
Privacy: Who Needs It?

Segment Length: 7:47 minutes

Lesson Description:

Are you concerned about your online privacy? Do you do anything to protect it? Can social media companies manipulate us or is that just nonsense from conspiracy theorists? In this video, John Stossel and Edward Snowden discuss online tracking of citizens, manipulating our behavior, and the role of encryption in protecting our privacy.

Concepts & Key Terms:

encrypt – conceal data by converting it into a code to prevent unauthorized access.

exiled – being barred from one's native country.

monopoly – control of the supply of or trade in a commodity or service.

manipulation – the use of devious means to exploit, control, or otherwise influence others to one's advantage.

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- identify ways in which technology users are being tracked.
- explain advantages and disadvantages of having their activities and movement tracked.
- discuss how social media companies make money.
- determine if their views and behavior can be manipulated without them knowing.
- assess the costs of social media relative to the benefits of it.

Preview Activity:

Use Think, Pair, Share to have students answer and discuss these preview questions: Are you concerned that your cell phones and social media apps track your online activity? Do you think search engines and social media influence your behavior? How would you feel if one day, everything you've done online is exposed to the whole school?

OR

Distribute the K-W-L chart and have students complete the first two columns to the best of their ability. (Have them revise their answers and complete the worksheet after viewing the video.)

Viewing Guide:

We recommend that teachers show the video twice: once to allow students to view it and focus on the issues presented, and once to allow them time to complete the viewing guide. After they complete the viewing guide, allow students a few minutes to work in pairs sharing and verifying answers.

Answers to Viewing Guide

1. believe
2. engineers
3. advantage
4. secret
5. secure
6. information

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Viewing Guide

Name _____

Date _____

Class _____

Teacher _____

Directions: As you watch the video, fill in the blanks with the correct words.

1. When you see a banner ad, they're trying to shape your behavior, to sell you a new pair of shoes, but they can also control what you see and, in enough time, what you _____ .
2. There are entire teams of _____ whose job is to use your psychology against you.
3. This is controlling human behavior by a private company. For what end? Just to see if they could. The next variants are not going to be just to see if they could. It is going to be for their _____. It is going to be to shape laws. It is going to be to shape elections.
4. The FBI uses _____ subpoenas to grab our data
5. Maybe I should rethink how I use my phone, because Snowden points out that what I say here is not _____ .
6. We're entering increasingly a quantified world where everywhere you go, everything you do, everyone you interact with, and everything you are interested in is being collected and recorded and analyzed and assessed. And we don't know how that is being applied yet, but we do know once they have this _____, we can't take it back from them.

Now, take a few moments to reflect on the video and answer the questions below:

In the video, John Stossel says, "I like it that web companies know me and direct me to things I'm interested in," but Edward Snowden points out some negative aspects of the data collection that enables. What are some of those negative aspects? _____

How will encrypting our data protect us? _____

Discussion and Analysis:

1. How many of you use Facebook? Instagram? TikTok? Twitter? Google Chrome? Do you know your online activity is tracked by these companies?
2. Do any of you use encryption to avoid tracking and monitoring? If so, what do you use?
3. John Stossel says that if he doesn't want his personal information collected, he will "lose good things." What did he cite as "good things"?
4. Do you feel comfortable knowing companies are "tracking" you? Did you know that everything you do online is tracked? Would you like your parents and teachers to be able to see everything you do online?
5. Edward Snowden told John Stossel that the reason he doesn't care about this is because he doesn't understand the way that that system is being used against him. What does he mean by that? If they are giving us information or products we want, how is it being used against us?
6. Why is Edward Snowden exiled in Russia?
7. Generally speaking, do companies try to shape your behavior? In what ways? How about social media companies? How might they try to shape your behavior? What's all this talk about algorithms impacting what we see on the internet?
8. According to Edward Snowden, Facebook was able to affect real world behavior and emotions of users without ever triggering the user's awareness. Do you think it's possible to manipulate people by controlling what they see and hear online? How?
9. Facebook ran studies to see if they can make people angry. Do you think social media apps can affect your emotions? How so?
10. Facebook claims independent fact-checkers protect their users, but what if the "fact-checkers" are simply trying to further limit information or views they disagree with?
11. In "The Social Dilemma," referred to in the Stossel video, there's this line: "If you want to control the population of the country, there has never been a tool as effective as Facebook." Do you think that is true? Why/Why not?
12. The video suggests that one reason Nazis were able to round up Jews was that they had lists of Jewish people and their ancestors. That information was obtained by a census, but applied to a "different purpose." Does that concern you? Do you ever complete questionnaires or "challenges" on social media? How can the information you provide be used for a "different purpose?"
13. Do you agree with Eric Schmidt, former CEO of Google, who said, "If you have something that you don't want anyone to know, maybe you shouldn't be doing it in the first place"? Why/Why not?
14. Does the definition of wrong change? Do you have an example where you have seen "wrong" change?
15. Are you concerned that the standard messaging app on your phone is not secure? Have you opted for any "secure" apps or browsers mentioned in the video, such as DuckDuckGo, Signal messenger, or others?

