



*A project of ConnectSafely.org*

## Classroom Lesson – Grade 6 to 8

Demonstrating how the good we do online makes the Internet and world better!

If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives. Be kind anyway.  
-- Mother Teresa

This lesson plan demonstrates digital citizenship in action and shows how conscious acts of kindness and respect can increase Internet safety for the person doing them as well as the person's beneficiaries and community, online and offline.

### Lesson Goal

This lesson helps students 1) notice, reflect on and share positive actions (we're calling them One Good Things or OGTs) that they've seen or engaged in online and 2) consider that their activities, even the smallest ones, may help to make the Internet and world a better place by spreading positive behavioral norms online.

### Lesson Mission

What can you do to encourage your students to reflect and come up with one good thing they or someone they know has done to make the Internet a better place, perhaps something that has positively affected another person's life? A student's idea can be about a good thing he or she accomplished, something done by a friend, sibling, parent, or other relative. It can even be a good thing that someone else did - even someone the student does not know - perhaps online or on the news (e.g., charitable giving, fighting hunger, helping another or otherwise helping the planet).

Middle school students can also identify online or on-phone actions that helped in some way to make things go better for them or others. They can also be offline actions or activities that are *shared* or disseminated via digital media or technology. OGTs can include wisdom shared, comfort given, people helped, problems solved, and kindness expressed. Please help each student understand that nothing is too small to contribute. Once your students recall these good or kind acts, ask them to create media that illustrates them. When possible, please share these student creations with the website at [OneGoodThing.org](http://OneGoodThing.org) (carefully following any relevant school or school district online sharing guidelines).

### Time Required

This activity can be accomplished in one 40-50 minute period or, depending on your classroom schedule, two periods of 25-30 minutes. If you teach this lesson in two shorter time periods, consider using one

period for discussion and recording and the other for media creation. Some of your students may need a bit of extra time if they become deeply involved in their **One Good Thing** media representations.

### What You Need for this Activity

- A good time set aside for reflection, discussion and brainstorming (10-15 minutes)
- Six to eight large pieces of paper hung around the room
- Post-Its in three colors - 1.5 inch or 3 inch (or scotch tape and three colors of paper cut into small pieces)
- A few digital cameras, tablets, smart phones, or iPads
- Possibly a laptop or computer where media are downloaded
- Access to the Internet

### Group Conversation

- Begin with a group discussion (5-10 minutes) that includes everyone in the class.
- You might want to use the Mother Theresa quote noted above.
- The introduction to your class conversation might begin with something like this:

*Middle school kids hear a lot of people talk about the bad things that occur online, but today we are going to talk about how people use the Internet in positive ways; how, today, the Internet is really all of us, its users; and how each of us has the power to make the Internet and, through it, the world and people's lives better. Today we want you to brainstorm about good things. We're going to make a list of the Good Things you and others do online and on connected devices. Once we are finished with the brainstorming, we hope you can, individually or in small groups, make short videos explaining your or someone else's One Good Thing. We hope you can share your video at [OneGoodThing.org](http://OneGoodThing.org).*

- Ask your students to reflect for a moment and think about good things they've done or seen on the Internet. Do they understand the idea of [random acts of kindness](#)? Have they ever spontaneously helped to support another person online or tried to make improvements with ideas or comments? Have they ever given a compliment to a person, publicly or anonymously? Have they seen others do so? Perhaps they know someone -- a friend or family member who has tried to help out a person or a cause online.
- Work hard to focus the discussion on positive behaviors and actions they've observed or done online.
- Questions might include (but feel free to come up with your own):

- Have you made a positive or thoughtful comment?
- Have you seen someone else make one?
- Have you "liked" somebody being nice?
- Can you describe how an online activity of yours or a person you know solved a problem or made someone's life better? Perhaps a compliment to a person whose feelings were hurt or a message of encouragement for someone who was struggling with something.
- Can you explain how you helped or assisted another person when you were on some connected device or in some site or digital game?
- How have you helped solve a problem, perhaps with a friend or maybe your grandparents?
- Have you even suggested that a person improve his or her behavior (in a way that doesn't put them down)?
- Can you describe ways that your online activities have helped people when you connect with others during work and play? Did you help a friend with an assignment, remember a due date or study for a test? Did someone else help you?
- Have you ever tried to inspire something or someone online?

- Have you ever helped your community by doing something good online (for instance signing a petition, reporting a streetlight that's out, or sharing information about a community activity)?

