

Essential Question: How do you present yourself to others on the Internet?

Learning Overview and Objectives

Overview: After discussing their own unique identities, students investigate how these identities are expressed through different offline and online roles. By reflecting on their own online and offline roles, students discover that they have choices about how they present themselves to others on the Internet.

Students first explore different aspects of who they are by playing the “Three Facts, One Fiction” game. They then watch the *Self-Expression and Identity Student Intro Video*, and discuss how online and offline personalities can be both similar and different. Students then explore their own personalities on and off the Internet by completing the **Offline/Online Me Student Handout**.

objectives

Students will:

- Recognize that they have unique characteristics that make up their identities
- Discover that people express their identities through offline and online roles, which can sometimes differ from one another in significant ways
- Explore their own offline and online personalities
- Understand that the Internet gives them the freedom to make choices about how they present themselves to others online

Materials and Preparation

Materials


- *Self-Expression and Identity Student Intro Video*
- **Offline/Online Me Student Handout**
- **Partner Profile Student Handout**
- Paper and pens

Preparation

- Download the *Self-Expression and Identity Student Intro Video*. Preview the video, and be prepared to show and discuss it in class
- Copy the **Offline/Online Me Student Handout**, one for each student
- Review the **Offline/Online Me Student Handout - Teacher Version** and be prepared to guide students through the creation of their diagrams
- Copy the **Partner Profile Student Handout**, one for each student

Parent Resources

- Send parents the **Self-Expression and Identity Parent Tip Sheet**



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Lesson Plan

Key Vocabulary

- **Identity:** All of the factors that make up who you are
- **Online Profile:** An informal online summary of who you are

teaching plans

Introduce

WRITE the word *identity* on the board.

ASK *What does the word identity mean to you?* (Encourage students to respond with their first impressions.)

REVIEW the vocabulary word *identity*.

ASK *What things make up someone's identity?*

GUIDE students to consider the parts of their identities that they're born with, such as race, ethnicity, gender, eye color, and overall appearance. Also encourage them to think about the parts of their identities that are more open to change or that others help to shape, such as their talents and hobbies, dreams and goals, memories and experiences, and the communities they are part of.

LIST students' responses on the board, and encourage the class to discuss them.

Teach 1: Three Facts, One Fiction

ARRANGE students into groups of four, and make sure they have paper and pens.

INVITE students to play the "Three Facts, One Fiction" game by writing down four things about themselves. They should begin each sentence with the words "I am ..." Tell students that three of the things they write should be true, and one should be something they made up.

Encourage students to make the game more fun by choosing interesting or unusual facts about themselves that their classmates might not know. Some of the facts should reflect their experiences and accomplishments, while others should describe part of their personalities. In addition, suggest that students invent a fictional statement about themselves that other students might believe.

Sample responses:

- *I am a state swimming champion*
- *I am a trumpet player*
- *I am the youngest of six kids in my family*
- *I am good with animals*
- *I am afraid of spiders*
- *I am friendly and outgoing*
- *I am shy when I meet new people*



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Ask students to read aloud the four statements about themselves, and have others in their group guess which one is made up.

DISCUSS with students what they learned about each other by playing the game.

ASK *Did you learn anything about your classmates that you didn't know before? How hard was it to figure out which statements were true and which one was made up? What clues helped you decide?* (Students may say they used their existing knowledge of their classmates to decide which statement was most likely to be invented. They also may say they used visual or voice clues to tell when their classmates were not telling the truth.)

ASK *What if you told someone your three facts and one fiction on the Internet? Do you think it would be easier to make something up about yourself online than in person? Do you think other people would be more likely to believe it? Why or why not?*

ENCOURAGE students to think about how it might be easier to make something up, exaggerate, or change their personalities on the Internet, because they are not interacting with someone face to face. In addition, students are more likely to communicate with strangers on the Internet than in person.

Use this point to emphasize that people may not always present themselves on the Internet the way they do in person.

Teach 2: Online/Offline Me

INTRODUCE the activity by telling students that you will be showing them a video about a boy named Jamie. Ask students to notice, as they watch, the ways Jamie is different – and the same – online and offline. Create two columns on the board, headed “Online Jamie” and “Offline Jamie.”

REVIEW the vocabulary word *identity*. Tell students they will be looking for similarities and differences between Jamie’s identities online and offline.

