



## DIGITAL LITERACY

### WHAT IT IS AND HOW TO USE IT



#### WHAT IS IT?

Digital literacy refers to the ability to engage with technology and access digital content while being able to evaluate it, critically reflect on it, and use it creatively. Within the context of supporting student learning in post-secondary education, digital literacy can involve providing opportunities for students to engage critically with digital information, determine its credibility and validity as a source of scholarship, and to find ways for students to use technology in effective ways to support their learning in the classroom.



#### WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Digital literacy is an important skill for students to develop because [21<sup>st</sup> century learning](#) requires students to be equipped with more tools to be successful as they complete their studies and enter the workforce that is constantly being shaped and influenced by emerging technologies. The rise of hybrid learning spaces and technology-enhanced classrooms provides new opportunities for students to explore course content, while simultaneously helping students develop the key skills they need for the future. Given the rise of AI, digital literacy is increasingly important for students to acquire an understanding of what these tools are, what potential benefits they can be used for, and how to use these tools in responsible and ethical ways. Digital literacy will help equip students with skills they need for future workforce. For instructors, gaining digital literacy with various technologies available is important for being able to teach to a generation of students who are raised with this technology and can easily navigate it



#### HOW CAN INSTRUCTORS IMPLEMENT DIGITAL LITERACY IN THEIR CLASSROOM?

For instructors who are interested in implementing digital literacy into their teaching, consider the following tips and strategies:

- 1. Survey students to get a sense of their digital literacy and familiarity with technological tools.** This can be done via an anonymous survey using polling software during the class or it can be set up on eClass. You can incentivize students with a completion bonus if they complete the survey. Include resources on syllabus or a statement about AI and technology that will be used in your course.
- 2. Allocate time during class to discuss the ethical implications of AI and other digital technologies.** Taking time to discuss the use of digital tools with your students can go a long way in helping to support digital literacy and support academic integrity in the classroom. Conversations can include discussions about appropriately citing AI generated work, indicating clear expectations on acceptable use of technologies in your courses, and providing students with tips and strategies for assessing the validity of online sources are ways to support digital literacy in direct ways.
- 3. Give students a chance to practice with these tools and reflect on them.** This first-hand experience and exposure to these digital tools can serve students well and be a learning experience for them. For example, you can assign a ChatGPT-generated essay or short answer responses and give students a chance to critically assess and evaluate it the accuracy and

validity of the response. Not only would an activity like this highlight the potential benefits and limitations of AI tools in education, but it would give students a chance to experiment productively with these technologies in creative ways which can foster digital literacy.

4. **Provide students with the tools to critically evaluate digital information.** Since online sources are often the starting point for learning any kind of new information about a topic, the ability to critically evaluate the validity and accuracy of online information is important because it teaches students to think carefully and build other skills that can help them succeed in their studies. For example, you can use AI to generate a piece of writing and ask students to locate appropriate citations to support the claims made in the assignment. You can also use this as a chance to teach students to fact check information derived from the Internet and from AI while helping them develop skills in researching, critical reading, and analysis.
5. **Embrace creativity and collaboration in assignment design and give students opportunities to develop transferable skills.** For example, give students opportunities to work together to problem solve and/or to use different technologies in their assessment (e.g., collaborating on a written paper or working on recording a video presentation together). These are tangible ways to help students build their digital literacy while meeting course outcomes.



#### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES (External)

##### Explore in 15-30 Minutes

Bali, M. (2023, April 1). What I Mean When I Say Critical AI Literacy. *Reflecting Allowed*. <https://blog.mahabali.me/educational-technology-2/what-i-mean-when-i-say-critical-ai-literacy/>

Borthwick, A. C. & Hansen, R. (2017). Digital Literacy in Teacher Education: Are Teacher Educators Competent? *Journal of Digital Learning in Teacher Education*, vol. 33, no. 2, pp. 46-48. DOI: 10.1080/21532974.2017.1291249.

Giannikas, C.N. Developing students' digital literacy skills. Structural learning. <https://www.structural-learning.com/post/developing-students-digital-literacy>

McGraw Hill. (June 2022). What is digital literacy in higher education? <https://www.mheducation.ca/blog/what-is-digital-literacy>

Skeat, J., & Ziebell, N. (2023, June 22). University students are using AI, but not how you think. Pursuit (University of Melbourne). <https://pursuit.unimelb.edu.au/articles/university-students-are-using-ai-but-not-how-you-think>

Ursinus College. Library and information Technology. Defining Digital Fluency. <https://www.ursinus.edu/offices/library-and-information-technology/teaching-learning/digital-fluency/defining-digital-fluency/>

##### Explore in 30-60 minutes

Caines, A. (2023). Prior to (or instead of) using ChatGPT with your students. *Is a Liminal Space*. <https://autumm.edtech.fm/2023/01/18/prior-to-or-instead-of-using-chatgpt-with-your-students/>

Chigona, Agnes (2018) "Digital fluency: necessary competence for teaching and learning in connected classrooms," *The African Journal of Information Systems*: Vol. 10 : Iss. 4 , Article 7. Available at: <https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/ajis/vol10/iss4/7>

Fulgence, K. (2020). Developing digital fluency among teacher educators: evidence from Tanzanian schools of education. *International Journal of Education and Development using Information and Communication Technology (IJEDICT)*, 2020, Vol. 16, Issue 2, pp. 158-175

Uerz, D., Volman, M., & Kral, M. (2018). Teacher educators' competences in fostering student teachers' proficiency in teaching and learning with technology: An overview of relevant research literature. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 70, 12–23.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2017.11.005>

Wang, R., Wiesemes, R., & Gibbons, C. (2012). Developing digital fluency through ubiquitous mobile devices: Findings from a small-scale study. *Computers & Education*, 58(1), 570-578.

White, G. K. (2013). Digital fluency: skills necessary for learning in the digital age.  
[https://research.acer.edu.au/digital\\_learning/6](https://research.acer.edu.au/digital_learning/6)

### Explore in 60+ minutes

da Costa Pinho, I., & dos Santos Lima, M. (2013). Teacher's digital fluency: a new competence for foreign language teaching. *Revista Brasileira de Linguística Aplicada*, 13(3), 711-739.

Jeffrey, L., Hegarty, B., Kelly, O., Penman, M., Coburn, D., & McDonald, J. (2011) Developing digital information literacy in higher education: Obstacles and supports. *Journal of Information Technology Education*. vol.10, pp. 383-413.

Miller, C. & Bartlett, J. (2012). 'Digital fluency': towards young people's critical use of the internet. *Journal of Information Literacy*, vol. 6, no. 2, pp. 35-55

Savin-Baden, M. (2015). *Rethinking Learning in an Age of Digital Fluency: Is being digitally tethered a new learning nexus?* Routledge.

Vee, A., Laquintano, T., & Schnitzler, C. (Eds.) (2023). TextGenEd: Teaching with Text Generation Technologies. The WAC Clearinghouse.  
<https://wac.colostate.edu/repository/collections/textgened/>

## Would you like to learn more?

Contact us at Teaching Commons for additional resources, handouts, applications, courses, workshops, examples, advice, assistance, one-on-one consulting, and everything else related to teaching and learning. We are happy and eager to assist you!



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