



**Essential Question:** What information is appropriate in a digital footprint?

## Learning Overview and Objectives

*Overview:* Students learn that the information they put online leaves a digital footprint or “trail.” This trail can be big or small, helpful or hurtful, depending on how they manage it.

Students follow the digital information trails of two fictional animals. They make observations about the size and content of each trail, and connect these observations by thinking critically about what kinds of information they want to leave behind.

### objectives

*Students will:*

- Learn that the information they put online leaves a digital footprint or “trail”
- Explore what information is appropriate to be put online
- Judge the nature of different types of digital footprints by following the information trails of two fictional animals

## Materials and Preparation

**Estimated time:** 45 minutes

### Materials

- **Digital Trail Squares** (see end of lesson plan)
- **Animal Tracks Student Handout**

### Preparation

- Cut apart the squares from the **Digital Trail Squares** (see the end of this lesson plan), keeping the elephant and mouse squares separate. Be prepared to lay out each animal’s “tracks” in different locations in the classroom after the “Introduce” step.
- Make copies of the **Animal Tracks Student Handout**, one for each group of four

### Parent Resources

- Send parents the **Privacy and Digital Footprints Parent Tip for Elementary Students**

## Key Vocabulary

- **Trail:** A path or track
- **Digital Footprint:** The information about you on the Internet
- **Permanent:** There forever



## teaching plans

### Introduce

**TEACH** the Key Vocabulary word **trail**.

**SHARE** with students that you can place information online much like you pin something to a bulletin board.

**ASK** *What kinds of things are on the bulletin board or walls in our classroom?*

Sample responses:

- *Student work*
- *Photos of students*
- *Birthday chart*

**INVITE** students to imagine that all of the information on the walls of their classroom was pinned up on a bulletin board at a local grocery store. Ask them if they would be comfortable with this information being up for everyone to see. (*Guide students to think about how some information is better kept for only their eyes or the eyes of people close to them.*)

**EXPLAIN** that there is certain information that might be fine to show anyone. But there is also personal and private information, such as their addresses, birth dates, and photos of their family vacations, which is not meant for most people's eyes.

### Teach 1: Follow the Digital Trail

**PLACE** the **Follow the Digital Trail** lesson plan squares on the ground, face down, in two different trails, keeping Mizzle the Mouse and Electra the Elephant's trails separate from one another.

**SHARE** the stories of Mizzle and Electra. These animals decided it would be fun to put some information about themselves online. They went onto [www.wildkingdom.com](http://www.wildkingdom.com) and posted information. The only problem is that they forgot to ask their mamas if it was okay first.

**EXPLAIN** to students that they are from the "Things Big and Small" Detective Agency. An evil human has hired them to find out as much as possible about Mizzle the Mouse and Electra the Elephant. The more the detectives learn, the better for their plan to take over the animal kingdom.

**ASSIGN** students to groups of four. Tell them that each group should have a detective that will keep detailed notes.

**INVITE** students to go on a hunt for information. Let them know that the information that Mizzle and Electra post can be seen by anyone, including the detectives. Each group should follow the digital trail of both animals, starting with the mouse and then the elephant. Stagger the groups so they are on the trail at slightly different times. They should fill out the **Animal Tracks Student Handout** as they go.

### Teach 2: Digital Footprints

When students are finished, have them report on what they learned about each of the animals by reviewing the **Animal Tracks Student Handout** with them. Begin by teaching students the Key Vocabulary words **digital footprint** and **permanent**.



|                                                                | Mizzle<br>the Mouse | Electra the<br>Elephant |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Whose full name do you know?                                |                     | x                       |
| 2. Whose house could you find?                                 |                     | x                       |
| 3. Whose birth date do you know?                               |                     | x                       |
| 4. Whose user name and password do you know?                   |                     | x                       |
| 5. Who let out a secret on the Internet?                       |                     | x                       |
| 6. Which animal can you describe better from his or her photo? |                     | x                       |

## Questions

- 1. Who can the detectives find out more about, and why?** (*Electra, because we now know where Electra lives, what she looks like, and private and personal information about her life. Point out to students that having a bigger digital footprint means the detectives can learn more about them too.*)
- 2. Which animal has a bigger digital footprint?** (*Electra, because she put more private and personal information online than Mizzle.*)
- 3. Mizzle says some funny things about himself on the Internet. What are they?** (*He says he likes Swiss cheese, his photo is of cheese, and he has a pet flea.*)
- 4. Is there anything that Electra posted on the Internet that could become a problem for her? If so, what and why?** (*Sample response: Private and personal information (e.g., address, full name) allows others to learn more about her. This could be unsafe. Saying that she fights with her brother could hurt her brother's feelings because it is public.*)

**CREATE** a chart with students that summarizes which information is appropriate or inappropriate to put online. Here is a sample:

| Appropriate | Inappropriate                      |
|-------------|------------------------------------|
| Interests   | Address                            |
| Hobbies     | Full name                          |
| First name  | Information that would hurt others |

Also discuss how Mizzle and Electra both had very interesting information online, but Mizzle used better judgment about what was most appropriate to post. Mizzle had a smaller digital footprint. Electra put some information online that might make her unsafe or might upset her brother. Remind students that the Internet is a public space where people they do not know will likely see their information. And this information is very hard to remove. It is basically permanent.



