# Google & Facebook Cross the Creepy Line

Video Length: 6:08

## Lesson Description:

Are Google and Facebook secretly shaping your thoughts and influencing your choices? This video explores how these tech giants use the vast amounts of personal data they collect, creating detailed profiles of users that never disappear. By examining the hidden practices of data collection and the power they wield in the digital world, this video raises critical questions about privacy, consent, and the influence of technology on society, making it an essential resource for classroom discussions on ethics and media literacy.

## Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- identify how Google and Facebook collect and use personal data from users.
- explain the concept of the "creepy line" and how it relates to the ethical use of personal data by tech companies.
- analyze the potential impact of data collection practices by tech giants on user privacy and behavior.
- evaluate the arguments for and against regulating tech companies like Google and Facebook, considering both the benefits and risks to consumers.

## Concepts & Key Terms:

**Algorithm:** A set of rules or processes used by computers to solve problems and make decisions, often used by search engines to rank web pages.

**Data Privacy:** The practice of protecting personal information shared online from being accessed or used without permission.

**Targeted Advertising:** A form of advertising that uses data collected about individuals' online activities to show them ads that are more relevant to their interests.

**Tracking:** The monitoring of user activities online, such as websites visited and searches made, often used to gather data for targeted advertising or building user profiles.

## Preview Activity:

Use Think, Pair, Share to have students answer and discuss these preview questions: How do you think companies like Google and Facebook make money if their services are free to use?  What types of personal information do you think are collected when you use the internet or social media?  Why do you think privacy might be important when using online services or browsing the web?

**OR**

Distribute copies of the K-W-L worksheet to the class.  Have students fill in the K and W sections.  After showing the video, have students complete the L section and answer the questions at the bottom of the worksheet.

## Viewing Guide:

We recommend that teachers show the video twice: first to allow students to view the video and focus on the issues presented, and second to allow them time to

complete the viewing guide.  After they complete the viewing guide, allow students a few minutes to work in pairs to share and verify answers.

**Answers to Viewing Guide**

1. search
2. targeted
3. Chrome
4. Regulated
5. rules

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## Viewing Guide

Name _____          Date _____

Class _____ Period ____          Teacher_____

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

1. Theirs was not the first _____ engine, it was just leaps and bounds ahead of services like Yahoo Alta Vista and quickly became the clear winner in the space.

2. …basically send you _____ ads.  That is where Google gets more than 90% of its revenue.  They don't sell you anything.  They sell *you*.

3. By getting people to use _____, they were able now to collect information about every single website you visited.

4. Media companies are _____, newspapers are regulated, telecommunications providers are regulated.  But regulation often makes things worse for consumers.

5. I would rather say, here are the ground _____ that other media companies have to subscribe to.  Google should be put in the same category.

**Take a few moments to reflect on the video and answer these questions.**

How might the data collected by tech companies influence people's decisions and behavior?_____

_____

_____

What are possible downsides of regulating tech companies? _____

 _____

_____

_____

## Discussion and Analysis

1.  What are some ways Google collects data about its users?

2.  How does Facebook use personal information to show targeted ads?

3.  What does the term "creepy line" mean in the context of data collection?

4.  How do Google and Facebook create profiles of their users?

5.  What are some examples of personal data that might be collected when you use Google?

6.  Why might people feel uncomfortable with how much data Google and Facebook collect?

7.  Do you prefer targeted ads or untargeted ads?  Why?

8.  What are the benefits and risks of companies collecting data about users?

9.  How might the data collected by tech companies influence people's decisions or behaviors?

10.  Why do you think the filmmakers believe Google and Facebook have crossed the "creepy line"?

11.  How does the idea of the "creepy line" relate to ethics and privacy?

12.  What impact could Google and Facebook's data practices have on society and democracy?

13.  Do you think tech companies should be regulated like other media companies? Why or why not?

14.  How might government regulation of tech companies protect user privacy?

15.  What are the possible downsides of regulating tech companies, and how could it affect innovation and free speech?

16.  This video is several years old.  Have concerns about online privacy increased or decreased?  Why?

17.  Mark Zuckerberg wrote a letter to Representative Jim Jordan, acknowledging censorship of discussions on Facebook regarding several topics, at direction from the White House and from politicians in other capacities.  Do you consider this an infringement on First Amendment rights?  Why or why not?  Is this kind of behavior "crossing the creepy line?"  Why or why not?  Link to primary document of the letter:
https://x.com/JudiciaryGOP/status/1828201780544504064/photo/1

## Discuss These Lines from the Video:

Google crosses the creepy line every day.

They are constructing a profile of you, and that profile is real, it's detailed, it's granular, and it never goes away.

To the extent that somebody can do something <u>for</u> you, they can do something <u>to</u> you.

The question comes down to are they abusing their power, and I think you can make a very important powerful compelling case that they are.

If the major players in tech right now, and that's mainly Google and Facebook, banded together and got behind the same candidate, they could shift 10% of the vote in the United States without anyone knowing they had done anything.


