You Hit Send* in small groups. They personalize the information and analyze the content of the pamphlet in their groups. Then they view the related video, *Before You Hit Send*, which reinforces the pamphlet's health messages, and discuss the characters' actions and motivations related to communication, peer relationships and technology.

Time: 45–60 minutes

Before you teach this activity:

- **Review both the pamphlet and the video** to be sure they are appropriate for your students. Obtain parent/guardian consent if required by your school.
- **Set groundrules about self-disclosure**, if these are not already in place. For example, you might ask students not to name or identify friends who have sent sexts, and to treat any personal disclosures shared in class as confidential.
- **If you are working with young people in a setting other than a school**, see the *Adapting the Activity* section at the end of this guide.

Objectives

Students will be able to:

1. Identify potential problems and challenges of using technology to communicate through texting, social networking, instant messaging and online chatting.
2. Personalize and increase perception of their risk for problems while communicating using technology.
3. Identify potential negative consequences of making poor choices about privacy settings or harassing others using technology.

4. Identify positive action steps that can prevent problems when using technology to communicate.

Materials & Preparation

Prepare

- **Determine** how students will view the video, based on your classroom resources.
 - Option A: Students watch the video online during class, either as a full group using a single monitor, multiple linked monitors or a digital projector, or in small groups using multiple computer stations.
 - Option B: Students watch the video as a homework assignment, either on a home computer or in the school's computer lab.
- **Have** butcher paper and markers, a whiteboard, or another way to record students' ideas.
- **Write** the name of the character each group is to watch at the top of the **Video: Before You Hit Send** activity sheets (Activity Sheet 2A) before handing them out (if students will watch the video in class). Assign each character to at least 1 group: Rachel (female, sitting on the right, blue shirt, receives a picture of her boyfriend on her phone), Emily (female, sitting in the middle, red-and-white striped shirt, tries to send text message), Mike (male).

Copy:

- Activity Sheet 1A: **Tech Confidential: Personal Reflections**, 1 for each student.
- Activity Sheet 1B: **Tech Confidential: What to Know Before You Hit Send**, 1 for each small group.

If students will watch the video in class:

- Activity Sheet 2A: **Video: Before You Hit Send**, 1 for each small group.

If students will watch the video as homework:

- Activity Sheet 2B: **Homework Video: Before You Hit Send**, 1 for each student.

Links to Other Learning

This lesson on technology and communication could be related to lessons on:

- Communication
- Respect

- Personal safety
- Bullying and harassment
- Relationships (romantic or with peers)
- Legal issues that affect teens

Teaching Steps for Pamphlet

Explain activity

Today we're going to look at something most teens are dealing with—using technology to communicate. You'll look at the ways technology helps you communicate, as well as some of the problems that can come up. You'll have a chance to think about your personal style of communicating with technology, as well as the ways your friends communicate. When we're finished, you should have a better sense of steps you can take to get the most out of your communications and avoid problems.

Discuss technology and communication

Ask students:

- If you need to get in touch with a friend after school, what's the best way for you to reach him or her?
- If you need to check in with your parents about your plans for this evening, what's the best way for you to reach them?
- What are your favorite ways to communicate with your friends?
- How do you decide how to communicate with someone? When do you choose texting? calling? e-mail? talking face-to-face?

Allow students to respond to the questions and discuss their ideas.

Write the main points of the discussion on butcher paper or a whiteboard. Prompt students, if necessary. For example, ask them to talk about all the ways teens communicate, such as texting, instant messaging, e-mail, social networking, cell phones, internet phones, GPS tracking, mobile group games, virtual social or gaming sites, chat rooms and bulletin boards, as well as face-to-face discussions.

You're going to be looking at a pamphlet and a short video that point out both the benefits and potential problems of using technology to communicate.

Small groups read and discuss pamphlet

Break students into small groups. Distribute a pamphlet and the **Tech Confidential: Personal Reflections** activity sheet to each student. Distribute the **Tech Confidential: What to Know Before You Hit Send** activity sheet to each group. (Note: Groups can be up to 5 students each. Ideally, you will have at least 3 groups.)



Pamphlet

Take turns reading the pamphlet aloud in your group. The pamphlet includes a quiz. After you answer each question, decide which of the steps below the question (“What to Know and Do”) make sense for teens like you.

When you finish reading the pamphlet in your group, take a few minutes to complete Activity Sheet 1A: **Tech Confidential: Personal Reflections** on your own. This activity sheet is private. You won’t share your answers with your group.

Then complete Activity Sheet 1B: **Tech Confidential: What to Know Before You Hit Send** as a group.

Allow students to read and discuss the pamphlet and complete the individual and group activity sheets.

Activity Sheet 1A

Review and summarize

Ask students:

- What did you think of the pamphlet? What’s something you learned from the pamphlet that you didn’t know before?
- What are the most serious problems that could come up for teens using technology to communicate?
- How can using privacy settings help keep you and your friends safe online?

