



# Day 5: Lesson 4-2 Does It Matter Who Has Your Data

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 [Lesson 4-2 Does It Matter Who Has Your Data.pptx](#)

### Essential Question

What are the upsides and downsides of companies collecting your data online?

### Lesson Objectives

Students will be able to...

- recognize that companies collect several types of information about them when they go online.
- think critically about the benefits and risks of online tracking and targeting, and of the content that is offered based on collected data.
- learn strategies for managing what happens with their information online.

### Warm-up

Ask

**Q1: What kinds of information about yourself do you share online?**

**A1:** Students will likely respond that they share information about themselves in online profiles and on social networking sites.

**Q2: What else do you do online that reflects who you are?**

**A2:** Students should understand that the searches they perform and websites they choose to visit also reveal information about themselves.

**Teach** the key vocabulary terms **track (when companies collect information about you based on your online behavior)** and **target (when companies tailor content to you based on the information they have collected about you)**. Explain to student that when they input information into a website - such as profile information or search terms - they are telling that site something about themselves. The companies that run the sites track this data. They then use it to target students with specific content, especially advertising to their interests.

**Explain** that you are going to discuss the kinds of data companies collect about users, and the benefits and risks of companies having this information.

**Show** video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PiGzM3d7-L4>

**Explain** that one of the first companies to track and target users was Amazon.com. It created technology that could match people's preferences with other users whose buying habits were like their own, and make recommendations on that basis. This kind of targeting worked, and Amazon's sales grew rapidly. More recently, Amazon began to sell e-books (electronic books). With e-books, the company can track information about what you read, what pages you skip, and what you highlight. Amazon then uses this information to figure out what books to recommend to you (Pariser, *The Filter Bubble*, 2001, p. 29). Other companies, such as Netflix (which offers movies that you can order by DVD or stream online) and Pandora (which allows you to rate music in real time), have a similar model: Based on your choices, they try to determine your tastes. Then they recommend products that reflect those tastes.

**Ask**

**Q1: What do you think are companies' goals in tracking your information?**

**A1:** Students should understand that tracking allows companies to target them with personalized content, usually to tailor their experience on the website, or to deliver advertising aimed at them.

**Q2: What do you think of tracking and targeting?**

**A2:** Some students may believe that this is an invasion of their privacy or makes them uncomfortable; others might find that personalized information is useful to them or makes them feel special.

**Q3: Do you think it is okay for companies to collect information about you?**

**A3:** Opinions will vary. Explain that you will be debate this issue later in the lesson.

## How to Protect Your Data

**Discuss** the idea that students may sometimes want to share information on sites that they know and trust, while preventing other sites from getting their data. The important thing is to make their own choices about how and where they share their personal data, and about how this data is used.

**Introduce** students to the idea that there are things they can do to help protect their personal information. Let students know that they will be learning some strategies that can help them limit the data that companies collect.

**Define** key vocabulary term **Cookies (data files that are stored on your computer when you visit certain sites, which are often used by companies to identify repeat customers**

## and personalize visitors' experiences.)

**Discuss** with students each of the following tips for limiting data collection. Invite volunteers to explain how and why each item might affect how much personal information companies are able to acquire.

- Do not provide email addresses to mailing lists unless you need to do so.
- Unsubscribe from listserves or websites that you do not regularly use.
- Limit the number of times you click on ads, no matter what they are for.
- Avoid "too good to be true" products, deals, and opportunities. Once you have confirmed your email address, they are likely to sell your email address to other companies.
- Make sure you have antivirus software, and that it also protects against spyware, programs that secretly collect your data.
- Disable Internet "cookies," so that companies cannot put tracking devices on your computer. (Sites will not be able to remember your preferences as well this way, which is something to consider.)
- Investigate computer applications that block pop-up ads.
- Examine sites' privacy policies before you reveal any information on the site; avoid using sites that will share your data with others.

**Explain** to students that the techniques companies use will change over time, so the best strategy they can use is to think critically and conduct research about different companies and practices.

## Wrap Up

### Ask

**Q1: What information about your demographic group and online behavior might websites collect about you?**

**A1:** Sample Responses:

- Gender, age, ethnicity, location
- Political or religious views
- Likes and dislikes
- Subjects or activities that interest you
- Products you look at or buy online

**Q2: What are the pros and cons of online tracking and targeting?**

**A2:** Students should understand that tracking and targeting enable websites to provide search results and advertising that may be of greater interest to them. On the other hand, these practices may limit the results they get when they perform online searches, and they may represent an invasion of privacy.

**Q3: What are three ways you might help prevent companies from collecting information about you online that you may not want them to have?**

**A3:** Sample Responses:

- Limit the amount of personal information you give out on websites
- Disable cookies
- Install antivirus software
- Read site privacy policies