Senior Digital Leadership

If you want to change the world, technology can connect you to people, information, and causes in an instant. It provides tools to help you inform, organize, and mobilize others.

Digital leadership is staying safe and being kind online. It's also inspiring and uplifting others using digital devices and tools like apps, email, and video. You can use technology to reach people quickly all over the world, saving time and sharing your message with an audience ready to act.

In this badge, explore how digital leaders encourage action. The digital world lends itself to activism, and you can lead the charge!

Steps

1. Discover your digital landscape
2. Examine digital advertising
3. Advocate for yourself and others online
4. Create content for change
5. Expand your reach

Purpose

When I've earned this badge, I will know how to use technology for positive change. I'll also know how to make the internet a better place for myself and others.

Words to Know

Avatars: Digital characters used online, especially in video games. They can wear different clothing, accessories, and hairstyles.

Bias: A belief or opinion that affects how we perceive and treat others—it can be an aversion or a preference.

Catfish: Someone who pretends to be someone they're not online.

Data: Another word for information.

Digital community: Who and what you interact with online, including people and organizations.

Digital content: Something created to be used or shared online, like a video, meme, or online presentation.

Digital footprint: The trail of what you do online. It's generated automatically when you move around in the digital world. It includes the people and causes you follow, the apps you use, and the networks you're a part of.

Digital landscape: All the things you do with technology, including the devices, platforms, and tools you use to connect with others and share messages online.

Digital leadership: When you use technology to protect yourself and inspire and guide other people.

Hashtag activism or **slacktivism:** Online activism that creates a lot of talk, or "likes," but may not create change or progress in the real world.

Intersectionality: Understanding how the systems of inequality in society create unique biases against people with multiple stereotyped identities.

Misinformation: Information that's incorrect or false but presented as true. It's often created on purpose and spread digitally.

Persona: An aspect of someone's personality that they present to others.

Phishing: A kind of cyberattack where someone may try to get your private information by pretending to be a person or business you trust. It can happen by email, chat, or text.

Stereotype: A characteristic or trait—whether positive or negative—that is associated with an identity group. It is often an oversimplification or exaggeration about the group.

Troll: A person who intentionally starts fights online with mean comments.

Step 1: Discover your digital landscape

Your **digital landscape** is what you do with technology, including the devices (smartphones, tablets, or computers), platforms, and tools you use, like websites, apps, social media, email, and messaging. Your **digital community** is the network of people and groups you belong to or follow online.

When you move around the real world, you might leave a trail of footprints. Similarly, many things you do online can create a **digital footprint** with data or information about you. Think of it as a map of your digital landscape, with data about who you follow, what you click, when you're online, and how you interact online.

Your digital footprint means different things to different people. Future schools or employers can check your online presence. Businesses can buy and use your data to create and market products. Individuals can use data to scam you into giving up even more personal information, like your location or personal photos.

Choices—do one:

Crowdsource community data. Make a list of questions to explore how one community you're a part of uses technology. For example, ask if they use social media, how they use it, and explore how using it makes them feel. Consider how different sites or platforms, times of day, or periods of time impact how you or others feel. Then survey a group of community members and analyze your data. How can your community use technology more intentionally, critically, and effectively? How can you keep everyone safe? How can you build community?

Be intentional with technology. What apps or platforms do you use the most? For how long do you use them? Look for patterns, such as time of day, platform, and your mood. Then decide: What are three ways to be more intentional with technology? Maybe you can cut back on screen time, find an app for productivity, or introduce friends to a new collaboration tool. Design a pocket guide with your ideas. Keep it as a reminder in your wallet or cardholder.

Design avatars for your top platforms. Avatars are digital characters used online, especially in video games, that wear different clothing, accessories, and hairstyles. A **persona** is an aspect of your personality that you present to others. Explore the personas you show online by designing avatars for the three apps, websites, or platforms you use the most. Make a list for each with the different data you share, like who you follow, what you post or click on, and anything else that creates a digital trail. Use each list to create an avatar for your online persona in that digital world. Then compare your avatars: how do you feel about each? Do any represent you more than others? How do you portray yourself differently through each, if at all?

▶ **For more fun: Find out what data social media platforms collect about you.** In the account settings of many platforms, you can download reports about your personal data. Download and look through the data. What did you find? What kinds of data does the platform collect about you?

My Digital Data Tracker

Device(s) I have or use:
○ Phone   ○ Tablet   ○ Computer   ○ Other: _____

Time (start and end)	Device	Location	Platform: app, program, or website	What did you do?	What data or content did you share? With whom did you share it?	What was your mood before? And after?

Surprised by your data? Check out the tips on page 5 for ideas to stay safe and take care of yourself online.