Allow students to respond to the questions and discuss their ideas. Go back to issues raised during the opening discussion.

Activity Sheet 1B

If students don't mention it, ask them about the risk of sexual predators or adults posing as teens. Do students believe these risks are real? Have they or their friends ever had such an experience? What steps do they take to protect themselves?

Review standard safety guidelines, including:

- Don't share personal information such as address or phone numbers.
- Always remember that people online may not be who they say they are.
- Don't meet an online friend in person without bringing along a parent or other responsible adult.

Note: If you are showing the video in class at this time, follow the Teaching Steps in section A below. The video can be found at www.etr.org/pub/beforeyouhitsend. If your students will be viewing the video outside of class using the URL link on the pamphlet, follow the Teaching Steps in section B below.

A. Teaching Steps for In-Class Video

Explain activity

Now we're going to watch a video that dramatizes some of the things described in the pamphlet. The script was written by a teen.

Assign characters to watch

Distribute the **Video: Before You Hit Send** activity sheet to each group. (Note: Write the name of the assigned character at the top of the activity sheet for each group. If you have more than 3 groups, you can assign some characters to more than one group.)

There are 3 characters in this story. I want you to watch the entire video. But each group will focus on one character in particular. The character your group will focus on is written at the top of your group's activity sheet.

Activity Sheet 2A

Names: _____

Character: _____

Video: Before You Hit Send

Directions: After watching the video, answer the questions as a group about your assigned character.

1. What are 3 things this character is thinking or feeling during these events?

2. What did this character do or not do that contributed to the problem?

3. What kind of person is this character? List 3 qualities you feel this person has.

4. What if the text had been sent to Hannah? What might have happened to your character?

5. What is something this character might have done to change the situation and keep the problem from happening?

6. Will this experience change what this character does in the future? Why or why not?

7. If you were friends with this character, what advice would you give to help him/her avoid this situation in the future?

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Relationship Check Activity Sheet

Activity Sheet 2A

As you watch the video, pay attention to:

- What your assigned character is thinking and feeling during these events.
- What that character does that contributes to the problem of the harassing text.

If your character is Rachel, you'll watch the girl sitting on the right in the blue shirt. If your character is Emily, you'll watch the girl sitting in the middle in the red-and-white striped shirt. If your character is Mike, you'll watch the guy.

Now let's watch the video.

Show video

Have students watch the video.

Discuss video in general

Ask students:

- What did you think of the story? Was it realistic?
- Could something like this happen to people you know?

Allow students to respond to the questions and discuss their ideas.

Small groups analyze characters

Allow time for small groups to work together to complete the activity sheet. Then lead a full-class discussion. As time allows, have groups report on their assigned character for each of these questions:

- What were some of the things the characters in this story were thinking and feeling?
- What did each character do or not do that contributed to the problem? What do you think was motivating them at each point along the way?
- What kind of person is Emily? Rachel? Mike?

Make the point that all the characters are good people, and that none of them intend to do something hurtful or illegal.

- What might have happened if the text had been sent?
- What could each of these characters have done to change the situation and keep the problem from happening?

- Will this experience change what the characters do in the future? Why or why not? In what ways?
- What advice would you give the characters help them avoid this situation in the future?
- What does Rachel need to say to Tyler?
- What does Mike need to do about or say to Hannah?

(Go to Closure section.)

B. Teaching Steps for Video as Homework

Explain assignment

For homework, you're going to watch a 3-minute video that dramatizes some of the things described in the pamphlet. The script was written by a teen.

The URL for the video is listed on the back page of the pamphlet. If you need any help finding a computer to watch the video on, let me know before you leave class today.

Distribute the activity sheets and describe the assignment.

I want you to watch the video twice. The first time, watch all of the characters and notice what they say and do.

The second time, choose one of the characters to focus on. As you watch the video, pay attention to:

- What the character is thinking and feeling during these events.
- What the character does that contributes to the problem of the harassing text.
- What's motivating the character's actions? Why does he or she do choose to act, or not to act, at each point in the story?

When you've finished watching the video for the second time, complete your activity sheet. Bring it back to class on **[due date]**, so we can discuss it.

Activity Sheet 2B

Name: _____

**Homework Video:
Before You Hit Send**

Directions: Go to the video Before You Hit Send, at www.etr.org/youth/beforeyouhitand. Watch the video 2 times.

- The first time, watch all of the characters and notice what they say and do.
- The second time, choose one of the characters to focus on as you watch the video. Then answer the questions below.

Bring your completed activity sheet back to class on _____ (due date)

1. Which character did you focus on the second time you watched the video?
 Rachel (girl sitting on the right in the blue shirt)
 Emily (girl sitting in the middle in the red-and-white striped shirt)
 Mike (guy sitting on the left)
2. What are 2 things this character is thinking or feeling during these events?

