Microsoft

Building a Culture of Digital Civility

At Microsoft, we believe in treating each other with dignity and respect—face-to-face and online. As part of our work for Safer Internet Day 2020, we're suggesting some practices to encourage civility among online users. By no means should this guidance be regarded as definitive or finite. Rather, it's designed as a starting point, as we collectively aim to grow a culture of digital civility across all online interactions.

Technology companies

Create purposeful online environments, institute codes of conduct, offer remedies

1. **Purposeful online environments.**
   Services offering users the ability to create and participate in communities need to explain the purpose of the online environments they seek to grow. For instance, is a service for gaming and entertainment, buying and selling, communicating, socializing, or dating? Let users know. Recognize that virtual communities cross geographical and cultural boundaries.

2. **Codes of conduct.**
   Service providers must create and make public and conspicuous, in a code of conduct or similar vehicle, content and activities that are both encouraged and prohibited, as well as the penalties for failing to respect a company's terms. Companies must take seriously reports about content or conduct that is illegal, incites violence, is discriminatory or promotes hatred. Policies and codes of conduct should be balanced against fundamental rights, including privacy, free expression, and personal and public safety.

3. **Remedies.**
   Offer easy-to-find, user-friendly online tools to report illegal, inappropriate or offensive content, review and address those reports in a timely manner, and consistently enforce codes of conduct across a company's range of services. In turn, provide mechanisms for customers to report and request reinstatement of content they believe was removed in error. Be transparent about content takedowns.
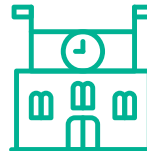
Educators, counsellors, school officials

Teach "citizenship," promote social and emotional learning, emphasize civility online and off

1. **In-school education: "citizenship."**
   We live in a digital culture. To thrive, citizenship skills encompassing a child's full life must be a priority. Integrate lessons about life online into traditional scholastic curricula, including social studies, health and language arts classes. Invest in after-school programs so all family members can learn and model safe, healthy skills and competencies and become responsible, respectful and informed citizens of the world.

2. **Social and emotional learning.**
   Educational approaches that focus on **social and emotional learning** help develop empathy and prepare youth for success in the 21st century. Core competencies include self-awareness, self-management and responsible decision-making. Conversely, this focus reduces social isolation, in-school conduct problems, aggressive behavior and emotional stress.

3. **Emphasize civility.**
   Civility in everyday interactions fosters vibrant, engaged communities. Lead by example and celebrate positive attitudes and behaviors. Acknowledge and appreciate the student voice in the civility dialogue, engage peer leaders to share positive online social norms and emphasize that most youth are making sound choices online.

Law and policymakers

Promote legal approaches that deter exploitation, grow public-private partnerships, support responsible industry practices

1. **Laws and regulations.**
   The practice of civility includes the protection of one's identity, needs and beliefs without harming or degrading another's. Laws need to be strengthened to deter online exploitation and harassment, and not inadvertently victimize the people they seek to protect. Work closely with child advocacy and victim support organizations, law enforcement agencies, industry, youth and families.

2. **Public-private partnerships.**
   Seek input from and collaborate with technology companies, members of civil society, public health and other outside experts. Raise awareness of online risks and rewards; educate families, teachers, lawyers, judges and law enforcement personnel. Devise creative and innovative approaches for encouraging positive, respectful behaviors online and off.

3. **Encourage responsible industry practices.**
   Work with industry and civil society organizations to agree foundational principles. Technology providers can then determine the most effective means of implementation. This approach provides industry with the latitude and flexibility required to respond to the ever-changing online risk landscape.

The inclusive community

Embrace pluralism online, share knowledge, grow positive communities

1. **Pluralism online.**
   Work together to encourage and grow a culture of online civility that respects and values different opinions. Making room for all perspectives helps to break down echo-chambers, sparks insights and improves cooperation. Embrace free expression, tolerance, and cultural and social diversity.

2. **Share knowledge.**
   Develop and share educational resources that encourage individuals, families and communities to proactively engage and prepare—at the earliest ages and stages—for life online.

3. **Positive communities.**
   Civil societies foster positive, healthy relationships and community. Help build and support safe and trusted online environments where individuals are encouraged and empowered to share, create, learn and fully participate.

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