Keeping Myself eSafe

Information for Teachers

Cyber Plagiarism

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Children are taught from a very young age that it is wrong to steal. When it comes to the written word and online media, however, young people can be easily confused by the nature of intellectual property.

Intellectual property

Intellectual property rights (IPR) are rights granted to creators and owners of works such as published writing, movies, music, paintings, photographs, technological inventions and software. They give the creator exclusive right to control reproduction or adaptation of such works for a limited period of time. IPR also provides an incentive for the author or inventor to develop and share the information, rather than keep it secret.

The main intellectual property rights are:

- **Copyright** – which protect material, such as literature, art, music, sound recordings, films and broadcasts.

- **Patents** – which protect the technical and functional aspects of products and processes.

- **Trade marks** - which protect signs that can distinguish the goods and services of one trader from those of another.

- **Design rights** - which protect the visual appearance or eye appeal of products.

Cyber plagiarism

The ease of cutting and pasting information from websites and downloading documents, images and videos means that it has become increasingly common for internet users to infringe the property rights of the people who create such content.

Young people often feel pressure from their families, teachers and friends to do well at school, so it's not surprising that they look for shortcuts to make their lives easier. With the internet at their disposal, taking someone else's work can seem like a great time saver. This can be as simple as copying text or images from a website and pasting them into a Word document, but it can also mean using someone else's published ideas and not citing them with credit.

Plagiarism is the act of taking another person's work and using as if it was your own. When this happens on the internet, it is usually called 'cyber plagiarism'.

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Copyright infringement

For young people in particular, the sharing of digital media such as music, photographs, videos, games and podcasts is one of the most exciting features of the digital age. Uploading and downloading files from the internet and sharing digital content with others is an everyday activity amongst young people. It is very common for children and teenagers to populate their Bebo and Facebook profiles with music and images downloaded directly from the internet.

Many young people are unaware, however, that movies, music and images are usually the property of a person or company, and permission must be granted before they can be used. Where young people upload such items to their own personal web pages or social networking profiles, or share music, games and videos with friends, they are in breach of copyright.

If a young person downloads the intellectual property of others and then sells it for financial gain, this can have serious legal and financial repercussions. Entertainment corporations are increasingly taking legal action against people who download copyrighted movies and music, and there have been several recent cases of lawsuits against children.

Peer-to-peer file sharing

The transfer of digital files between computers over the internet is referred to as 'file sharing'. The most common method is called 'peer-to-peer' sharing, which describes the process of moving stored digital files from one personal computer to another.

In recent years, software has become widely available that enables a user to browse files on another person's computer and download music, films, games and other media. Users, who install such software, do so in the knowledge that millions of people around the world may access the directories on their hard drives, download files and then share them with other users.

This has led to millions of songs, games and films being freely downloaded and shared, without any royalties being paid to the recording artists or entertainment corporations.

For more information, see the section on **File Sharing**.

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YouTube

YouTube is a video sharing website where users can upload, view and share video clips, and its phenomenal growth since 2005 demonstrates the growing popularity of video file sharing. While many users post home made videos on YouTube, there is also a wide range of clips from TV programmes, films and music videos.

YouTube has been frequently criticised for failing to ensure that its online content adheres to the law of copyright. Although YouTube users are instructed not to upload any content that may breach copyright legislation, there are still many unauthorised clips from television shows, films and music videos on YouTube. Organizations including Viacom and the English Premier League have issued lawsuits against YouTube, claiming that it has done too little to prevent the uploading of copyrighted material.

Cyber-cheating

The ease of searching for information on the internet makes it an invaluable tool in helping young people to learn. However, some students see this as an opportunity to cut corners by copying other people's published work, and presenting it as their own. This is sometimes referred to as cyber-cheating. Not only is this unfair to other students, it can hamper the young person's ability to learn effectively. Many schools and universities are now taking disciplinary action against students who are caught cheating.

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Risks

The main risks associated with cyber plagiarism are as follows:

1 Breaching intellectual property rights is against the law, and young people can leave themselves open to legal action and financial penalties.

2 Distributing music, games and video for financial gain is illegal and can lead to legal action and financial penalties.

3 Often file sharing systems contain viruses, spyware and other invasive bugs that can wreak havoc on a computer and steal personal information that might be used in identity theft.

4 Students caught cyber-cheating in tests and exams are usually failed automatically. In some cases they can be asked to leave school or university.

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Safety Strategies

1) Don't break intellectual copyright by uploading or sharing images, music or film that is the work of other people. It is against copyright law to do this. You don't have the right to alter someone else's work either.

2) Do not use peer-to-peer software to download content if it breaks copyright law. It's important that artists get compensation for their work in the same way that your parents get paid by their employers.

3) Never sell music, films or games to other people where they infringe the copyright of the individuals of organisations that created them.

4) Never buy music, films or games from other people where they infringe the IPR of the individuals of organisations that created them.

5) Learn how to cite the sources of your school work properly. There is nothing wrong with using other people's work as reference for your own, but the proper credit must be given. Make sure your bibliographies are comprehensive and complete.

6) Never steal someone else's ideas or published work and present them as your own. Not only is it unfair to the original author, it's not a good way for you to learn, and you will soon lose the respect of your teachers, parents and friends.

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