16. It was called the largest digital migration in history. Why did so many users leave WhatsApp?
17. Do you really believe everywhere you go, everything you do, everyone you interact with, and everything you are interested in is being collected and recorded and analyzed and assessed? Do you care? Will this video change any of your behaviors?
18. Would you rather pay to use social media and not have your internet use tracked and stored or use social media for free and continue to have your internet use tracked and stored?
19. Are you going to make any changes after seeing this video?

Discuss These Lines from the Video

1. I even like that they know where I am, so they can show me “restaurants near me.”
2. The reason that you say you don't care about this is—and I say this without any offense intended whatsoever—is because you do not understand the way that that system is being used against you.
3. Snowden is in exile in Russia because he revealed how our government spied on us.
4. When you see a banner ad, they're trying to shape your behavior, to sell you a new pair of shoes, but they can also control what you see and, in enough time, what you believe.
5. There are entire teams of engineers whose job is to use your psychology against you.
6. We have less control over who we are and what we really believe.
7. Facebook, they ran their own psychological studies on the current population to see if they could make you angry. They intentionally wanted to manipulate their users.
8. Facebook discovered that they were able to affect real world behavior and emotions without ever triggering the user's awareness.
9. This is controlling human behavior by a private company. For what end? Just to see if they could. The next variants are not going to be just to see if they could. It is going to be for their advantage. It is going to be to shape laws. It is going to be to shape elections.
10. When the Nazis came to power, they had lists of Jews, with bloodlines going back generations. How did they get that information?
11. If you want to control the population of your country, there has never been a tool as effective as Facebook.
12. The problem that I have with this is that we should have to constrain our intellectual curiosity, and even frankly, our weirdnesses, because we could potentially someday be judged on the basis for it, even if we had done nothing wrong, even if it wasn't strange, because the definition of what is wrong is constantly changing.
13. We're entering increasingly a quantified world where everywhere you go, everything you do, everyone you interact with, and everything you are interested in is being collected and recorded and analyzed and assessed. And we don't know how that is being applied yet, but we do know once they have this information, we can't take it back from them.

Quotes for Discussion:

Facebook was not originally created to be a company. It was built to accomplish a social mission—to make the world more open and connected. –Mark Zuckerberg

The biggest problem is that Facebook and Google are these giant feedback loops that give people what they want to hear. And when you use them in a world where your biases are being constantly confirmed, you become susceptible to fake news, propaganda, demagoguery. – Franklin Foer

Everyone knows, or should know, that everything we type on our computers or say into our cell phones is being disseminated throughout the datasphere. And most of it is recorded and parsed by big data servers. Why do you think Gmail and Facebook are free? You think they're corporate gifts? We pay with our data. – Douglas Rushkoff

If you're not paying for the product, you are the product. – Anonymous

We talk about this concept of openness and transparency as the high-level ideal that we're moving towards at Facebook. The way that we get there is by empowering people to share and connect. The combination of those two things leads the world to become more open. – Mark Zuckerberg

Privacy is not an option, and it shouldn't be the price we accept for just getting on the internet. – Gary Kovacs

How can we be free when we are prisoners to social media, in a world without privacy? How can we be free when our every movement is tracked and every conversation is recorded and can easily be held against us? How exactly are we free if we are tethered to our cell phones? – Tom Green

Facebook is not your friend, it is a surveillance engine. – Richard Stallman

How many of you remember getting your data check in the mail? It got lost. It went to Facebook, Amazon, Google. – Andrew Yang

I have said that propaganda, misinformation, and disinformation have always been part of political warfare. Social media and other new platforms have given it a new life and reach through which the fake news phenomenon can reach everywhere. – Bilawal Bhutto Zardari

The rise of Google, the rise of Facebook, the rise of Apple, I think are proof that there is a place for computer science as something that solves problems that people face every day. – Eric Schmidt

One look at an email can rob you of 15 minutes of focus. One call on your cell phone, one tweet, one instant message can destroy your schedule, forcing you to move meetings, or blow off really important things, like love and friendship. – Jacqueline Leo