## Wrap Up and Assess

You can use these questions to assess your students' understanding of the lesson objectives.

**ASK** *What is a digital footprint, and what did Mizzle and Electra's footprints look like?* (A digital footprint is the information about you on the Internet. Mizzle's footprint is pretty small and does not reveal private or personal information. Electra's is large and contains information that could make her unsafe or upset others.)

**ASK** *What kinds of information are appropriate to put on the Internet? What kinds of information are inappropriate to put on the Internet?* (Appropriate: interests, hobbies, first name; Inappropriate: full name, address, hurtful information about others.)

**ASK** *Can you put interesting and funny information online and still be appropriate?* (Absolutely. Just look at the information that Mizzle posted.)



## Extension Activity

Students modify Electra's trail. Ask students to make a new trail for Electra that contains information that is safer and more appropriate. In small groups, encourage students to think critically about how they might change the information in Electra's "animal tracks." They should write down these alternative pieces of information for each footprint. Have students report on the information they created and how they made their decisions.



## Homework

Students recount the story of Mizzle and Electra to their parents. They share why Mizzle put appropriate information online and why Electra put inappropriate information. They then share with their parents two things that are okay to reveal on the Internet and two things that are not okay.

### Alignment with Standards – National Educational Technology Standards for Students® 2007

(Source: International Society for Technology in Education, 2007)

#### 1. Creativity and Innovation

- a. apply existing knowledge to generate new ideas, products, or processes
- d. identify trends and forecast possibilities

#### 2. Communication and Collaboration

- d. contribute to project teams to produce original works or solve problems

#### 3. Research and Information Literacy

- d. process data and report results

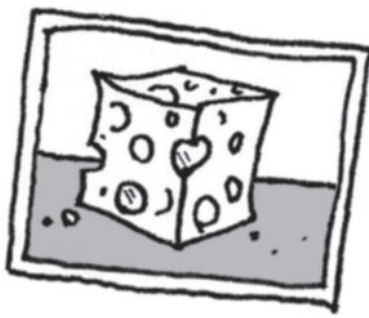
#### 4. Critical Thinking, Problem Solving, and Decision Making

- a. identify and define authentic problems and significant questions for investigation
- b. plan and manage activities to develop a solution or complete a project
- c. collect and analyze data to identify solutions and/or make informed decisions

Common Sense Media is an independent, nonprofit resource that helps families and educators teach kids how to be safe and smart in today's 24/7 media world. Go to [www.commonsensemedia.org](http://www.commonsensemedia.org) for thousands of reviews and expert advice.

**Digital Trail Squares**

**Directions:** Cut out the squares below and pass out one square per person.

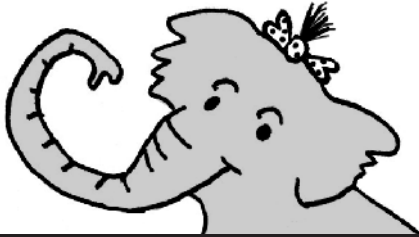
| <b>Mizzle the Mouse</b>                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                     |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>Name:</b><br/>Mizzle</p>                  | <p><b>Where you live:</b><br/>Mouse hole</p>      |
| <p><b>Pet's name:</b><br/>Frank the Flea</p>  | <p><b>Favorite Hobby:</b><br/>Ice skating</p>  |
| <p><b>Favorite food:</b><br/>Cheese</p>       | <p><b>My favorite photo:</b></p>               |



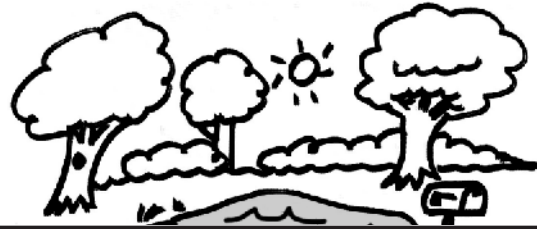
## Electra the Elephant

**Name:**

My full name is:  
Electra Ella Elephant

**Where you live:**

132 Water hole Lane,  
Peanuts, Ohio

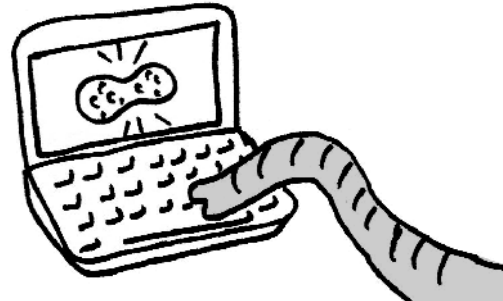
**Birth date:**

February 21, 2010

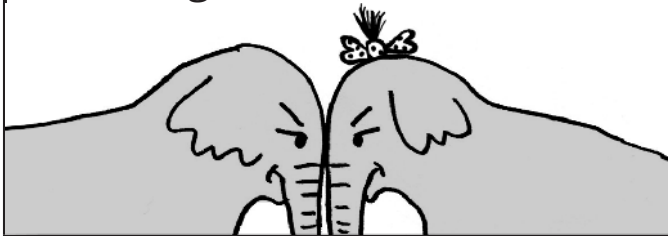


**User name:** gray\_toes

**Password:** bamboo

**Secret:**

My brother and  
I fight all the time

**My favorite photo:**