### Student Brainstorming (5-10 minutes)

-- Place large pieces of paper around the classroom. Label each with various categories of good things, but as students brainstorm they may think of additional categories. Please put these on large papers as well. Remind the class that, at the end, each of them will be asked to choose an OGT -- it does not matter how big or small, and it can be something that another person did -- and share it, but initially we will all brainstorm together to come up with lots of ideas.

Categories on the large pages might include:

- Wisdom shared
- Comfort given
- Kindness offered
- Person assisted
- Great inspiration offered
- Supportive comment made

-- Ask students to walk around the room using the Post-Its to write examples of OGTs and place them on the appropriate pieces of paper. Typically these ideas are short and simple. Use one color Post-It for online OGTs and a second color for offline OGTs. The third color will be used for each individual's OGT selection. During this phase of the activity, each student may have several ideas and that's great because more ideas can help other classmates. The idea is to get their ideas flowing. Note: You might want to snap a picture of these colorful OGT collections and share them with parents or other teachers.

### Refining the OGT (5 minutes)

-- After about five minutes, ask the students to take a third color Post-It and write down the specific OGTs they want to share. Remind students that each OGT can be big or small and can even be something another person or a family member did. Remind them that we are hoping they can come up with online ideas, but that it is OK if they don't. **Note:** We want students to think about, create media for, and share all of the OGT ideas that they generate, however, because this is for Safer Internet Day, we ask educators to remind their students that only the OGTs that describe online activities can be posted on [OneGoodThing.org](http://OneGoodThing.org).

-- Explain that each student will be asked to elaborate on his or her OGT and then record it as a video. Working in small groups can be helpful, but we know that each teacher understands the class dynamics, so we will not specify how the groupings should work.

### Expanding the OGTs and Creating Media (25 - 30 minutes)

- Give students paper and pencils or a digital device for note taking.
- Ask each child to take the OGT on his or her Post-It and expand on it a bit (no pressure if it's short).
- Suggest ways to share their ideas. OGT contributions can be shared as poems, a recorded conversation (e.g., a podcast or video), a video interview, tweets, a paragraph of text **photographed, a 15-20 sec.** selfie video (individual or group), drawings photographed and shared. We find that students are amazingly creative at inventing ways to share their ideas.
- Ask each student or small group to plan for sharing the OGT.
- Explain to students that they will have 25-30 minutes to follow the plan and share their ideas.

- Ask students to support one another by helping with ideas, assisting with photographing or filming, and offering technical help.
- Video the students sharing their ideas so that the process can be shared too!

### **Creating Media -- Possible Project Ideas** (Students are not limited to their ideas!)

- Make up a poem or rap with a refrain. Each child shares his or her One Good Thing and then everyone repeats the refrain.
- Write a short song.
- Organize a flash mob. One person begins with a contribution and the refrain and then other students join in with their OGTs and the refrain. The group grows bigger as more students join and becomes a flash mob.
- Design posters in traditional ways or using online tools. Take photos of traditional media.
- Write OGTs in phrases on cards and have a student take video of students sharing their Good Things by holding their cards up for the videocam, one after the other, maybe editing in some music they've chosen.
- Make a podcast (all spoken but not visual component) using *Garage Band* or an online service such as VoiceThread.
- Take a series of still photos and share them by adding text to each photo. Make a slide show.
- If your students are 13 or older and can use social media, they are welcome to create and tweet. (Younger students can compose tweet-like phrases of 140 characters or less, hashtags and all.)

### **Sharing Student Projects**

Share students' projects with parents, other classes, the school administration. Upload them to the [One Good Thing](#) website, but please read the FAQ below and be sure to follow your school's safety guidelines.

### **One Good Thing Videotaping/Media Guidelines**

- Full-frame faces (we love faces!) – zoom right in on the 1-3 people as they share.
- If a group presents on camera, write down a plan that specifies who will say what. For instance, one person can share the One Good Thing, and others can take a turn to react or explain or add their example.
- Try not to interrupt or speak over each other on camera.
- One Good Thing presentations can be anywhere from 15 sec. to 20 or 30 sec. Short is great. Presentations may be sort - just a sentence or two. Longer is fine if someone wants to tell a story.
- Selfie videos are fine if anyone prefers to go it alone, but encourage collaboration.
- If people aren't comfortable with being on camera, text or illustrations are also just fine. Video can zoom in on posters, poems, or other media creations while a person speaks.
- You or your students can [submit their work to the One Good Thing website](#).
- If anyone wants to go home to think, create, and write, they can also submit from home – that's fine too.

