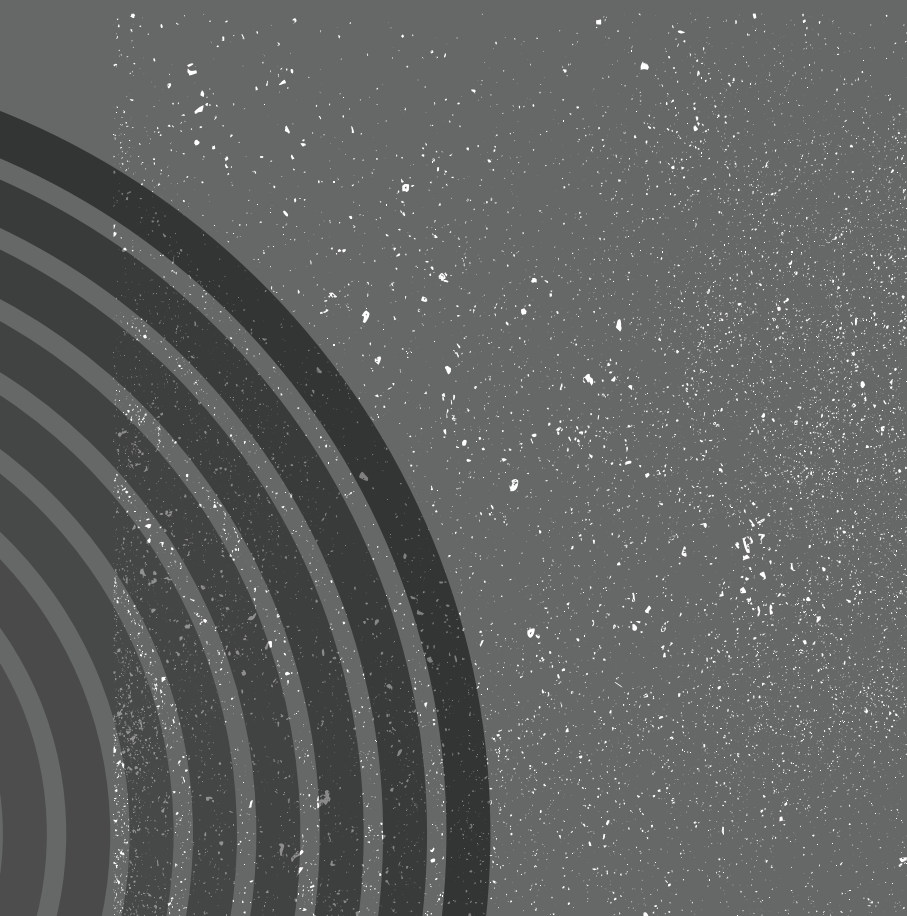


**Digital Ethics
and Practices:
Resource Packet**



In our 2018 exploration of digital rights and responsibilities we saw that youth are actively seeking tools and supports to impact the digital world in a positive and constructive manner. Building off of this work, Chicago Ideas aimed to do precisely that—to empower our youth to create their own code(s) of digital ethics, which could then be shared with and implemented as a toolkit by their peers.

As we experienced during the breakout sessions at the Chicago Ideas Youth Kick Off in 2018, there are significant tensions in how youth view life in the digital world. First, they see the Internet as a place of discord, yet they remain hopeful that it can be a place of genuine community and support. Second, they are unhappy with the lack of direction and help that's available when faced with challenging situations online, but they *want* resources to overcome those challenges—they simply don't know what or who to turn to in order to effectively confront and solve them.

The materials in this resource packet have been developed to aid youth in pinpointing the biggest challenges they see in digital life, and channel those frustrations into an actionable set of guidelines and suggestions tailored *by them and for their* communities. Chicago Ideas very deliberately wanted to present both a stated set of principles as envisioned by our youth (**Principles of Digital Community**), as well as a replicable toolkit so that groups of their peers are able to go through a similar process and create their own (**Improving Digital Life, Designing a Code for the Internet**). We fully recognized that different communities will have different standards in terms of digital life, and the Chicago Ideas Youth statement is meant to serve as an example and guide and not an end-all, be-all statement for their peers.