3. What did this character do or not do that contributed to the problem?

4. What kind of person is this character? List 3 qualities you feel this person has.

5. What if the text had been sent to Hannah? What might have happened to your character?

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Relationship Check Activity Sheets 5

Activity Sheet 2B

Debrief homework

*After students have completed their homework, guide a discussion.
Allow students to refer to their activity sheets during the discussion.*

Ask students:

- What are some things that stand out for you when you think about the video?
- What did you think of the story? Was it realistic?
- Could something like this happen to people you know?

As time allows, ask students to report on their chosen characters for each of these questions:

- What were some of the things the characters in this story were thinking and feeling?
- What did each character do or not do that contributed to the problem? What do you think was motivating them at each point along the way?
- What kind of person is Emily? Rachel? Mike?

Make the point that all the characters are good people, and that none of them intend to do something hurtful or illegal.

- What might have happened if the text had been sent?
- What could each of these characters have done to change the situation and keep the problem from happening?
- Will this experience change what the characters do in the future? Why or why not? In what ways?
- What advice would you give the characters help them avoid this situation in the future?
- What does Rachel need to say to Tyler?
- What does Mike need to do about or say to Hannah?

(Go to Closure section.)

Closure

End the lesson

Ask students:

- How does what you learned from the video compare with what you learned from the pamphlet?
- How can a quiz like the one in the pamphlet help people think about the steps they take to protect themselves and respect others when using technology?
- What are the most important things for teens like you to remember about technology and communication?

Reinforce these points:

- *There are both benefits to and potential problems with tech-based communication. It's important to be aware of both.*
- *Respect your own and others' boundaries, no matter how you're communicating with them.*
- *Make smart choices about protecting your own and others' privacy.*

Assess student work

Collect students' activity sheets and evaluate their work.

Assessment Evidence

Objective 1: Students identified potential problems and challenges of using technology to communicate through texting, social networking, instant messaging and online chatting by:

- Completing the **Tech Confidential: What to Know Before You Hit Send** activity sheet.
- Participating in class and small-group discussions.

Objective 2: Students personalized and increased perception of their risk for problems while communicating using technology by:

- Completing the **Tech Confidential: Personal Reflections** activity sheet.
- Participating in class and small-group discussions.

Objective 3: Students identified potential negative consequences of making poor choices about privacy settings or harassing others using technology by:

- Analyzing the characters' motivations as well as potential consequences of their actions on the **Video: Before You Hit Send** or **Homework Video: Before You Hit Send** activity sheet.
- Participating in class and small-group discussions.

Objective 4: Students identified positive action steps that can prevent problems when using technology to communicate by:

- Listing 3 personal steps they can take to stay safe and avoid problems in Question 4 on the **Tech Confidential: Personal Reflections** activity sheet.
- Listing 3 guidelines relevant for all teens in Question 5 on the **Tech Confidential: What to Know Before You Hit Send** activity sheet.
- Answering Question 5 on the **Video: Before You Hit Send** or Question 6 on the **Homework Video: Before You Hit Send** activity sheet.

Adapting the Activity

If you are presenting this activity in a community-based setting, some simple adaptations can enrich the learning and make it more relevant to the young people you serve. Here are some ideas:

- **Take more time, if you can.** You may have more time than schools to develop discussions, and more freedom in the matters you discuss. Explore participants' ideas, experiences, perspectives, responses and solutions in greater depth.
- **Link the material to the mission or focus of your organization.** For example:
 - In a religious or spiritual setting, talk about the ways choosing respectful communications or respecting one's own and others' privacy relate to spiritual perspectives.
 - In a young men's or young women's organization, spend more time addressing gender-specific issues, both in terms of risks and solutions. Do girls and boys make different choices in tech communications? Do they face different kinds of risks?
 - In an organization that focuses on a particular cultural community, ask participants to describe the specific issues they observe and experience and discuss how these are similar to or different from those presented in the pamphlet and video. What forms of

technology are most popular? What social networking sites? What are the particular benefits and challenges related to technology in their lives?

- In a setting that supports youth with specific risks, such as substance abuse, mental health issues or learning challenges, ask participants to describe how these risk factors affect the dynamics of communicating using technology. Are there particular resources that are especially important to them? Have they faced challenges related to self-disclosure or privacy? What are some of the ways tech resources might increase or decrease their risks?
- **Expand the learning by involving parents.** After teaching this activity, have participants develop a program for their parents/guardians using the pamphlet, video, and discussions between youth and adults. They could come up with a list of questions for parents, offer presentations about what they have learned, or work with parents to come up with a set of guidelines for promoting healthy communication using technology.
- **Have youth develop their own scripts.** Have participants write their own scripts that address technology, communication and risks. They can act out their scripts as skits, or make their own videos.