

What is digital literacy?

Digital literacy is the ability to identify and use technology confidently, creatively and critically to meet the demands and challenges of life, learning and work in a digital society.

Being digitally literate implies having skills and capabilities across a number of domains, including the ability to:

- use technology;
- find, use and critically evaluate information;
- curate data and media sources;
- communicate, collaborate and participate in online environments;
- manage your online identity as well as your personal security and privacy; and
- create online content, not just consume it.

The level of digital literacy fluency within any particular domain will depend on the context and your level of engagement in that context. For example, digital literacy expectations of primary school children will be different from those of higher education students; computer scientists will require high levels of ICT fluency, whereas digital marketers need to be fluent in online communication and collaboration as well as using social media; skills and capabilities required in a learning context may be different from those developed in a social context.

What are the implications for practice?

Being digitally literate goes beyond being able to use technology; it is the ability to function critically and effectively in a digitally-enhanced environment, whether the context is your social life, learning life or working life. It means that you use technology critically, thoughtfully and responsibly, that you recognise the transferability of skills developed in one situation to another across platforms, applications and contexts, and that you manage your digital footprint, which is permanent and has impact (potentially both positive and negative). Most importantly, it is being able to behave professionally, ethically and with cultural and social understanding in digital environments.

A major impact of digital technologies in any context is the disruption caused. Skills such as flexibility, adaptability and being a life-long learner are essential in order to maintain relevant digital literacy skills over time. Your digital literacy skills and capabilities need to grow and be nurtured, they need to be scaffold through your learning and, ultimately, they need to be fit-for-purpose.

Make it count!

How would you assess your digital literacy? Think about the following:

- How comfortable are you with the technologies you need for your studies?
- Can you transfer your digital skills from one platform to another (think iPad to PC, for example)?
- Can you adapt your digital skills from one context to another (think about using social media to support your learning, for example)?
 - Are there challenges?
 - How can you overcome them?
- What about the technologies used to manage work within your discipline: do you know which platforms are used and what the expectations are for new graduates or for interns?
- What happens if you search for yourself on the Internet: Is your digital footprint something you would be comfortable to share with a future employer?
- Do you know how to work at an advanced level with common programs such as Word, Excel and Acrobat?
- Do you have strategies for conducting effective online searches?
- Do you have strategies for managing all the digital resources you collect (bookmarks, documents useful links etc.)?
- How do you manage your passwords? Is your approach secure?
- What does being a “digital citizen” mean to you?
- Do your standards of behaviour online pass the “Nana rule”? If you wouldn’t want your Nana (Grandmother) to know about it, don’t put it on the web!
- Do you have strategies for managing digital distractions such as Facebook, Instagram etc?
- There are some great online, open-access resources for improving your digital literacy, regardless of how you assessed your current skills and capabilities. Here are some suggestions to enhance your journey towards becoming digitally adept
 - [All Aboard: digital skills in higher education](#): Irish national project aimed at empowering “anyone who uses technology to support their work, their study, or other aspects of living in a digital age”.
 - [Applied Digital Skills](#): a curriculum for practical problem solving with digital tools by Google.
 - [European Computer Driving Licence](#): a formal certification program.

This resource was contributed by Jo Coldwell-Neilson, Deakin University.