You will find these materials broken into three parts:

Improving Digital Life

In this initial session, youth talk through problems that they encounter in digital spaces, and brainstorm potential solutions to those problems. They will also dig into longitudinal complexities of their digital footprint, and be presented with the opportunity to think through what they do and do not want present in terms of their digital identities.

This is not a lesson in “don’t post”, but more of a framework to discuss the inevitable mistakes that youth will make in digital life and a chance to start to think how they can best be supported by their communities and tech companies to insure that those ‘mistakes’ don’t haunt them.

This session also contains an extension activity for youth to have conversations about digital consent—and exactly *who* justifiably controls *their* digital identities—with their parent(s), guardians, and families.

Designing a Code for the Internet

This session grounds the idea of community standards in classic social contract theory. Youth will work their way through the need for rules, regulations, and standards, and then turn their attention to contemporary and digitally-relevant applications of those ideas. Participants will then break into teams and devise their own set of digital best practices/community expectations, iterate on those ideas with their peers, compile these practices into their own *Principles of Digital Community*, and discuss how to get community buy-in regarding these practices.

Principles of Digital Community

Our Youth Ambassadors drafted their *Principles of Digital Community* to reflect the type of spaces they want to inhabit on the Internet—and the expectations that they have of themselves, their community, and the tech industry in maintaining those spaces.

In terms of applicability, youth, teachers, counselors, or mentors can implement these materials in a variety of contexts. Youth can implement these materials themselves if they're collaborating with peers in student governments, after school clubs, or organizations in their communities. Adult allies can implement these materials as supplements to a history or a social science unit on social contracts/The Enlightenment—particularly if there is a desire or need to make those theories have a more contemporary hook for students—or in drafting classroom, school, or student government digital constitutions.

Improving Digital Life

There are three sections to this session. The first (**Social Media + The Presence of Harm**) focuses on how social media, in part, can have a negative impact on participants. Youth will be prompted to think through current problems (like the live streaming of violent acts or the elevation of clickbait over substantive news on newsfeeds) and actively posit potential solutions that the tech industry should implement.

A good extension activity for this section would be for youth to take their ideas and address them directly to stakeholders in the industry (via posts, stories, a hashtag campaign #dearsocialmedia, etc.).

The other two sections focus on the long term repercussions of one's digital footprint (**My Digital Footprint**) and the concept of consent and digital identity (**My Digital Life**). **My Digital Footprint** is not meant to serve as a finger-wagging, don't-do-this exercise—youth are already extremely aware that what gets posted follows them (potentially) forever—but as a brainstorming activity about solutions for minors to be able to regulate and (in some part) control the digital identity that is presented to the world as they transition into adulthood.

A possible extension activity would be to tack on a mini-research project about currently proposed solutions to this issue (for example, the EU's "Right to be Forgotten").

The last section (**My Digital Life**) is a take-home extension for youth to start conversations regarding digital consent with their parent(s), guardian(s), and family. Many young people are (rightfully) confused and upset that so much of their lives are already available online before they even have the ability or awareness to craft that narrative and identity for themselves. Presented here is a series of questions for them to use to broach these issues of digital consent and identity with those individuals whom have been in control of that digital identity up until now.

We all have a responsibility—to ourselves, to one another—to do no harm. In a digital world we can be faced with questions and challenges on this score every time we look at our screens. *What does it mean to do no harm if you're merely looking at harm being done or said? How are we responsible to each other when someone posts a call for help? What resources exist for us to change what it is that we see as wrong?* If we don't stop to take a breath, there are occasions that these questions seem never ending.

We want you to be able to parse out *who* has responsibility for *what* in online spaces. Building off a previous session on **Digital Spaces + Responsibility**, we'll be looking specifically at the roles of **individuals**, **communities**, and **the tech industry**. When you answer and discuss each of the prompts below, be sure to think about how each of these groups might be part of the solution.

