

Digital Citizenship Lesson Plan: The Power of Words

Title:	The Power of Words: Digital Footprints and Constructive Feedback
Grade Level:	6th - 8th Grade (Middle School)
Time Allotment:	45 minutes
Topic:	Digital Citizenship, Social Media, Online Communication

Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. **Explain** the concept of a "digital footprint" and understand the permanence of online actions.
2. **Differentiate** between constructive criticism (helpful) and cyberbullying (harmful).
3. **Apply** strategies to rephrase negative or reactive comments into positive, constructive feedback.

Materials

- Projector/Whiteboard
- Handout or digital document with 3-4 example negative comments (for Independent Practice)
- Exit Ticket/Quick Write (simple index card or digital form)

Lesson Structure (Workshop Model)

1. Introduction and Hook (5 minutes)

Phase	Activity	Time	Teacher/Student Actions
Hook	"Invisible Ink" Metaphor	5 mins	Teacher: Ask students: "Imagine everything you type online is written in permanent marker—not on paper, but on the internet itself. Can you erase permanent marker?" (Wait for responses). Introduce the terms: Digital Footprint and Permanence . Explain that once a comment, post, or reaction is online, it's archived, shared, and impossible to completely erase.

2. Mini-Lesson (10 minutes)

Phase	Activity	Time	Teacher/Student Actions
Instruction	Defining the Difference	10 mins	Teacher: Use a T-Chart on the board (or presentation slide) to define two core concepts: Constructive Criticism (CC) and Cyberbullying/Harmful Critique (CB) . CC: Focuses on the <i>work/situation</i> , offers specific solutions, is respectful, and aims to help. CB: Focuses on

			<p>the <i>person</i>, is mean-spirited, uses aggressive language (sarcasm, name-calling), and aims to hurt. Model: Share a common online scenario (e.g., someone posted a video of themselves doing a trick badly). Model a CB comment ("You suck at that. Quit.") and then model a CC comment ("That's a tough trick! Maybe try slowing down and watching this tutorial.").</p>
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3. Guided Practice / Active Engagement (7 minutes)

Phase	Activity	Time	Teacher/Student Actions
Shared Practice	"Comment Quick Check"	7 mins	<p>Teacher: Display 3 short, anonymous, ambiguous comments on the screen (e.g., 1. "That outfit is ugly." 2. "You could have used a better font." 3. "Why are you even trying?"). For each comment, instruct students to vote (e.g., Thumbs Up = Constructive, Thumbs Down = Harmful/Bullying). Debrief: Quickly discuss <i>why</i> a comment is harmful (it attacks the person or offers no solution) and</p>

			how it relates to the digital footprint concept.
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4. Independent Practice (18 minutes)

Phase	Activity	Time	Teacher/Student Actions
Application	Redrafting Exercise	18 mins	<p>Teacher: Distribute the "Comment Redrafting" handout. The handout contains 4 examples of common negative or hurtful online comments.</p> <p>Student Task: For each negative comment, students must redraft it into a constructive, helpful, and kind response that still communicates the original idea (if the idea was critique) without being hurtful.</p> <p>Example Handout Item: <i>Original Comment: "This game review is the worst thing I've ever read. You should stick to playing games, not writing about them."</i></p>

5. Share and Close (5 minutes)

Phase	Activity	Time	Teacher/Student Actions
Synthesis	Exit Ticket & Reflection	5 mins	<p>Share: Ask 2-3 volunteers to share one of their redrafted comments and explain their changes. Close:</p>

			<p>Hand out or display the Exit Ticket question.</p> <p>Exit Ticket Prompt: <i>If your future self (at age 25) could read one of your comments today, what is one rule you will use to make sure that comment is something you'd be proud of? (Collect responses.)</i></p>
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Differentiation/Modifications:

- **Support:** Provide sentence stems for the Redrafting Exercise (e.g., "I liked the part where ____, but next time you could try ____").
- **Challenge:** For the Redrafting Exercise, ask students to write not only the constructive comment but also a short, kind private message (DM) that they could send to the original poster for deeper feedback.