

A New Year has begun

It's time to help children
become active digital citizens



For teachers



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Being online

Access and Inclusion

Digital technology can bring children together with family and friends in distant places all year long. However, it can also divide people by giving extra advantages to those who have and know how to use it, but depriving the less fortunate of many opportunities.

-  Challenge your students to find an innovative way that technology is being used to help children with disabilities.
-  Have students present their findings, and get the class to vote on the most interesting research result.

Learning and Creativity

The start of a new year represents new beginnings, and is therefore an ideal time to encourage children to explore new topics. Digital technology can help boost their imagination. Explore with them and let them show you their digital skills.

-  Have students work in small groups to research and make a presentation to the class on how people celebrate the new year in a country or on a continent a long way from your own.
-  Remind them to think about copyright if they are cutting and pasting or downloading images!

Media and Information Literacy

While New Year resolutions are still at the top of everyone's mind, get children to think about the media they use and the way it can influence the things they want and do.

-  Groups can follow up on the previous activity by preparing a more in-depth presentation on the country they had chosen: short history, geography, population, famous monuments, customs and national products, etc.
-  Discuss information reliability, and be sure they cite their references.

Well-being online

Ethics and Empathy

Families and friends often meet and give each other gifts at the end of the old year or the beginning of the new one.

Talk about gift-giving with children and get them thinking about ways other than gifts that they can show kindness and appreciation to others.

-  Have students choose a date to organise a “digital citizens’ day” in your class or across the school, and jointly come up with one or two ideas on how to celebrate this day in a meaningful way.
-  Help them implement their ideas and measure their impact.

Health and Well-being

Whenever children have time off school, they often spend more time than ever online. Remind them that physical exercise is really important too. This includes thinking about posture, and avoiding using screens for at least an hour before bedtime.

-  Ask your students which video and online games they play or would like to have, and to look them up on [PEGI](#), the Pan-European Game Information website.
-  Discuss why it is important to respect age and content guidelines, and the impact that games can have on their health and well-being.

e-Presence & Communications

At the start of the new year, lots of online messages and greetings are exchanged worldwide. It is therefore the perfect moment to remind children that the messages they send and the things they do both online and offline contributes to the way they are perceived by others.

-  Talk to your students about the importance of being polite and respectful in all on- and offline communications.
-  For example, sending messages and greetings with text abbreviations and emoticons is fine for friends, but not really appropriate for teachers or certain other adults.

Rights online

Active Participation

New Year resolutions are often about making the year to come better and brighter than the last one. Active participation is one way of making this happen. Children often need reminding that by working with others towards common goals, they are contributing to making the world a better place.

-  Organise a class debate on a trendy global topic such as climate change.
-  Ask students to present their ideas on online or offline actions that can be implemented in school in the new year to contribute to improving life on earth.

Rights and Responsibilities

To start the new year on a good footing, encourage children to investigate whether their favourite online platforms really provide ample protection and respect their basic rights.

-  Ask your students to name a few of the online platforms they like to use.
-  Check out a few of them in class to see which ones protect children's rights such as privacy, filter out harmful content and block contact requests from strangers.

Privacy and Security

During end-of-year celebrations, children often receive new video games, game apps, subscriptions to online gaming platforms, or internet-connected toys. This is a great opportunity to bring up the topic of privacy with them, and the many ways it can be infringed when using these gifts.

-  Ask your students to look up the data policy on their favourite online game or app, and present a short summary in class. What does the policy say about the protection of their personal information and privacy?
-  Get them to re-write the relevant sentences in the data policy in a way that would be easier for them to understand.

Rights online

Consumer Awareness

Over the New Year, we tend to consume more than usual, and since the Covid-19 pandemic a lot of this spending is done online. Make the most of this opportunity to speak with children about ways that over-consuming can impact the environment, and things they should watch for when choosing items online.

-  Ask your students to tell you some of the items they have on their wish-list.
-  Then get them to do an online search to find out how and where these items are produced, and if they support the national or local economy and respect fair-trade norms.

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Other Council of Europe publications on Digital Citizenship Education

- ▶ Educating for a video game culture – A map for teachers and parents (2021)
- ▶ Digital citizenship education - Trainers' Pack (2020)
- ▶ Digital Citizenship Education – Lesson plans for educators available at <https://www.coe.int/en/web/education/new-materials>
- ▶ Digital Citizenship Education Handbook (2019)
- ▶ Bullying: perspectives, practice and insights (2017)
- ▶ Internet Literacy Handbook (2017)

Further information available at:
www.coe.int/education

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