Be Proactive in the Digital World

When you look at how you use technology, you might be surprised by what you find! Technology can be such a large part of our day-to-day life, we might not pause to think about the impact it's having.

Here are some tips to help you stay safe and take care of yourself whenever you use technology:

- **Balance your screen time.** Check your app or device settings to understand the amount of time you're online. Set time limits and balance what you do in the digital and real world—get outdoors, find a hobby, or volunteer. Use your screen with intention—put it away while eating and an hour before bedtime. Mute notifications to focus or be in the moment.

- **Protect your personal data and devices.** Personally identifiable information, like your home address or password, can be used to identify, contact, or locate you and should never be shared. Keep your devices and apps updated and change your passwords regularly. Use secure Wi-Fi and turn off location services and your webcam when you don't need them.

- **Understand how technology affects your mood.** What you see online has an impact on you. While it's normal to compare yourself to images or content you see online, doing so may not be helpful. For example, go through accounts you follow and consider unfollowing any that bring you down. This can open up space for new connections that make you feel good.

- **Consider what's real.** Photos can be edited and filtered in any number of ways. People can change their body size and shape. Blemishes can be airbrushed. Crooked noses can be straightened. Muscles can be enhanced. When you see an image that looks "perfect," remember: there's no such thing! Keep in mind that what you see online is just one part of someone's life.

- **Reach out for help.** If you're having a hard time, online or offline, tell someone, like a relative, troop leader, or teacher, who can support you and make sure you're safe. If you come across something concerning from a friend (like a sad meme or angry post), reach out, listen, be supportive. If needed, ask an adult for help or call 911.

Look Out for Bias

Every person has their own viewpoint, created by their lived experience. We see different ads, live in different places, do different things, and know different people. We have different identities spanning our gender, race, socioeconomic class, sexual orientation, ability, age, and political views. Our experiences and intersecting identities create how we see the world and how the world sees us.

Sometimes the way we see and interact with the world, or how the world sees us, can be biased. **Bias** is a belief or opinion that affects how we perceive and treat others—it can be an aversion or a preference. Sometimes we know our opinion or belief is biased; that's conscious bias. Sometimes the bias is unconscious, which can lead us to instantly connect stereotypes or attitudes with certain groups of people based on their identity. A **stereotype** is a characteristic or trait—whether positive or negative—that is associated with an identity group. It is often an oversimplification or exaggeration about the group.

Biases and stereotypes are the result of the systems of inequality in our society. They impact people both immediately and over time, online and offline. They contribute to a culture where people are judged and excluded for being themselves. **Intersectionality** is understanding how the systems of inequality in society create unique biases against people with multiple stereotyped identities.

By acknowledging and celebrating our unique life paths, online and offline, we can uplift and celebrate our differences. We can research our sources and read different points of view. We can better understand our individual needs and build a welcoming and inclusive community, in the real world and online.

Step 2: Examine digital advertising

Advertisements are all around us, from giant billboards to subtle logos. Online they might be ads that look like normal social media posts or a news story sponsored by a major corporation. Online ads come from different sources. Sometimes they're shared by the company or brand who made the item. Sometimes a person posts about a product they like (or have been paid to promote). A news article might even turn out to be an ad.

Online ads may sometimes seem like they're made just for you—that's because they are, kind of. Apps and websites are created with coded algorithms or sets of instructions. Algorithms can make recommendations off of behaviors and action tracked in your digital footprint. Think about recommendations for similar videos or seeing an ad for something you've already looked at buying.

That's why it's important to consider the creator's motive and what they want you to do. Then, you can protect and stand up for yourself and others.

Choices—do one:

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Identify ads everywhere. Track all the ads you see in a day. Where are they? What kind of ads are they? Can you spot any red flags? Look for ads in print (like magazines and newspapers), ads around you (like on buses, billboards, labels, or cabs), commercials and product placement (in movies and TV), and digital ads (like on social media, websites, and any accounts). Then, analyze your data. How could the ads impact how you view the world?

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Identify digital ads. Look for ads on your social media, email, and any other accounts. Write down what they are and when and where you see them. Flag any targeted ads, biased news stories, sponsored posts, or other examples intended to misrepresent or manipulate. After, analyze your data. How many ads did you see on each platform? What kinds of ads did you see the most? Do you think any of the ads had access to your data?

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Recreate an ad to be inclusive and bias-free. Find an example of bias or stereotyping in an ad, like an unrealistic image or women's products that come only in pink. Analyze the ad. Then rewrite, refilm, or recreate it with an inclusive and fair point of view. After, compare the two ads. What kinds of design decisions did you and the original creator each make?

