A digital footprint, much like your fingerprint, is the unique activity trail you leave online. Everyone has one. Your digital footprint includes “hard” information that the Internet gathers about you through your email, your online registrations, your video and photo uploads and your combined activity on social networks. A digital footprint also includes “soft” information such as the *impression* you leave through your overall words, photos and interactions with others.

Explain to your child that a digital footprint is kind of like an invisible report card that accumulates over the years and is a general reflection of their online activity. His digital footprint can appear positive, negative, or somewhere in between. It’s really his choice.

**3 Things that Matter to Your Digital Footprint:**

1. **How You Protect Your Privacy.** You can be protective or careless about your online presence, your passwords, your social profiles and what information you “let in” your PC or phone. Your digital footprint is compromised when someone steals your personal information through links, malware, and scams. Privacy settings and [security safeguards](http://home.mcafee.com/Default.aspx?rfhs=1&CID=MFEen-usMHP001) are critical to protecting your digital footprint.
2. **How You Express Yourself.** The Internet is permanent so anything you have shared online gives others a collective snapshot of who you are, what you value, and what kind of interaction they might expect from you. This online reputation is critical as you build relationships, pursue your goals, and seek employment. Being genuine and having integrity online impact your digital footprint. *What* you share is as important as *how* you share it.

**How You Respect Others.**Honoring others online and showing respect for ideas is not only a matter of integrity but it’s also the law. Copyright laws govern how to share and cite content created by others. The respect you show for the rules of social networks, other people’s opinions and ideas, and the respect you show for school policies and the law . . . become characteristics of your digital footprint.

<http://internet-safety.yoursphere.com/2013/07/helping-kids-understand-their-digital-footprint/>

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=7\_LPdttKXPc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7_LPdttKXPc)

www.explainthatstuff.com/**internet**.html