

2. Internet – Connecting ideas and people

” “Eventually everything connects – people, ideas, objects. The quality of the connections is the key to quality per se.”

Charles Eames, early 20th century designer

CHECKLIST FACT SHEET 6 – E-MAIL AND COMMUNICATION

Have you created several e-mail accounts and set different passwords for each?

Is the password sufficiently “strong” (more than 8 characters long, with a combination of letters, numbers and symbols)?

Do you clearly label your e-mails with relevant key words in the subject line?

Have you enabled two-factor security on your e-mail accounts (providing an extra security question and/or your mobile phone number)?

CHECKLIST FACT SHEET 7 – CHAT AND MESSAGING MEDIA

Have you included contact details in your website or blog?

Have you taken steps to protect your online privacy?

Have you checked that the content that you are using for your website/blog is in accordance with copyright law?

CHECKLIST FACT SHEET 8 – SOCIAL NETWORKING AND SOCIAL SHARING

Reputation is something we only have one of: do you systematically “think before you post”?

When did you last update your privacy settings on the sites you use?

Democracy depends on the participation of as many citizens as possible in the public debate: have you tried making your voice heard through relevant social network sites?

CHECKLIST FACT SHEET 9 – PRIVACY AND PRIVACY SETTINGS

Is it necessary to post that tagged photo on a social networking site?

Have you read the mobile app agreement to understand what are you sharing: what you own and what “they” own?

When you upload apps, are you sure you know exactly what private information they will access? Is such access really necessary for the app to function?

Do you understand what the European Union’s General Data Protection Regulation implies for you?

Chat and messaging media



■ “Chat” is a generic term that refers to interactive communication which takes place on a dedicated discussion channel. Users can talk to groups of people in chatrooms¹ or hold private conversations with selected friends by using instant messaging² services.

■ Chatting is a very informal means of communication, similar to face-to-face conversations, and occurs between two or more people. Chat discussions are usually typed but can also include video or audio streaming³ through the use of headsets or webcams. This form of communication is instantaneous and therefore different from e-mail, which does not depend on the recipient being present at the same time as the sender.

Chatting vs. instant messaging

■ The terms are used interchangeably; however, a user can chat while using instant messaging services, but sending an instant message (IM) is not a chat. Chat used to be quite popular but seems to be losing its position to instant messaging and other types of messaging media. Many companies

1. https://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chat_room
2. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Instant_messaging
3. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Streaming_media

frown upon IM in the work environment as it tends to reduce productivity if employees are constantly interrupted by messages while performing their tasks.

What are other types of messaging media?

■ Messaging apps such as WhatsApp, Kik, Viber, Telegram or iMessage are increasingly being used by smartphone owners. Auto-deleting apps such as Snapchat and Wickr are also popular with smartphone owners. These types of messaging media are typically free and seemingly offer more “privacy” than the types of messaging that are available on larger platforms such as Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn.

■ The quick availability of these messaging apps on smartphones often means that users film, comment, take photos and send before thinking of the ramifications. They have therefore, unfortunately, been cited as playing a part in the increase in online harassment and bullying.

■ The growth of instant messaging and other types of messaging media will undoubtedly continue as smartphones are entering new markets. Facebook has acquired WhatsApp, the Japanese company Rakuten purchased Viber and many of the other messaging apps have been injected with investment money from interested parties. The message could not be clearer: messaging media will be around for a while.

Importance in understanding chat and instant messaging

■ Chat and instant messaging are popular pastimes and are transforming the way young people communicate with each other. Chatting and instant messaging are used in positive ways as students exchange ideas and discuss homework and other academic projects, but they are unfortunately also used to bully and harass others online (see Fact sheet 21 on bullying and harassment).

■ Teachers often underestimate how important chat is to young people and may miss the opportunity to harness this force and apply it as an educational tool. Some ideas include:

- brainstorming sessions and problem-centred real time discussions
- role-playing games and simulations
- exchange of opinions and debates and small-group panel discussions
- tutoring and guidance
- group investigation
- creation of an online community.



ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND RISKS

- When chat is text based, social cues, gestures and non-verbal communication cannot be transmitted through typing, and misunderstandings can easily occur online. One should be as agreeable, polite and well-mannered as in real-life situations and make a habit of using good netiquette⁴. Humour and emotions can also be shown through use of emoticons⁵, small symbols that look like faces written sideways. Most young people use linguistic shortcuts or acronyms, and you can find a dictionary of the most common of these at <<http://www.netlingo.com/acronyms.php>>.
- When chatting with strangers on the Web, it is also important to remember that people are not always who or what they say they are. Closed groupware chats⁶ that provide conferencing possibilities for use in a school or classroom setting are safer to use because access is limited to a defined user group.
- The time spent chatting or sending IM has greatly increased with teenagers sending hundreds of messages in various forms (texts, IM, chats, e-mails, etc.) every day. While the ergonomics of computer keyboards and computer mice have greatly improved, new syndromes such as

4. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Etiquette_in_technology#Netiquette

5. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emoticon>

6. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collaborative_software

“teenage texting tendonitis” have appeared. Smartphones are relatively recent devices, and sending messages or typing long e-mails may result in overuse of the thumbs. Limiting chat and texting is therefore not just a life-balance issue but also a health issue.

- While many IM apps appear to be “free”, always keep in mind that a company has to cover its operating costs one way or another. Many apps opt for a “build and sell” strategy, attracting users with a “free” app, and then sell the user base to another company as soon as it is large enough. Such was the case with Whatsapp which was bought by Facebook. Other apps such as Snapchat first build their user base and then start introducing advertising. Always be aware of the business model of the IM service you are using and choose wisely, taking into consideration the trade-offs (less privacy, control over your data, exposure to advertising, yearly/monthly fee, etc.).
- People often exchange files through messaging and chat, and it is important to remember that files can contain malware. Make sure that all files have been scanned for viruses before sharing them and scan anything you receive before opening it (see Fact sheet 19 on security).
- There has been a lot of negative publicity about the risks young people might encounter when using chatrooms. Due to several high-profile criminal cases, parents and teachers often worry about the possibility of children coming into contact with paedophiles in chatrooms, especially through online games (see Fact sheet 16 on games). Although these dangers do exist, it is important to keep these fears in perspective. A vast majority of chatroom users are who they say they are, and most chat communication is completely innocent. Rather than preaching fear or banning the use of chat, adults should empower the young by teaching them how to stay safe. Here are some basic rules that children and young people should follow:
 - ▶ Choose a chatroom appropriate to your age group and with a live moderator, and report any negative incidents to the moderator.
 - ▶ Use a gender-neutral user name and never give out your personal information or post photos of yourself (see Fact sheet 9 on privacy).
 - ▶ If you are really going to meet a chatroom friend, discuss it first with your parents and take a trusted adult along with you. Always meet up in a public place, such as a town square, on the first physical meeting with someone you met online.
 - ▶ Tell an adult if anything you have encountered in a chat session makes you feel uncomfortable. If you encounter any problems in a chatroom or anywhere else on the Internet you can always discuss it with experienced advisors at your national helpline⁷.
 - ▶ If you want to chat with people you know, consider using instant messaging (e.g. MSN, Skype) instead of a chat room so that you can control your contact list.

HOW TO



- There are many kinds of free chat programmes available on the Web. You can find a wide range by searching for “chat” in any search engine⁸. Many web-based chat programs, such as Yahoo Chat⁹, ICQ¹⁰ and AOL Chat¹¹ provide a wide variety of chatrooms with real-time discussion groups. Users must often first download a small application to enable chat and register with the moderator but can then login and participate freely.
- Instant messaging¹² applications, which allow private conversations with selected users, now surpass chatrooms in popularity. These capabilities can be found by searching for “instant messaging” in any search engine. Users download an application to enable instant messaging and then compile a list of people with whom they want to chat. Because communication takes place in a restricted user group, instant messaging is often considered “safer” than chatting in chatrooms.

7. www.betterinternetforkids.eu/web/portal/practice/helplines

8. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Web_search_engine

9. <http://chat.yahoo.com>

10. <http://www.icq.com/>

11. <http://lifestream.aol.com>

12. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Instant_messaging

How to use a chatroom?

- Open the chat program that you have chosen to use.
- Provide a username and password, if necessary.
- Choose an appropriate, humanly-moderated chatroom. Usually there are rooms for different purposes and topics, for example automotive interest groups, subject-specific study groups, chats for teachers and so forth.
- Once you are logged in, you will see the participants' conversation scrolling on the main text screen.
- Type your message and press "enter" or click "send" to post it so participants can see it.
- If you want to send a message to one specific person, select a person from the participant list in the window.
- Many chatrooms can also be used for peer-to-peer¹³ file exchange. Chatrooms enable the swapping of files too large to be sent by e-mail¹⁴.
- Always check your settings so that you do not inadvertently add unwanted users to your chatroom.