Step 3: Advocate for yourself and others online

Digital communities are connected by goals, interests, or other similarities. They connect on a platform, such as a website, messaging app, video game, or photo-sharing platform. The community members might be guided by common values. They might follow a common set of rules to guide how they interact online.

Your **feed** is a collection of content from the digital communities you belong to. It includes posts from everyone you connect with online, from your friends and family to businesses, experts, and influencers. All of these small connections and pieces of data come together to create your feed.

While scrolling and posting can be fun, it can also be used for larger goals. You can tailor what you see to focus on things you care about, follow others who support causes that are important to you, find information, and explore upcoming events and actions.

Choices—do one:

Create a card game. Make a set of "scenario cards" with online interactions, like people sharing bias, cyberbullying, or promoting unhealthy body image. For example, what if someone told you to quit when you're playing a video game? Or if someone emailed you asking for your birth date and ID number? Make a set of "action cards" with ways to respond, like mute, delete, block, respond, report, and "player's choice." Then choose a "scenario" card and pick an "action" card to match how you'd respond. After several rounds, choose a random "scenario" and "action" card: what might be good and bad about responding in that way? To play with other people, give everyone an "action" deck, play the "scenario," and discuss how everyone chose to respond.

Analyze your digital landscape. Create a list of superlatives for the highs and lows you do and don't want to encounter online. For example, you might want to find funny or interesting posts like "most inspiring quote" or "most hilarious cat video" and not want hurtful comments or unrealistic images, like "worst body-shaming ad" or "worst stereotyping news story." Then, look through your accounts and find content for each superlative. Then decide: how can you better reflect your values in your digital landscape?

Map a historical leader's digital landscape. Choose a leader who lived before the internet was invented (1983). How did they stand up for their community? How would they stand up in the digital world? Map what their digital landscape would look like today. Who would be in their digital community? Who would they follow? Who would be in their audience? How would they respond to their opponents, trolling, or untrue "news" stories? Brainstorm how technology could help with their goals and add it to your map. Then look at the map: Would you want to be a part of the community? What can you learn from them? How can you be a leader online and offline?

▶ **For more fun: Explore influencers.** Influencers are people who have built a following on social media. Many offer important information in their field, like fashion, activism, music, or food. Others just have lots of people follow them. Choose an influencer to research. What makes them an expert? Have they created impact online and offline? Are they a digital leader or social media celebrity? Do they embody values of digital leadership or notoriety and fame?

Lead in Your Digital Landscape

Online, you may encounter ads and messages from many different points of view, telling you what to buy, how to look, or what to believe and value. You may encounter cyberbullies, **catfish** (people pretending to be someone they're not), or **trolls** (people who intentionally start fights online). You might get **phishing** emails (trying to get your private information) or messages scamming you for money. You might find ads with unrealistic bodies and a lack of representation for groups of people.

How you respond in the digital world can impact your life and the lives of others. Protecting your privacy, insisting on kind and honest interactions, and monitoring how you engage in the digital world are all important aspects of being a digital leader.

As you scroll, pause and consider when you see something that you're no longer interested in or that brings you down. Review what and who you follow every once in a while to open up space and keep your feed full of things you like and care about. And remember that any post is just one curated moment; it's not the whole picture!

Here are some other ideas to take care of yourself and others on social media:

● If you want to control who sees what you share, you can change your privacy settings.

● If someone is leaving unkind comments on your posts, you can use comment filters.

● If you want to stop seeing updates from someone you're connected with, you can mute them.

● If someone's behavior is impacting you negatively and muting or unfollowing isn't enough, you can block them.

● If you see anything that doesn't follow the guidelines or rules for the platform, you can report it. You can also report bullying.

● If you see someone sharing anything to suggest they may be sad or angry, reach out to them and listen to find ways to be kind and supportive.

● If you're ever feeling sad or angry, reach out to someone you trust, like a relative or troop leader.

Step 4: Create content for change

As a digital leader, you can connect with and amplify people and organizations who are already working on an issue. You can mobilize your network around causes you care about. You can share information and make plans with others to act. You can set an example and urge others to get involved. You can promote inclusive and honest digital experiences while using your own talents to help solve a problem.

Digital leaders can create real change by reaching people all over the world with a message and encouraging them to act. However, sometimes digital content creates a buzz online, but does not take the next step to take action or make progress in the real world. That's sometimes called **hashtag activism** or **slacktivism.** Digital content can spread awareness for an issue, but it also needs action to address why an issue happens in the first place.