How can we be free when we are prisoners to social media, in a world without privacy? How can we be free when our every movement is tracked and every conversation is recorded and can easily be held against us? How exactly are we free if we are tethered to our cell phones? – Tom Green

Whoever controls the media, controls the mind. – Jim Morrison

Activities:

1. Have students complete the K-W-L chart [fillable PDF] in class or for homework.
2. Have students complete one or both of the political cartoons [fillable PDF] in class or for homework.
3. Have students complete and submit the Exit Ticket.
4. Show the class John Stossel's "Snowden: Traitor or Hero?" video and then discuss the Edward Snowden's actions and his credibility.
<https://stosselintheclassroom.org/2021/03/16/snowden-traitor-or-hero/>
5. Show the class the trailers for:
The Great Hack (2:27) <https://youtu.be/iX8GxLP1FHo>
and
The Social Dilemma (2:34) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uaaC57tcci0>
Then ask for volunteers to watch the one of the complete documentaries at home and work in groups to prepare a slideshow to present a synopsis to the class. Students who volunteer and complete the assignment should be given extra credit.
6. Read and summarize the article, "Andrew Yang wants you to make money off your data by making it your personal property." Then either write a persuasive essay in support or opposition of his idea or present what you've learned in a TED Talk style format for your class. Be sure to anticipate any unintended consequences of his proposal.
<https://www.businessinsider.com/andrew-yang-data-ownership-property-right-policy-2019-11>
7. Conduct a classroom debate on whether social media companies really influence users' behavior. To get students to look at the question of influence from a different perspective, consider having them argue from a position with which they disagree. Students should be given time to research their position prior to debating.
8. Produce a "man-on-the-street" video in which you ask people if they are concerned about their internet-use privacy. Be sure to ask them the reason for their answer. In lieu of person-to-person interviews, students can conduct online video interviews.
9. Research and write a persuasive essay about the impact of social media on young adults. Expected long-term consequences should be included.
10. Using their cell phones or computers in class, have half the class open Google and the other half open DuckDuckGo in their browser. Have them each type in the same exact term, which you can provide or have students volunteer. Ask them what (if anything) comes up as an autofill. Then, have them complete the search and share the first result. Discuss as a group. What did they observe? What conclusions can they draw?
11. Research and report on DuckDuckGo. Some questions you should be sure to answer are Why was the company created? How is it funded? How does it work?
12. Read the lyrics and listen to the song "Somebody's Watching Me" by Rockwell and answer these two questions:
 - A) How do the song and Stossel video relate?

B) Are there any social media lessons in the song?
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qw7WkFkBEu0>

13. Have the students each interview five people individually (friends, other students, teachers, family members, or even strangers) about this quote: “If you want to control the population of your country, there is never been a tool as effective as Facebook.” Do they agree or disagree with that statement? Why do they feel that way?
14. Create a 30-60 second public service announcement (PSA) that brings attention to the tracking of citizens’ personal data by social media companies and internet service providers.
15. Create a plan to develop your own social media app that will not track and sell users data. Be sure to figure out how your company will be funded.
16. Read and summarize or take Cornell Notes on one of the following articles:
 - A) “Snowden revelations lead Russia to push for more spying on its own people” by Charles Maynes
<https://theworld.org/stories/2013-12-04/russia-uses-snowden-excuse-step-spying-its-own-people>
 - B) “Your Social Media Is (Probably) Being Watched Right Now, Says New Surveillance Report” by Zak Doffman
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/zakdoffman/2019/11/06/new-government-spy-report-your-social-media-is-probably-being-watched-right-now/>
 - C) “How Governments Use Social Media to Spy on You & Sway Elections”
https://www.voanews.com/a/usa_how-governments-use-social-media-spy-you-sway-elections/6178813.html
 - D) “The Postal Service is running a 'covert operations program' that monitors Americans' social media posts” by Jana Winter
<https://news.yahoo.com/the-postal-service-is-running-a-running-a-covert-operations-program-that-monitors-americans-social-media-posts-160022919.html>
 - E) “64% of Americans say social media have a mostly negative effect on the way things are going in the U.S. today” by Brooke Auxier
<https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/10/15/64-of-americans-say-social-media-have-a-mostly-negative-effect-on-the-way-things-are-going-in-the-u-s-today/>

Name

Admit One

“If you have something that you don't want anyone to know, maybe you shouldn't be doing it in the first place.” I **agree** / **disagree** with this because

Admit One

EXIT TICKET

Name

Admit One

“If you have something that you don't want anyone to know, maybe you shouldn't be doing it in the first place.” I **agree** / **disagree** with this because

Admit One

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Name

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Admit One

EXIT TICKET

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Political Cartoon Activity #1

Name _____

Date _____

Class _____

Teacher _____

Directions: Use the political cartoon to answer the questions below.