Social Media + The Presence of Harm

GROUP SHARE: If you could change one thing about how people interact with one another online, what would it be? Why do you think this is important?

Directions: Using the prompts and suggestions below, share your thoughts about ways that we can improve people's experiences online. *All of the examples were generated by Chicago Ideas Youth, but we'd like you to be creative and think up lots of other unique options!*

If you could design a new social media site, what would it be like?

Example: ***"It would only allow for positive communication."***

[For instance, when you type in comments to a post, if you use negative or hateful speech, a "think twice" prompt pops up. You have to read and click it away in order to post.]

What are other features you would want in a "positive" social media environment/platform?

How can we stop violent and hateful material from being streamed or shared?

Example: ***“Social media should stop broadcasting violence or inappropriate material.”***
[For instance, mass shootings and fights should not be able to be streamed in real time.]

How would this work? What is “inappropriate”? Who gets to decide that?

Should biased material and fake news be given the same place or prominence as rigorously fact-checked journalism?

Example: ***“Social media sites should promote news and awareness of important topics, instead of distracting us with celebrity news and clickbait.”***

What would this look like? How would it work? Where would the news and information come from?

What else? Write down another challenge that you want to see solved.

Issue: _____

How does this suggestion or improvement for digital life work? How is it enforceable?

In all of these changes, whose help do you need to make them enforceable? [Peers, Parents, Teachers/Schools, Technology Companies, Government?]

My Digital Footprint

Background: *Imagine you are 30 years old. Your entire life to-date has been documented online. List all of the things that people would be able to see and find out about you by searching social media and the internet.*

Good Things!	Whoopsies... Not So Good Things	Who Posted/Created this Digital Record?

Again, pretend you're 30. You have a family of your own, a career, a professional identity. What wouldn't you want people to find out about you or your past? Why?

What's the problem to a lifelong, unalterable digital footprint? Who has control or consent around this part of your identity? Who *should* be able to control your digital identity?

What are some solutions?

Potential Examples: The "Right to be Forgotten" [European Union Law, not applicable in U.S.], erasable/sealed "minor" social media profiles, etc.]

MY Digital Life: A Conversation Starter

Using the concerns that you have laid out in the **My Digital Footprint** section, now it's time to talk to your parent(s), guardian, and/or family members about digital consent. Using the following prompts as a guide, have a conversation about how their choices have formed and impacted your digital identity.

- What was the first picture or post that you ever made about me? How old was I?
- Did you ever think that those posts would eventually create an online identity *for me*?
 - How do you feel about this?
 - Would you have approached posting about my childhood differently, if you'd know social media would be as big as it's gotten?
- How would you feel if you were in my place, and someone had posted your whole life without asking you first?
 - What do you think it felt like to see that your whole life, as *told by not you*, existed independently for anyone else to see and browse and comment on?
 - Do you think there are some things that you wouldn't want everyone to see? How come?
- What do you think digital consent looks like between young people and their parent(s), guardians, or family?
 - Who gets to post what? Does everyone get to post everything? Should I be asked first?
 - Do you understand why this is an important issue for me?
- Should we have a household or family policy about digital consent?
What would that look like?
 - *[If you want to be asked first before things are posted, now would be a good time to discuss that. Likewise, talk about any posts that have been made in the past that you have a problem with or make you uncomfortable. Explain why, and talk through solutions: Delete them? Make them private to only family/close friends?]*

Designing a Code for the Internet

Connections + Logistics:

For those of you who are using this as a supplement to a social sciences or social contract curriculum, the most important connection for youth to make is that the Internet is a very good proxy for the State of Nature (or State of War). They will be asked to explicitly conclude this in the initial section's questions.

There are also a number of extension questions that can be posed to your youth, if you're looking to take this element of the session a bit deeper.

For example:

- *Do you agree that the Internet is like the State of Nature? Why or why not? What's your evidence?*
- *Based off of the type of interactions and materials you see online, what conclusions would you draw about human nature? What Enlightenment philosopher are you most aligned with as a result? Please cite your evidence for this comparison.*

NOTE: Whomever is leading this session will need to break up the group into teams of three for the **Principles of Digital Community: How would you solve for these issues?** section. Each team will focus on coming up with a single set of guidelines associated with the group they've been assigned (i.e. Tech Companies, Participants, Community).