## Quotes for Discussion:

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


You know something is wrong when the government declares opening someone else's mail is a felony, but your internet activity is fair game for data collecting.
                                                        – E.A. Bucchianeri

Privacy is dead and social media holds the smoking gun.   – Pete Cashmore


Internet privacy is fiction.                            – Abhijit Naskar


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


Historically, privacy was almost implicit, because it was hard to find and gather information.  But in the digital world, whether it's digital cameras or satellites or just what you click on, we need to have more explicit rules not just for governments but for private companies.          – Bill Gates


If there are terrorist groups operating in America and we can tell by patterns of calls made or emails sent, I'd like for somebody who's trying to protect our future to know that. I'd also like to know with greater certainty than I now do that the ordinary telephone calls and other communications of citizens can't be penetrated. This is more or less a permanent challenge, and I think it's a little out of balance now on both sides.                                  – Bill Clinton


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


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


## Activities:

1. Have students complete the K-W-L chart in class or for homework.  (Recall that the K and W sections are to be completed before watching the video and the L section after watching the video.)

2. Have students complete the political cartoon activity in class or for homework.

3. Have students complete the PMI chart in class or for homework.

4. Have students complete and submit the Exit Ticket as they leave class.

5. Have students keep a journal for a week, noting every time they use Google, Facebook, or other online services. They should record what they search for and the types of ads or recommendations they see afterward. At the end of the week, students can analyze their findings and discuss how their online activities might influence the ads they receive.

6. Divide the class into two groups. One group argues that Google and Facebook's data collection practices are beneficial to users, while the other argues that these practices are unethical and invade privacy. Each group presents their arguments, using evidence from the video to support their stance.

7. Have students individually choose a privacy policy from a popular app or website (such as Google or Facebook). They should read through the policy and write a brief summary highlighting what data is collected and how it is used. Students can then share their summaries with the class to discuss common themes and concerns.

8. In small groups, students design a survey to ask their peers about their awareness and opinions on data privacy and targeted ads. They can use the results to create graphs or charts and present their findings to the class, highlighting any surprising or significant trends.

9. Ask students to write a letter to the editor of a local newspaper/blog post/opinion piece for online, expressing their views on data privacy and the role of companies like Google and Facebook. They should include arguments based on information from the video, explaining why data privacy is important and what actions they think should be taken.

10. Assign students roles such as Google executive, Facebook user, privacy advocate, and government regulator. Each student will explain their character's perspective on data collection and privacy, and the class will hold a mock discussion panel, with each role arguing their point of view.

11. In groups, students create a short PSA video or poster to educate their peers about data privacy and the importance of protecting personal information online. They should use facts from the video to make their PSA informative and persuasive.

12. Have students write an essay comparing Google and Facebook's data collection practices with those of another tech company, such as Apple or Microsoft. They should analyze which company is more transparent about data usage and consider which practices they find more ethical.

13. Students can interview family members or friends about their views on privacy and data collection. They should ask about any concerns the interviewees have and how much they understand about how their data is used. Students can present a summary of their interviews to the class.

14. Students research current data protection laws (like GDPR in Europe) and how they affect companies like Google and Facebook. They will create a presentation or report that explains these laws, how they are enforced, and whether they think similar regulations should be applied in other regions.

15. Have students complete an anonymous survey about their own internet habits and privacy concerns. Compile the results and use them to facilitate a class discussion about common practices, misconceptions, and the importance of being aware of data privacy.

16. Students write an opinion piece about whether or not they believe targeted advertising is beneficial or harmful. They should use examples from the video to support their opinion and suggest ways that users can protect their personal information.

Name _____ Date _____

Class _____ Period _____ Teacher _____

# Google & Facebook Cross the Creepy Line
## 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 answer the questions below the K-W-L chart.

| K | W | L |
|---|---|---|
| What I know about privacy and social media... | What I want to know about privacy and social media... | What I've learned about privacy and social media... |

Does it make you uncomfortable that big tech can create such a detailed data picture of you? Why or why not? _____
_____
_____

What impact could Google and Facebook's data practices have on society and democracy? _____
_____
_____

Name _____                                          Date _____

Class _____ Period _____                                   Teacher _____

# Google & Facebook Cross the Creepy Line

## PMI Chart

**P = Plus:** What might be some positive effects of companies collecting data on their users?
**M = Minus:** What might be some negative effects of companies collecting data on their users?
**I = Interesting:** What is interesting about companies collecting data on their users?

| + Plusses + | - Minuses - | I |
|---|---|---|
| | | |
| | | |

Do you agree or disagree that Google, Facebook, and other big tech companies have crossed the creepy line?  Explain. ____
_____
_____

What are the possible downsides of regulating tech companies and how could it affect innovation and free speech? ____
_____
_____

# Google & Facebook Cross the Creepy Line
## Political Cartoon Activity

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



*"Always remember, sweetheart, that when the service is free, YOU'RE the product!"*

What does the phrase "you're the product" mean in the context of this cartoon and how does it relate to what you learned from the video about Google and Facebook?

_____

_____

_____

How does this cartoon illustrate the idea of the "creepy line" mentioned in the video? _____

_____

_____

In what ways do you think targeted advertising benefits or harms users? _____

_____

_____

_____

Do you think there should be more or fewer regulations on companies like Google and Facebook?  Why? _____

_____

_____

_____

**Name**

Admit One

What are the benefits and risks of companies collecting data about users?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Admit One

**EXIT TICKET**

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**Name**

Admit One

What are the benefits and risks of companies collecting data about users?

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Admit One

**EXIT TICKET**

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**Name**

Admit One

What are the benefits and risks of companies collecting data about users?

_____

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Admit One

**EXIT TICKET**