Teacher’s Guide

Privacy Policies & You

**Time Needed:** 1 class period

**Materials:** (optional but recommended)
- Student handouts
- Scissors
- Class computer and projector with internet access (optional)

**Handouts:**
- Reading (1 page; class set)
- Privacy Policy Cards (1 page; 1 per group)
- Key Question Cards (1 page; 1 per group)

**Objectives:** Students will be able to...
- Identify where users can find a company’s online privacy policy
- Answer key questions that privacy policies address
- Make decisions concerning how their data is shared

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### Step by Step

- **Anticipate**
  by asking students what comes to mind when they think of the word “privacy.”

- **Tell**
  students that today they will read about and review excerpts from real-life privacy policies. Ask students where they have encountered privacy policies before.

- **Distribute**
  the student reading to the class.

- **Read**
  with the class, pausing to discuss. Alternatively, have students read in groups or independently. Ask students: what is a privacy policy, where can you find them, what three things does the privacy policy tell you? Consider using a computer and projector to demonstrate where privacy policies can be found and skim the information they contain.

- **Group**
  students into groups of 3-4 students.

- **Distribute**
  one Privacy Policy card sheet and one Key Questions card sheet to each group. Tell students that they will review excerpts from real-life social media platform privacy policies. Remind students that these are just excerpts. If they want more information about a company’s data use, they should visit the website.

- **Instruct**
  students to cut out the Privacy Policy and Key Question cards. Tell students to keep the Privacy Policy cards separate from the Key Question cards. Students will take turns matching a Privacy Policy card to the Key Question its excerpt can answer. Once a student finds a match, that student reads the privacy policy excerpt to the group and asks their group mates to answer the key question and discuss the question that follows.

- **Allow**
  students time to complete the activity.

- **Close**
  by asking students to what they learned about privacy policies.

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Optional: Consider adding a writing component to this lesson. Ask student to choose and defend a side. Set students up to think about and address a counter claim by asking how a business owner’s opinion might be different from a user.

**Writing Prompt:** Do you think companies should be allowed to collect your personal data? Why or why not?
But, wait, what’s a privacy policy? And what did you just agree to?

**Privacy Policies Don’t Mean Private**

A privacy policy is an explanation of how a company collects, manages, and uses your personal information. You tend to see privacy policies mentioned when you sign up for a new account, install and open an app, or visit a website for the first time. You can also find them at the bottom of webpages or in the settings section of an existing account. Sometimes, companies include the privacy policy in their terms of use (aka the rules you agree to when you choose to use their product) or may link to an additional policy called a data use agreement which spells out exactly what the company is doing with your data.

A privacy policy doesn’t guarantee you privacy. In addition to revealing how a company gathers your information and what information they’re collecting, the privacy policy also tells you what the company is doing with all that data. Is it being shared? Can they sell it? Is it strictly confidential? Certain pieces of data may be treated differently. For instance, a company may choose to safeguard your payment information but prefer to share information about which products you purchased or viewed with partner sites.

**Did You Even Read It?**

Maybe. A 2014 survey revealed that 52% of Americans didn’t know what a privacy policy was. What’s up with that? At least you won't be included in that count! True, privacy policies have been known for being long and full of legalese—a fancy way of saying legal language that’s hard to understand. But what’s stated in them is important. And if you don’t read the policy, you could be saying yes to something you don’t want. If you feel uneasy about what you see in a company’s policy, don’t agree to it and don’t use that site. Also check to see what options the policy gives you in restricting or protecting your data from use you don’t want to allow. Large social media companies like Facebook and Twitter recently added settings to give users more control over their data. Want more information about what those settings are and how you can access them? Simply view the company’s privacy policy for details!
Privacy Policy Cards

**Directions:** Cut out each card. Read the excerpts from real-life privacy policies and try to match them to the key questions that they answer.

**Facebook Says:** We collect the content, communications and other information you provide when you use our Products, including when you sign up for an account, create or share content, and message or communicate with others. This can include information in or about the content you provide (like metadata), such as the location of a photo or the date a file was created [...]

**Pinterest Says:** We have a legitimate interest in delivering ads that are relevant, interesting and personal to you in order to generate revenue (providing this Service is expensive!). To further these interests we use the information we collect to decide which ads to show you [...]

**Instagram Says:** We may also access, preserve and share information when we have a good faith belief it is necessary to: detect, prevent and address fraud and other illegal activity; to protect ourselves, you and others, including as part of investigations; and to prevent death or imminent bodily harm [...]

**Wattpad Says:** We may share your Personal Information with third-party service providers, but only where it’s necessary to provide any of [our] Services to you (e.g., email providers, server providers, etc.) [...] we require that they protect your Personal Information to the same standards we do [...]

**Snapchat Says:** If you ever decide to stop using Snapchat, you can just ask us to delete your account. We’ll also delete most of the information we’ve collected about you after you’ve been inactive for a while—but don’t worry, we’ll try to contact you first!

**Reddit Says:** We take measures to help protect information about you from loss, theft, misuse and unauthorized access, disclosure, alteration, and destruction. For example, we use HTTPS while information is being transmitted.

**Twitter Says:** We give you control through your settings to limit the data we collect from you and how we use it, and to control things like account security, marketing preferences, apps that can access your account, and address book contacts you’ve uploaded to Twitter [...]

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## Key Question Cards

**Directions:** Cut out each card. Take turns matching the key question with the privacy policy excerpt that can answer it. Once you have a match, read the privacy policy excerpt aloud to your group mates. Ask them to answer the key question. Then discuss the question that follows. Repeat until all cards have a match.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Question</th>
<th>Privacy Policy Excerpt</th>
<th>Discuss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key Question:</strong> What information does the company collect?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key Question:</strong> What’s your information being used for?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key Question:</strong> Under what circumstances is your data shared with the government or police?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Key Question:</strong> Can you delete your data?</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Key Question:</strong> Is your data protected when it is collected?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key Question:</strong> Is your data shared? How?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Key Question:</strong> What options do you have to protect your privacy?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Discuss:**
- **Key Question:** Are you comfortable with what’s being collected? Why or why not?
- **Key Question:** It is used for anything other than what you thought? Explain.
- **Key Question:** Why should companies share this information with you?
- **Key Question:** Are there limitations or time limits on what you can and cannot delete?
- **Key Question:** Does knowing how a company is protecting your data change how you feel about them collecting it? Explain.
- **Key Question:** How can you indicate changes you’d like to make in how your data is treated?