Once you've broken the group up into teams, if you have poster paper, or chalk/white boards, or some way for them to present their material to the whole group later, it would be advisable to distribute those materials.

Language and terminology:

As background on the language employed in this session, the reason we refer to 'codes' and call the resultant document a set of 'principles' is a direct result of youth feedback. The principles/ codes developed from this session are not meant to be seen as a rigid or punitive set of rules. Our young people preferred the language of "codes" or "principles", particularly because they "represent standards that one should follow, but it doesn't feel as strict as *rules*." They also pointed out that "code" can have a double meaning, and also eludes to coding and technology—meaning that a "digital code" is both the standard that guides behaviors online, as well as the language that constructs the space that those behaviors occur within. Your group is, of course, free to title the document as they see fit.

Additionally, Chicago Ideas Youth gravitated toward the idea that any concept that related to appropriate or desirable action in digital spaces had to focus on *community participation* and membership at its core. They believe the terms of participation and community to be "empowering" as they "signify a group of people," and connote access to individuals/groups, as well as the information, resources, and entertainment found in those spaces.

Designing a Code for the Internet: How do we come together as a community?

As you hashed through in the previous session, there are *tons* of unresolved issues and challenges associated with consent, freedom, safety, and community health apparent on the Internet. At times the digital world can seem like a complete free-for-all.

Fortunately, you're not the first generation to hypothesize or theorize about the world under these conditions. Even if the *context* of online life is different—and with it our access to one another's lives—the questions about what we can do to improve our experiences and solve for undesirable conditions have been around for a very, very, very long time.

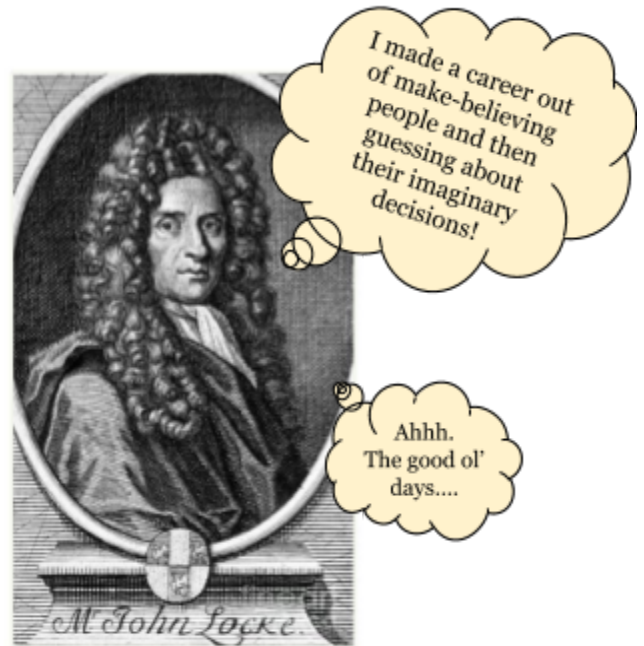
This session will take you all the way back to The Enlightenment in order to get a new vantage point on our contemporary digital challenges. By the end, you'll be in a position to draft your own Principles of Digital Community.

State of Nature: What Is It?

During the 1700s, a number of thinkers started toying with the idea that our laws and social rules developed as a response to a time when there were no rules for human beings to follow. They called this imaginary time (and place) the *State of Nature*.¹

See below for a brief on the State of Nature, and then answer the prompts below.

- Imaginary land/time that philosophers used as a hypothetical scenario to come up with laws and forms of government.
- Pretty much every country that has codified (or living) constitution and legal system is founded on this thought exercise (including the U.S. Constitution).
- In the state of nature:
 - There is **no government**,
 - There are **no laws**,
 - There are **no police**,
 - Every person has **complete freedom**,
 - Every person has **complete liberty**.