For Step 4, choose a topic you care about, like a lack of access to healthy foods, a need for more green space near your school, or hate towards an individual or group because of an identity they have, like race, gender expression, or body size. Find out what the impacted community needs and how to support them. Then create original digital content, like a video, social media post, email campaign, or anything else for your audience that has action behind it and promotes a positive and inclusive digital community.

Choices—do one:

Make content for a community that may not be online. Research local groups that may not have easy access to technology, like students at under-resourced schools, people without homes, or people in nursing homes. By connecting with the community, you can learn about their obstacles, creative solutions, and how to support them. For example, you might create print materials with information about places to get internet access, like public libraries or areas with free Wi-Fi. You might organize inside and outside of the community to help folks get online and navigate the digital world.

Make a crowdsourced archive of community stories. Choose a historical or current issue in your community. Find community members who have been impacted and record their different voices and experiences. Explore what they need to feel safe and solve the problem. Then you might bring the stories together in a video, podcast, or other digital storytelling format.

Make any digital content to engage your audience. The digital content with the most impact inspires people to act. Choose a topic and goal for how you want your audience to help. Find the best digital tools to create your content. Maybe it's a live webinar, an online petition, or original digital art. To create an impact in the real world, make sure your content has action behind it.

Create Digital Content That Makes an Impact

Follow these steps to create content that makes a difference:

Research the digital landscape. Choose a problem, topic, or issue you're passionate about and find out more. Research the root causes and what others are doing to help. Then consider what you can do. How can you uplift others? How can you support these efforts?

Keep the affected community at the center. Make sure that how you communicate about the problem and solutions feels good for people in the affected community. What language do they use to talk about the challenges? What message do they want to send?

Understand your audience. Who do you want to reach? Are you trying to directly connect with people impacted by the problem or raise awareness and mobilize people outside the community? Look into how the audience uses technology. What inspires and engages them? What platforms do they use?

Explore your digital tools. How can images, text, video, or any other digital content share your message? Find the right platforms to create and share your content. What tools can you use to make the content? How will you reach your audience?

Create accessible content. Use photos, text, facts, video, or anything else to motivate and inspire others about your topic. Include a specific call to action: what do you want people to do? Make the content accessible, written in a language and shared in places familiar to your audience.

Evaluate and amplify your content. What impact did your content have? Collect audience engagement data, like the number of likes, follows, clicks, comments, or other feedback. Most importantly—how many people took action? Consider how you can expand your effort. Do you create more content or share more widely? How can you grow the impact your digital community can have?

Step 5: Expand your reach.

Big change doesn't happen overnight. Even when a new policy changes the law, it comes after many meetings and tons of planning. Behind progress are people working together to organize others and act on their values every day.

Engaging content with a thoughtful message can teach people, ask them to consider a different viewpoint, and give them information to act. Even very successful online campaigns use non-digital ways to spread their message, like signs, marches, T-shirts, flash mobs, conferences, or buttons.

After you create digital content, evaluate how effective it was. How can you expand your reach and spread your message even more widely?

Choices—do one:

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Adapt your content for print. Remake your content from Step 4 to post and share in the real world. Decide who to reach and where, like the school, community center, library, city hall, or doctor's office. Think creatively about how to engage your audience, such as making posters, yard signs, and flyers to spread awareness or designing buttons and stickers to show support. Remember to include a call to action: what do you want people to do?

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Amplify your message with an in-person action. Events and actions bring people together to speak, march, and celebrate. Communities can host cleanups or paint murals. They can organize mutual aid to make sure everyone has what they need. Decide on something you can do in person to share your message from Step 4. You could meet and collaborate on next steps with other people and groups. You could hold a rally or event to get people motivated.

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Branch out with other media. How did your audience respond to your digital content from Step 4? What worked? What didn't? What feedback did you receive? How can your content be more inclusive or impactful? You might consider other media for your message and brainstorm places to share it. Then create the next iteration to share. Document how well each medium works and decide which was most effective for your message.

Your Digital Toolbox

You can use technology to:

- **Communicate.** Digital tools connect people around the world. Different platforms offer features to share text, photo, and video. Messaging and video apps connect thousands of people at once.

- **Raise awareness.** Technology can be used to create and share content. Movements and people can share information and actions, stories of their struggles, and ambitions for a better future. They can question those in positions of leadership, hold them accountable, and ask them to use their power and influence for positive change.

- **Organize, imagine, plan, and coordinate.** Digital actions can include people from all over. A hashtag can create a common topic for people to share their own experiences. An app that focuses on collaboration can give people a place to build their ideas.

- **Mobilize money and resources.** Technology can connect movements from across the world to share strategies and skills. It can organize everyday people to donate to grassroots campaigns. It can mobilize aid after a natural disaster and everyday necessities within a community.

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