### **FAQ**

#### **Q. Will my students' names appear with their contributions at the OneGoodThing.org?**

A. We encourage students who share a One Good Thing (OGT) to provide their first names and the state, province or country they live in, but they don't have to.

#### **Q. Do my students have to work together in small groups?**

A. We love collaboration, but individuals' OGTs are certainly welcome too.

**Q. What is the difference between a video and a slide show?**

A. Videos include movement and voice, and the background can move if that is appropriate to the video. A slide show is usually made by taking photos with a digital camera. Slide show creation options are widely available and often free on the Internet. It is also possible to create a hybrid, adding stills to a video program such as iMovie or Movie Maker and transitioning from one picture to another with music in the background.

**Q. So much seems to go wrong on the Internet today. What if my students bring these problems into the conversation?**

A. Certainly problems can come up in brainstorm sessions, but our goal is to **turn attention to and talk about** the good people do online, because we know that good actions add up and serve as powerful models for children (and everybody) online, as we collectively create and grow [positive social norms](#). Social norms research shows that, when we're aware of positive norms, our behavior changes in conformity with our perception. We also know that children hear a lot about the negative things that occur online and often want to talk about what they hear. If this happens in your classroom, please refocus the conversation on the positive and helpful. You may need to offer to talk with a student individually, but keep the discussion focused on the good. [Learn more about the brain's "negativity bias."](#)

**Q. Do I have to follow this lesson exactly?**

A. We ask you to keep the focus on One Good Thing and sharing your students' contributions. Other than that, we are happy for you to use your creative ideas to enrich the activity (and share them with us). We know that teachers develop great curriculum ideas!

**Resources**

- [Check out examples](#) of past One Good Thing submissions. Please look at these before you share them with the children to decide which ones are best for the students in your class.
- [Zooming in on Social Norms](#), Net Family News post by Anne Collier
- Video explaining [why fear campaigns don't work](#), presented by Hobart and William Smith Colleges Professor Wesley Perkins
- [Game-changing Insight into Internet Risk, ConnectSafely article](#) by Anne Collier

**Letter to Parents**

Below is a short letter to send to the parents of your students. It shares information about the One Good Thing activity.

**Sample Letter**

Dear Parents,

This week the children in my class will work on a digital life activity to help them understand the positive impact of kind and respectful behavior on the Internet. We will talk about how each person's acts of kindness and respect makes a positive difference, serving as a behavior model for people on the Internet, in their school communities, and in the world. Our class discussion will emphasize how even the little things we do to assist others can help make our online world a better place. The lesson also encourages students to connect digital citizenship, positive social norms, and everyday acts of kindness because, no matter where they occur, they can encourage and inspire others.

The class will work on an age-appropriate lesson developed at the [OneGoodThing.org](#) website. This website promotes activities that help children -- actually people of any age -- understand the impact of doing good and being kind online. Good things might include supporting others, making kind comments,

helping a grandparent, sharing a picture, supporting a friend whose feelings have been hurt, finding a place to volunteer, and much more. As a group the students will discuss how people go about accomplishing good things, and they will gain insight into the ways that small acts can come together to make the Internet a better place. One Good Thing is part of [Safer Internet Day](#), a celebration and awareness campaign that started in Europe more than 10 years ago and is now celebrated in more than 100 countries.

As part of the lesson, I will encourage students to reflect on one good thing that they or someone they know accomplished online or in everyday life. Your child can be the person who did the good thing, or it can be a friend, a sibling, a parent or other relative. It can even be a good thing accomplished by someone they do not know but observed online or in the media. Once students have generated ideas they will create pictures, photos, videos, or even write several sentences to illustrate their ideas. I will encourage the children to work in small groups, but if a child prefers to work individually, that is also fine. We will be excited to share our creations with you and the school and perhaps we will submit some of them to the One Good Thing website.

These days we hear much about troublesome events that occur in the online world, mostly because these events make the news. What we do not hear enough about are the good things people do everyday. Interestingly, researchers are discovering that children are much more likely to modify their behavior in positive ways when they learn, as research shows, that goodness and kindness, not negative behaviors, are actually the norm.

If you would like to learn more about encouraging children to think about and identify with the good in their work and play online, please check out [this video](#) about the power of social norms from Prof. Wesley Perkins of Hobart and William Smith Colleges.

We encourage you to talk about this lesson at home. Perhaps during a family meal, each person can identify and share a personal example of One Good Thing.

Sincerely yours,