¹ NOTE: These thinkers also hypothesized that the State of Nature, which was a state of absolute freedom, inevitably led to the State of War...which involved individuals essentially doing whatever they could get away with because there were no laws that directed people otherwise.

What do you think is *good* about life under these conditions? What might be *troublesome*?

Oh, hells yes!	Oh, heavens no...that's a problem.
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What does this imaginary place and its issues remind you of?

[Hint: These old guys are not as irrelevant as you might think...]

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What's the best way to solve for the free-for-all that is human behavior on the Internet?

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Social Media Challenges: There Are No rules! Everyone For Themselves!

Directions: Look at your response to the last question. Now, imagine that you're in a position (because you are!) to think up new solutions to this Internet/State of Nature problem. What are the biggest problems that need to be solved? How is that going to be accomplished? And by whom?

With that in mind, answer the following prompts:

What are the Top 3 biggest challenges that you/your peers face in an online environment?

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Who are the three agents (i.e. people, groups, organizations, etc.) in a position to achieve these changes? [Hint: Who holds responsibility in online spaces?]

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Principles of Digital Community: How would *you* solve for these issues?

Directions: Divide your group into three teams. Each team will be assigned to group A, B, or C. Once in your teams, brainstorm how each of those groups should approach challenges and problems in digital life.

Each team should ask itself: *What can we rightly expect out of our group? What should they be doing to insure that the Internet and social media are more positive and constructive spaces?*

Write down your suggestions and solutions in the charts below.

The Tech Industry, Individual Participants, and Online Community are the three agents who make up the digital world. In your three teams, come up with a set of rules that each group should make, and that *everyone* in that environment should follow.

As you're making these recommendations, think to yourselves: *What rules are feasible? And how would they be enforced?*

A. Tech Industry

The companies that create the spaces and conditions where these problems occur.

B. Participants

The individuals who are the participants of that online space.

C. Community

The group as a whole.

I am a member of Group A / B / C . (*Circle one*)

What is my role in creating or preserving a positive environment online?

What rule(s) should we make to solve the problems outlined above?	How is this rule enforceable? How do we hold people/companies accountable?
1)	
2)	
3)	
4)	
5)	
[Note: Your team will probably brainstorm more than five items. Great! Either use an additional sheet of paper, or jot them down on a board or piece of poster paper to share whole group later.]	

NEXT STEPS

Group Discussion + Brainstorm

Come back together whole group and share out what each of your teams wrote above. Ask others if they have feedback on the content, or would like to add additional items to any of the team's lists.

Evaluate and Pick the Best

Once each of the teams have gone, and after all the feedback and additions have been given, have the whole group vote on the top 4-5 items in each category.

Consolidate!

Write in your top 4-5 principles in each category on the following template. This is your group's Principles of Digital Community document!

Directions: Use this as a guide or template to consolidate your Principles of Digital Community.

A. The Tech Industry

The companies that create the spaces and conditions where these problems occur should strive to:

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

B. Participants

The individuals who are the participants of that online space should strive to:

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

C. Community

The group as a whole should:

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Community Buy-In

1. How would you convince a group of your peers (in your organization, at your school, in your friend groups) that it's important to come together and discuss problems that you see online?
2. What role do you think adults (teachers, counselors, mentors, parents, etc.) should play in helping youth figure out what solutions and resources exist for these digital problems?

Principles of Digital Community: The Chicago Youth Ambassadors Statement

The following document is the result of Chicago Ideas Youth work and input on the previous two packets of materials (**On Digital Accountability** and **Digital Ethics and Practices**).

In their own words:



The Chicago Ideas Youth Ambassadors believe the Internet can be a more positive place. We created our Principles of Digital Community to demonstrate the practices that we want implemented by tech companies, and upheld by our communities and the individuals within them. We believe that it is not merely our responsibility to make these platforms better environments, but also the responsibility of the tech companies that create them, and the communities that are generated within them.



Please distribute this document as an example to your group if you feel it will be helpful during the “Principles of Digital Community: How would you solve these issues?” section in **Designing a Code for the Internet**.