Briefly describe what is happening in the political cartoon: _____

What does the man person in the black suit represent? _____

How do you know? _____

What is the purpose or message the cartoonist is trying to convey? _____

How does this cartoon relate to the Stossel video? _____

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Political Cartoon Activity #2

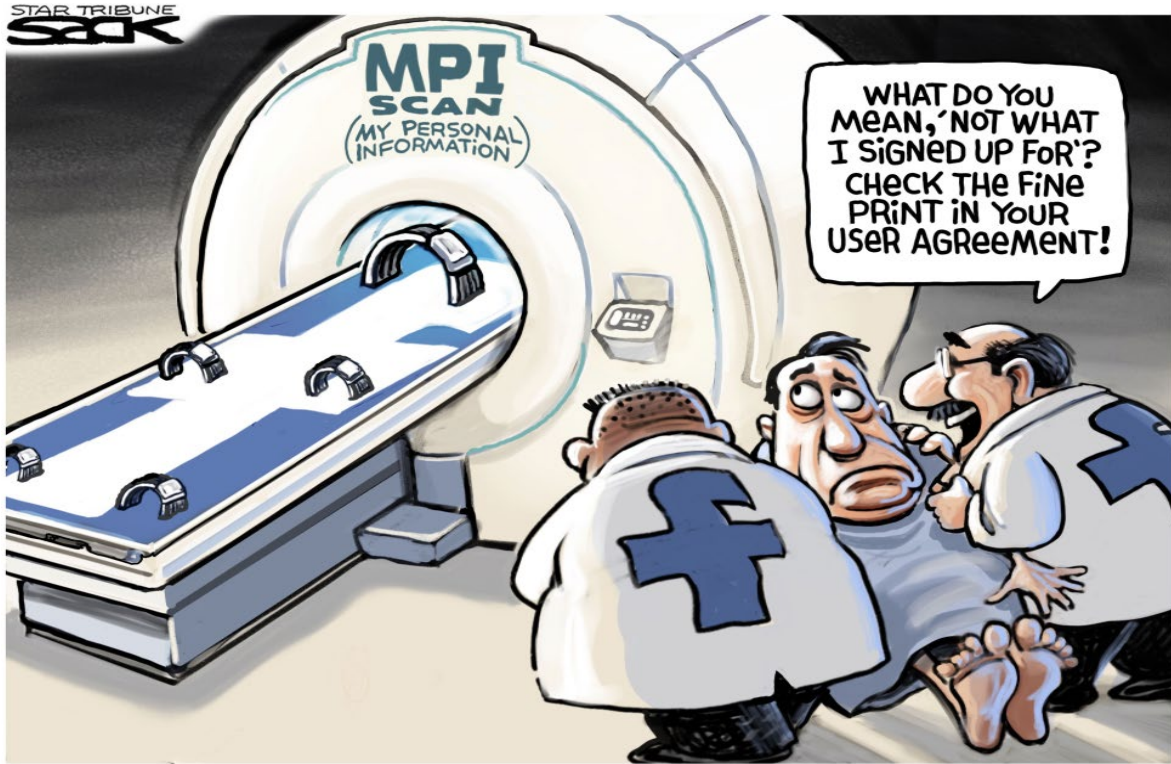
Name _____

Date _____

Class _____

Teacher _____

Directions: Use the political cartoon to answer the questions below.



Briefly describe what is happening in the political cartoon: _____

What do the people in the white lab coats represent? _____

Who does the "patient" represent? _____

What does the man in the lab coat mean by "the fine print in the user agreement"?

How does this cartoon relate to the Stossel video? _____

Name _____

Date _____

Class _____ Per _____

Teacher _____

Privacy: Who Needs It? **K-W-L Chart**

Directions: Complete the **K** and **W** sections prior to watching the video. After you have seen the video, complete the **L** section and the boxes at the bottom.

K	W	L
What I know about online tracking and internet users' privacy:	What I want to know about online tracking and internet users' privacy:	What I've learned about online tracking and internet users' privacy:
Why is the video titled "Privacy: Who Needs It?"	List some ways companies use people's online information:	After watching this video, will you change what you do on the internet? Why / Why not?