

ALGORITHMS & PRIVACY

LESSON PLAN
LESSON #6



LESSON RATIONALE:

Algorithms are informing and quickly replacing human judgment in many aspects of our lives. While service providers started using algorithms to make predictions and decisions about our preferences for products and entertainment -- e.g., Amazon, Spotify, Google, Netflix, Facebook, etc. -- today algorithms are being used to predict and make critical decisions such as your criminal status, your credit score, your health, and even your future success as an employee or student.

In this lesson, we continue to practice analyzing particular algorithms by focusing on an issue that impacts Humans vs Robots: Privacy. Students will learn why privacy is important, what their “digital persona” is, and how 3rd party data sales impact their ability to tell their own story.

INTRODUCTION (5 MINS)

Welcome students to class. Remind students about algorithmic storytelling. Tell them another concern with Humans vs. Robots-- beyond whether you want a human or an algorithm telling your story -- is privacy:

Who your digital story is being told to and how “3rd Party Data Sales” affect who tells your digital story.

IDH SPECIAL REPORT: ALGORITHMS AND PRIVACY VIDEO (10 MINS)

Play IDH Special Report: Algorithms and Privacy Video.

Ask students to reflect as a whole group on the video by asking these questions aloud:

What surprised you about this video?

What questions do you have about privacy?

What questions do you have about third-party data sales?

Explain to students that they are going to reflect on some of the questions that were asked in the video. Point out to students the “agree” and “disagree” signs on the opposite ends of the room. Share with students that they are going to physically move, to the best of their abilities, to the side of the room that best answers the prompt. Students should not be in a “neutral” position.

For example, if you said that tacos are better than hotdogs and a student agrees, they will go to the “Agree” side of the room. If they disagree, they will go to the “Disagree” side.



GRADE LEVEL

High School
Grades 9-12

TIME

45-50
minutes (mins)

COMMON CORE STANDARDS

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.9-10.1.E

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.4

MATERIALS

Paper
Writing utensil
Algorithms and Privacy Video
“Agree” and “Disagree” signs

LESSON OBJECTIVE(S):

Explain the value of privacy

Discuss the issues surrounding algorithms and privacy

Reflect on personal beliefs about algorithms and privacy

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:

Does online privacy exist?

Who is telling your digital story?

KEY VOCABULARY

Algorithm
Messy Data
Biased Data
Humans vs Robots
Privacy

CLASSROOM SET UP

Students will begin class by watching a video. Hang a sign that says “Agree” on one side of the room, and a sign that says “Disagree” on the other side of the room.



ALGORITHMS AND PRIVACY (20 MINS)

AGREE VS DISAGREE: LARGE GROUP ACTIVITY

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After reading each prompt, pause for a few moments to allow students to move to the side of the room that best represents their opinion. Then, have students respond to the following questions, first with a partner or small group of people who are on the same side of the room and then as a large group:

- Tell me more about your opinion. Why did you choose this side of the room?
- What examples were given that made you choose this side of the room?
- Do you have any additional examples that support your opinion?
- How might your answer affect other areas, such as schooling, housing, the justice system?

Prompts:

1. Online privacy exists.
2. My online self is the same as my real-world self.
3. Grocery stores should be able to access my data.
4. Social media (Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, etc.) should be able to access my data.
5. Companies should be able to access my data.
6. Schools, including colleges, should be able to access my data.
7. There are enough online privacy laws and regulations.
8. More often than not, algorithms have factual information.
9. I am comfortable with algorithms making decisions for me when I know about it.
10. I am comfortable with algorithms making decisions for me when I don't know about it.

REFLECTIVE QUICK WRITE (15 MINS)

Have students sit down at their desks and take out a piece of paper and a writing utensil. Have students respond to any 2-3 of the following prompts in a “quick write” format. Students should hand their responses in at the end of class.

- Are there certain types of information that you are uncomfortable with a site collecting about you? What types? Why?
- Are you concerned that some of the data that has been collected may be factually inaccurate?
- Are you concerned that a site can likely use all of this information to determine a person's race, gender, sexual preference, gender identity, etc.? Is there a potential that this information could lead to bias in decisions made about individuals?
- Are you concerned that the information that has been collected about individuals could lead to the wrong conclusions or judgments about individuals?



Need help facilitating classroom discussions centered on technology, algorithms, AI, digital ethics or more?
The IDH can help! Reach out with any questions or concerns!

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