Year 11: The Online World

Name:_____

Uses of Online Communication

When we talk about communicating online we mean transferring of data between different users over the internet. Communicating online doesn't have to be just chatting to someone using instant messaging, email or VoIP software like Skype though.

- Contemporary social media for publishing and accessing information
- Virtual learning environments for education
- Social networking websites for sharing information and building online communities.

Publishing & Accessing Information

One way we communicate with others is by using contemporary social media to publish and access information. Examples of social media tools we use to do this include blogs, wikis and podcasts.

Type	How It's Used	Why It's Used
Blog	Regularly updated in an informal style to share opinions or news, typically using text, image, video and sound.	They're quick & easy to update without technical skills. This makes it very useful for individuals to share the latest information on a topic of interest.
Wiki	Visitors who have signed up as members of the site can add and update the information provided for others to access.	Provides accurate and up-to-date information for others to access as it's maintained by a range of people who check and update each other's entries.
Podcast	Audio or video files that can be downloaded from the internet and are normally published in regular episodes.	Publishes information in a non-written format so people can access information through listening. Especially helpful for people with visual impairments.

What blogs, wikis or podcasts do you read and listen to?

If you don't use any then choose a topic you're interested in and see if you can find a related blog/wiki/podcast. You're very likely to find several.

Education

Virtual learning environments can also be a great way of communicating online and are used heavily in modern education.

Virtual learning environments, often called VLEs, provide a virtual classroom online that lets teachers and their students communicate and share resources. Your school or college likely uses a VLE, the most popular being Moodle & Blackboard.

These virtual learning environments have a range of features to help students and teachers communicate, including:

Resource Sharing – Class resources can be uploaded by teachers and accessed by students to help them do their work.

Discussion Forums – Forums can be setup to allow students to participate in a discussion with classmates.

Instant Messaging – Students can send messages to teachers to ask for help in completing their work.

Assessment – Students can submit work to teachers for assessment and teachers can deliver feedback on work back to students online.

There is a downside to using VLEs in education though. If the teacher or student doesn't have access to the internet, or the VLE is down, then the resources, student work, and feedback cannot be accessed.

Sharing Info & Building Communities

Social networking websites such as Facebook or Twitter have become an important part of online communication. In particular, one of the key elements of social networking is to connect you with people with similar interests to you.

When you sign up for social networking sites like Facebook you will create a profile that identifies some of your key interests such as your hobbies, music that you like or sports teams that you support. This can then be used for two purposes.

Sharing Information – Online Networks of Friends allow you to share information with family and friends by posting updates, such as statuses. You should always communicate politely when sharing information online, this is known as Netiquette.

Building Online Communities – Users can create and join groups dedicated to similar interests so that you can communicate with each other and share relevant information. This is known as an online community. Sometimes these online communities exist in virtual worlds rather than on social networking sites.

What groups do you follow on Facebook? Do you "like" any particular interests on the site?

What impact does this have? Do you find relevant information appearing in your feeds? How is this helpful?

Quiz

1.What two types of files can be used in podcasts?

- ☐ Audio
- ☐ Photos
- ☐ Text
- ☐ Video

2.Jack wants to keep an online journal so that his family can keep informed on his summer travels in Australia. What communication method should he use?

- ○ Blog
- ○ Wiki
- ○ Podcast
- ○ Chatroom

3.Simone wants to edit a wiki about her favourite video game. Who is allowed to edit this wiki?

- ○ No one
- ○ Anyone
- ○ Members
- ○ The site owner only

4.Which one of the following facilities is used by students in VLEs to aid communication?

- ○ Assessment feedback
- ○ Assessment submission
- ○ Resource uploading

5.A profile is a person's presence online on a particular system.

- ○ True

- ○ False

6.Which of the following is an example of bad netiquette?

- ○ Using all lowercase letters in a sentence.

- ○ Using all capital letters in a sentence.

- ○ Disagreeing with someone.

- ○ Making spelling mistakes.

7.What is an online community?

- ○ A virtual community where members interact with each other.

- ○ A simulated world where each user has their own 2d or 3d avatar that allows them to move around the world and interact with each other.

- ○ A website where visitors who have signed up to the site can add and update the information provided.

- ○ An online journal or diary that is regularly updated in an informal style to share opinions or news.

8.Nadeem is a member of a group on a social networking website that regularly discuss their shared interest in their local football club. What is this known as?

- ○ Virtual World

- ○ Forum

- ○ Network of Friends

- ○ Blog

9.A virtual world is an online community that meets in a simulated world.

- ○ True

- ○ False

Implications of Online Communication

Social Networking

Social networking sites are one of the biggest examples of online communication and have had a huge impact on the way we communicate with others.

They let us communicate in real-time through text, audio & video, to form online communities and to share our interests, opinions, thoughts & feelings with others for almost no cost.

There are a lot of advantages associated with this:

Photo Sharing – You can share photos & and other files to followers and friends. Friends can then see these images and comment on them.

Real-Time Chat – Often chatroom services are included to allow for real-time text-based conversations between users.

Group Messaging – You can send messages to multiple people all at once and even hold group conversations.

