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Understanding the Digital Landscape Handout

What Is the Digital Landscape?

The **digital landscape** is the online world created by:

- The devices we use (phones, tablets, computers)
- The websites, apps, and services we access
- The information we send and receive
- The people and systems working behind the scenes

If you use email, online banking, shopping, messaging apps, or government or health portals, **you are already part of the digital landscape.**

How Information Moves Online

When you go online:

- Information leaves your device
- It is stored somewhere else
- It may be shared or reused

Once information is online, you often lose control over where it travels. That is why **being cautious before sharing matters.**

Why Online Decisions Can Feel Hard

Online situations can feel challenging because:

- You cannot see who is really behind a message
- Messages arrive unexpectedly
- Urgency is often used to rush you
- Mistakes can feel permanent

Feeling unsure or hesitant online is normal. **Pausing is a powerful safety tool.**

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Your Digital Footprint

Your **digital footprint** is the trail of information created by your online activity, including:

- Searches and browsing
- Posts, likes, and comments
- Emails and messages
- App activity

This information can be useful, but it can also be misused if shared too openly.

Oversharing: Why It Matters

Anything shared online can be copied, saved, or shared again.

Simple habits to stay safer:

- Avoid sharing sensitive personal information (full address, birthdate)
- Turn off location sharing when possible
- Think before posting. Even deleted posts can be saved

What Scammers Care About

Scammers are usually interested in:

- Your contact information
- Your habits and routines
- Your trust
- Your sense of urgency

Scams are about **psychology, not intelligence**. Anyone can be targeted.

Social Engineering Explained

Social engineering is when someone uses emotion and manipulation, not technology, to influence your actions.

If a message pushes emotion over logic, **pause**.

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What Is Phishing?

Phishing is a scam where attackers pretend to be trusted sources to steal personal or financial information.

Phishing can arrive as:

- Emails
- Text messages
- Phone calls
- Messages through apps or social media

Common Phishing Warning Signs

Be cautious if a message includes:

- Pressure to act immediately
- Requests for secrecy
- Requests for payment using gift cards or cryptocurrency
- Unexpected links or attachments
- Requests for personal or financial details

If you are not sure, **do not click**.

Protecting Yourself Online

Before responding, ask:

- Do I know the sender?
- Was I expecting this message?
- Does it feel rushed or emotional?
- Does the link or attachment look unusual?

Not 100% sure? Stop and verify first.

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Password Safety Basics

Avoid:

- Using your name, birthday, or service name
- Simple patterns or common phrases

Do instead:

- Use long passwords or passphrases
- Keep them memorable but private
- Make each password unique

The Power of Pausing

Pause before:

- Clicking links
- Responding to messages
- Sharing personal information

Pausing disrupts scams and gives you time to think clearly.

If Something Goes Wrong

Mistakes happen. What matters is how you respond.

If you clicked something suspicious:

- Stop responding
- Do not send more information
- Change passwords if needed
- Reach out for help

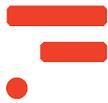
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Trusted Help Is Available

Trusted help may include:

- Your bank's fraud department
- Government services (contacted directly)
- A trusted friend or family member
- **Connected Canadians**

If you have questions or would like support with any of the topics discussed here, please reach out to Connected Canadians through our website: www.connectedcanadians.ca. Our helpful volunteers are ready to assist you and ensure you feel confident and supported in your digital journey.



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