How to use instant messaging?

- Open your instant messaging application¹⁵.
- Check your list of contacts to find out who is online and available to chat.
- You can add new contacts by entering their e-mail address and inviting them to join your contact group. They will receive an e-mail invitation and, if they agree, will be registered in your list. This will enable you to chat with them real-time when you are both online.
- Click on the selected person's ID to send a message and open a dialogue for communication.
- Type your message and press "enter" or click "send" to post it so participants can see it.
- It is best not to engage in conversations with unknown users or respond to e-mail or IM from people that you do not know.
- Always check your settings so you do not inadvertently add unwanted users to your IM.



IDEAS FOR CLASSROOM WORK

- Pick a topic and have students ask each other questions and exchange information in a chat setting.
- Decide on a study topic. Gather some orientation material to help students to do their pre-lesson activities. Have the students work on their assignments in pairs or small groups. This working phase should be organised along the lines of a group study model (chat works at its best in small-group interactions, that is 2-6 students).
- At the end of the project, students prepare presentations suitable for a chat session. Chat starts with small-group presentations of different study topics. The study community sums up together what they have learned during the course.
- Because chat sessions model real-life conversations, they offer students opportunities for authentic interaction and are therefore useful in studying foreign languages. The teacher can encourage students to participate in the discussion, advising them to post short messages. Interaction can be enhanced by creating roles for students: one may be an innovator, another a critic. The other students can follow the discussions and later provide feedback.
- Environment Online (ENO)¹⁶ is an international web-based environmental education project. At the beginning of the course, students get their topics from the web pages of the project. The students collect scientific and empirical environmental data, measure different phenomena or take photographs.

13. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peer-to-peer>

14. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Email>

15. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Instant_messaging

16. <http://www.enoprogramme.org>

- During each theme period, virtual lessons are arranged in the form of interactive and synchronous real-time chats¹⁷, electronic questionnaires and message boards¹⁸. Before and after lesson activities, students share ideas, monitor their tasks via chat and reflect on what they have learned.



GOOD PRACTICE

— The language used in chatting is fragmented, associative and very colloquial; a chat participant must not only be fast but flexible enough to switch from one topic and even one discussion to another. The supporting role of the teacher is very important when assuring quality of content and balanced participation by all those who contribute to the chat. The younger students are, the more important it is that the chat is hosted and moderated by the teacher.

- Follow the discussion actively during the whole chat session.
- Agree on the schedule of the session beforehand: everyone should be present at the same time.
- Follow rules of netiquette: be polite, kind and respectful as if you were face-to-face.
- Remember that a carelessly written message can hurt even if this was not your intention.
- A short message works best. Do not monopolise a real-time chat session by pasting chunks of pre-written text which the others are obliged to read and respond to.
- Chat style is close to a stream of consciousness style. Carefully read others' messages to understand what they are trying to say. This may involve filling in the blanks.
- Remember not to share your username and password. Keep all of your private information private during chats or IM. Screenshots can always be taken of your information (or comments) and shared with others.



FURTHER INFORMATION

- Some ideas for school teachers can be found at: http://www.educationworld.com/a_tech/chat-room-get-new-life-in-classrooms.shtml >.
- tChat is a chatroom in French: <http://www.tchat-orange.fr/index.php> >.
- Information on "In-room chat as a social tool" can be found at: <http://www.openp2p.com/lpt/a/3071> >.
- See Wikipedia for a list of basic emoticons: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emoticon#Basic_examples >.
- Pew Research Center has studied mobile messaging and social media: <http://web.archive.org/web/20160703022409/http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/08/19/mobile-messaging-and-social-media-2015/> >.
- "What is snapchat and why do kids love it and parents fear it?": <http://web.archive.org/web/20160619055301/http://www.forbes.com/sites/larrymagid/2013/05/01/what-is-snapchat-and-why-do-kids-love-it-and-parents-fear-it/#65fc2b447875> >.
- In Denmark, Cyberhus is using "group chat" as a valuable platform for helping enhance the well-being of vulnerable teens and foster their increased participation in society: <http://cfdp.dk/2015-cyberhus-chat-counselling-last-year/> >.

17. <http://www.netlingo.com/word/real-time-chat.php>

18. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet_forum