Cheap Cost – It is a very cheap form of communication as the vast majority of social networking sites are completely free.

Accessible – All you need is an internet connection, so you could even use it on a mobile device connected to a hotspot, or in an internet cafe.

With social networking websites there are some major drawbacks though which have received quite a lot of attention in the media over the past few years. These include:

Lack of Privacy – If privacy settings are set correctly our private information & photos might be publicly available. This information can potentially be accessed by malicious users for committing identity fraud or seen by a potential employer, costing you a job opportunity.

Profile Hacking – Malicious internet users may hack into your profile in order to access your private information and personal messages. This information could be used for blackmail, harassment, identity fraud or even bank fraud potentially.

Instant Messaging

Instant messaging is a major method of communicating with others nowadays. Many websites, such as social networking websites, have IM services integrated into their sites. We've also seen a number of standalone smartphone apps, such as Whatsapp, becoming the main way of messaging people on your phone ahead of SMS.

The reason it has become so popular is because there are many advantages with using IM over other services, such as:

Group Messaging – Many IM services allow for group conversations to be held. This is helpful to organise meetings either in work or in our personal lives.

Real-Time Communication – Recipients receive instant messages immediately allowing them to respond quickly and have real-time conversations.

Sharing Files and Links – Most IM software allows you to include web links, or even send files to the person you are messaging.

Of course with any service there are always drawbacks and instant messaging isn't any different in this regard. For example:

Spam – Instant messaging normally allows anyone to contact you and so this can lead to a lot of spam or phishing attempts to try and get you to reveal personal information or purchase dodgy products.

Security – Instant messaging conversations could be intercepted, so any private information you have included in your conversation could be misused. Many instant messaging services use encryption to hide your messages though, so even if someone steals them they won't be able to read the message.

Client and Server Roles in Instant Messaging

To better understand some of these pros and cons you need to understand the client and server roles in instant messaging.

Client	Server
The computer that the instant messaging software is installed on so we can write, read and reply to messages.	A computer that receives messages from the sender's client and redirects them to the recipient's client.

Real-Time Communication

Real-time conversations using speech and live video can be had online using Voice over Internet Protocol software, as well as through video conferencing software. Common examples you might have used before include Skype and FaceTime.

VoIP software offers a range of benefits, including:

Cheap – Voice & video conversation can be had for very cheap, usually for free, compared to alternatives such as traditional phone calls which can be expensive.

Available Everywhere – It can be used wherever you are, as long as you have an internet connection. It can even be used with roaming internet connections.

Works On Any Device – It works on any type of device, whether that is desktop, laptop, tablet or smartphone.

Web conferencing software usually uses VoIP technology but has added features, such as:

Group Meetings – It allows you to hold meetings with a large group of people without having to travel to the same location. This saves a lot of time and costs involved with travel.

File Sharing – Documents and presentations can be displayed and distributed to others taking part in the web conference.

These advantages show why VoIP and video conferencing has become so popular recently. However, there are some drawbacks with this type of system. For example:

Video/Voice Quality – The quality of the audio and video can be quite poor especially on slow internet connections.

Reliability – It relies on having access to an internet connection & slow internet connections can lead to it cutting out or skipping to the point of being unusable.

Security – There are always concerns that data being transferred over the internet could be intercepted and this is still true of video and voice communication.

Quiz

1.Suraj uses social networking sites to upload his photos. Why must he be careful when doing so?

- ○ The pictures might be used to commit identity fraud.
- ○ He might be banned from the site for uploading too many pictures.
- ○ The privacy settings might make the images viewable to the general public.
- ○ The photos might not be very flattering.

2.Which one of the following is a benefit of social networking websites?

- ○ The ability to hold video conferencing business meetings.
- ○ The ability to communicate in real-time for very little cost.
- ○ The high level of security when sharing your personal information.

3.Hannah had her social networking profile hacked. How might any stolen personal data be misused?

- ○ Copyright piracy
- ○ Hacking

- ○ Identity Fraud
- ○ Phishing

4.You cannot hold a group conversation using an instant messaging service.

- ○ True
- ○ False

5.What is the role of the server in instant messaging?

- ○ It keeps a copy of the messages sent so they can be downloaded by recipients.
- ○ It is only there for downloading the client software.
- ○ It is used to prevent hacking attempts on your private information.
- ○ It is used by the recipient to write their response.

6.What is the role of the client in instant messaging?

- ○ It is used to keep copies of conversations for others to download from.
- ○ It only let's you read messages but not write them.
- ○ It is used to back up instant message conversations.
- ○ It is used to write & send messages and then to receive & reply to messages.

7.What two types of data is VoIP used to transfer?

- ☐ Voice
- ☐ Software
- ☐ Video
- ☐ Text

8.Why do business' use video conferencing software to hold meetings?

- ○ It is more effective than meeting in person.
- ○ More people can be involved than in a normal conference.
- ○ It saves on transport time and cost as well as the cost of venue rental.
- ○ It is more secure than meeting face to face.

9.What factor might cause poor voice/video quality in a VoIP conversation?

- ○ Poor internet connection
- ○ Slow processor
- ○ Speaker volume is too high
- ○ Microphone is too close to the monitor