

## Securing Your Digital Footprint



Next, a lack of awareness about digital footprints can severely jeopardize future opportunities. Universities and potential employers routinely check applicants' social media history. Pictures or comments posted today, even if deleted later, can be permanently archived and surface years from now, leading to the loss of scholarships or job offers. Students must understand that the internet has a permanent memory.



First of all, poor privacy settings leave students vulnerable to cyber-attacks and identity theft. Sharing too much personal information—such as birthdates, high school names, or even photos with location tags—provides criminals with the "puzzle pieces" they need to bypass security questions or create fraudulent accounts. Students often neglect simple measures like using strong, unique passwords or enabling two-factor authentication, making them easy targets for account takeovers.



In a world where our personal data is a valuable commodity, the casual and careless use of social media is a dangerous liability. Every high school student must proactively prioritize and master fundamental digital security and privacy practices to protect themselves from identity theft, scams, and future reputational harm.



It is clear that passive social media use is no longer sustainable. I urge every student to immediately audit their online presence: strengthen passwords, review all privacy settings to the highest level, and habitually think twice before posting anything. We must commit to becoming digitally literate guardians of our own data before our negligence allows others to control our financial and professional futures.



Finally, we have a responsibility to combat the spread of scams and malware. By clicking on suspicious links or sharing "urgent" but unverified information, users unwittingly aid phishing attempts or introduce viruses into their network. A trained, secure user is the first line of defence against online criminality, making digital security a matter of communal responsibility, not just personal safety.