SHOW the *Self-Expression and Identity Student Intro Video* to the class.

ASK students to describe what Jamie was like online and offline.

Sample responses:

Online

- He has many different avatars
- The emoticons that he uses show that he likes to have fun
- He seems friendly (e.g., comments about Harry Potter)
- Can express himself (e.g., announcing his new novel)
- Sometimes he lies about his age
- He presents himself as someone who parties

Offline

- He uses emoticons to show he is happy
- The tone of his voice makes him seem friendly
- He likes to read
- He feels shy
- He's probably about 11 or 12
- He rides a skateboard



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POINT OUT that Jamie seems friendly both online and offline, and that he is interested in books and writing in both places. However, Jamie seems a little freer and more expressive online. For example, he proudly announces his novel online when he is too shy to do it offline. He also pretends to be older online than he is offline, which leads to unexpected consequences.

ARRANGE students in groups of three or four and distribute copies of the **Online/Offline Me Student Handout**, one for each student. Students should work in groups and exchange ideas, but each student should complete his or her own handout.

EXPLAIN that in the next part of the activity, students will identify and describe some of their own offline and online personalities. After looking at a sample diagram showing the personality of a girl named Maria, they will fill in their own diagrams. Then they will compare their offline and online personalities, and talk about the similarities and differences.

After students have completed their diagrams, have them talk about the discussion questions on the student handout in groups, and then share their answers with the class.

ENCOURAGE students to consider what their answers show about how and why many people are different offline and online. Ask them to generalize, based on their own answers and those of their classmates.

Sample responses:


- *Online you may feel more free to do things that you might not do offline*
- *Online you might feel like you can be bolder and more outgoing*
- *Online you might change the facts about who you are; for example, you may say you are a different age or have different talents or a different appearance*
- *Both online and offline you can find people with similar interests*
- *Offline you get to see people's faces and reactions when talking with them*
- *Offline it can be harder to change who you are or what you look like*
- *Offline you can hang out with people in the same space*

INVITE students to discuss why it might become a problem if their online identities are too different from their offline identities. (It's fun to express different parts of yourself online, but it might be harmful to take on a completely false identity.)

REMIND students that they are the creators of their online personalities. This means they can present some aspects of those personalities that they may be too shy or hesitant to express offline. Ask them if there is an aspect of their identity that they would want to express online that they are too shy to do offline.

Wrap Up and Assess

ENCOURAGE students to reflect on their observations about Jamie, Maria, their classmates, and themselves. You can use these questions to assess your students' understanding of the lesson objectives.



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ASK

- *How did Jamie and Maria’s online identities differ from their offline identities? Were there ways their differences resembled one another? (Students may observe that both Jamie and Maria seemed to be more outgoing online.)*
- *How would you summarize the relationship between your own offline and online personalities?*
- *Do you have choices about how you present yourself to others online? How does your online personality reflect these choices?*

REVISIT the discussion about identity from the lesson introduction. Make sure students understand that many core aspects of who they are do not change, even when they take on different roles.



Extension Activity

Have students work in pairs to create online profiles of a partner. Hand out the **Partner Profile Student Handout**. Give students 10 minutes to interview one another. Encourage them to take notes. Then have them create a profile for their partner that shows the partner’s personality. Discuss the following questions with students when they are finished.

- *What kinds of things did you include in your partner’s profile? How did you make decisions about what to include?*
- *How is your partner’s online profile the same or different from who this person is offline?*
- *How might others think of your partner based on the profile?*



Homework

Have students create an online profile for themselves on a large sheet of paper (or two sheets taped together). Suggest they use the same categories listed in the extension activity, and invite them to create additional categories of their own. Students should use photos and drawings, and design their profiles to look like a webpage. Encourage students to think carefully about how the material they choose to include in their profiles might affect the way they present themselves to others online.

Alignment with Standards - National Educational Technology Standards for Students[®] 2007

(Source: International Society for Technology in Education, 2007)

1. Creativity and Innovation

- apply existing knowledge to generate new ideas, products, or processes.

5. Digital Citizenship

- advocate and practice safe, legal, and responsible use of information and technology.

Common Sense Media is an independent, nonprofit resource that helps families and educators teach kids how to be safe and smart in today’s 24/7 media world. Go to www.commonsensemedia.org for thousands of reviews and expert advice.

