

What is digital literacy?

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The ability to live, learn and work in a society where communication and information are increasingly delivered through digital platforms such as the Internet, social media, and mobile devices is referred to as digital literacy. The [American Library Association](#) defines digital literacy as the ability to access, analyse, create, and convey information using information and communication technologies, which requires both cognitive and technical skills. Thus, I.T. proficiency isn't the only thing that digital literacy entails. It necessitates critical thinking abilities, an awareness of the accepted standards of behaviour in online spaces, and a grasp of the expected societal concerns that digital technologies have spawned.

While the term literacy generally refers to reading and writing abilities, when you add the word digital to the mix, it encompasses a lot more. Reading and writing are, of course, still at the core of digital literacy. However, because of the new and ever-changing ways we use technology to acquire and convey information, digital literacy now involves a wider variety of skills, including everything from reading on a Kindle to determining the veracity of a website to creating and sharing YouTube videos. Some experts avoid using the word digital literacy because it is too broad, preferring to speak more precisely about specific skills at the interface of technology and literacy. But, digital literacy is just concerned with how you utilise, consume, and share digital data.

Digital literacy, according to [Hiller Spires](#), a professor of literacy and technology at North Carolina State University, is divided into three categories:

- Accessing and consuming digital content,
- Creating digital stuff, and
- Communicating or sharing it.

People usually think of research when they think of digital literacy, finding, evaluating, and adequately crediting digital sources. The research connotation is understandable, given the sheer volume of sources and media forms available on the Internet. However, to keep things simple, the [World Literacy Foundation](#) came up with an equation:

Digital Literacy = Digital Tools Knowledge + Critical Thinking + Social Engagement

Given the given above, the digital literacy components have the following meanings:

- **Digital Tools Knowledge:** The capacity to use digital technologies to acquire, consume, and exchange information, as well as design and produce engaging original material. Digital tools include websites, video or movie maker tools, slide presentation software etc.
- **Critical thinking:** This is disputing the authenticity, validity, and utility of digital data. Developing your ability to think critically opens a new window. When you are dealing with a lot

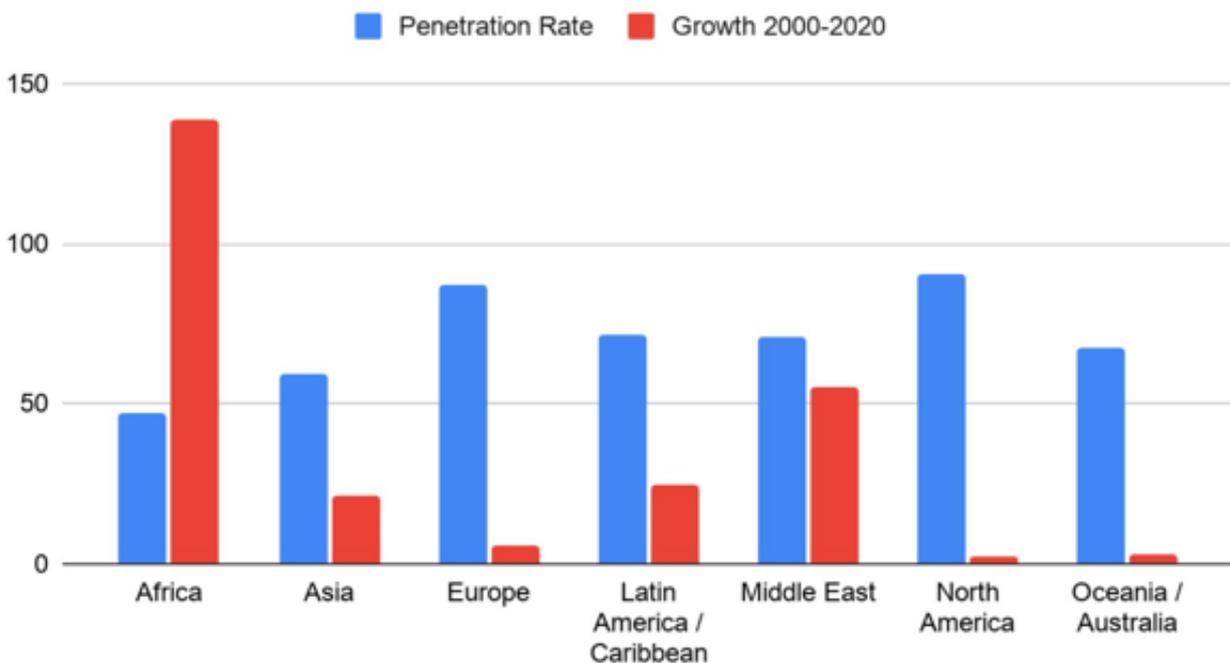
of information in numerous formats, thinking critically is crucial. Searching, sorting, assessing, applying, and producing knowledge all demand you to think critically.

- **Social engagement:** In the digital realm, talking and cooperating with others is essential. Participation in collective activities, which maintains social capital and social norms, is linked to social engagement.

Digital literacy statistics in the world

According to [Internet World Stats](#), internet penetration in Africa was expected to reach 47.1% by 2020, while according to the [Global System for Mobile Communications](#), 45% of the population in Sub-Saharan Africa subscribed to mobile services at the end of 2019. Even though Africa has a long way to go in terms of Internet and mobile penetration, the growth curve is improving, and Africans are demonstrating a strong desire and commitment to embrace rapid technological change, its adaptability, and close the global digital divide.

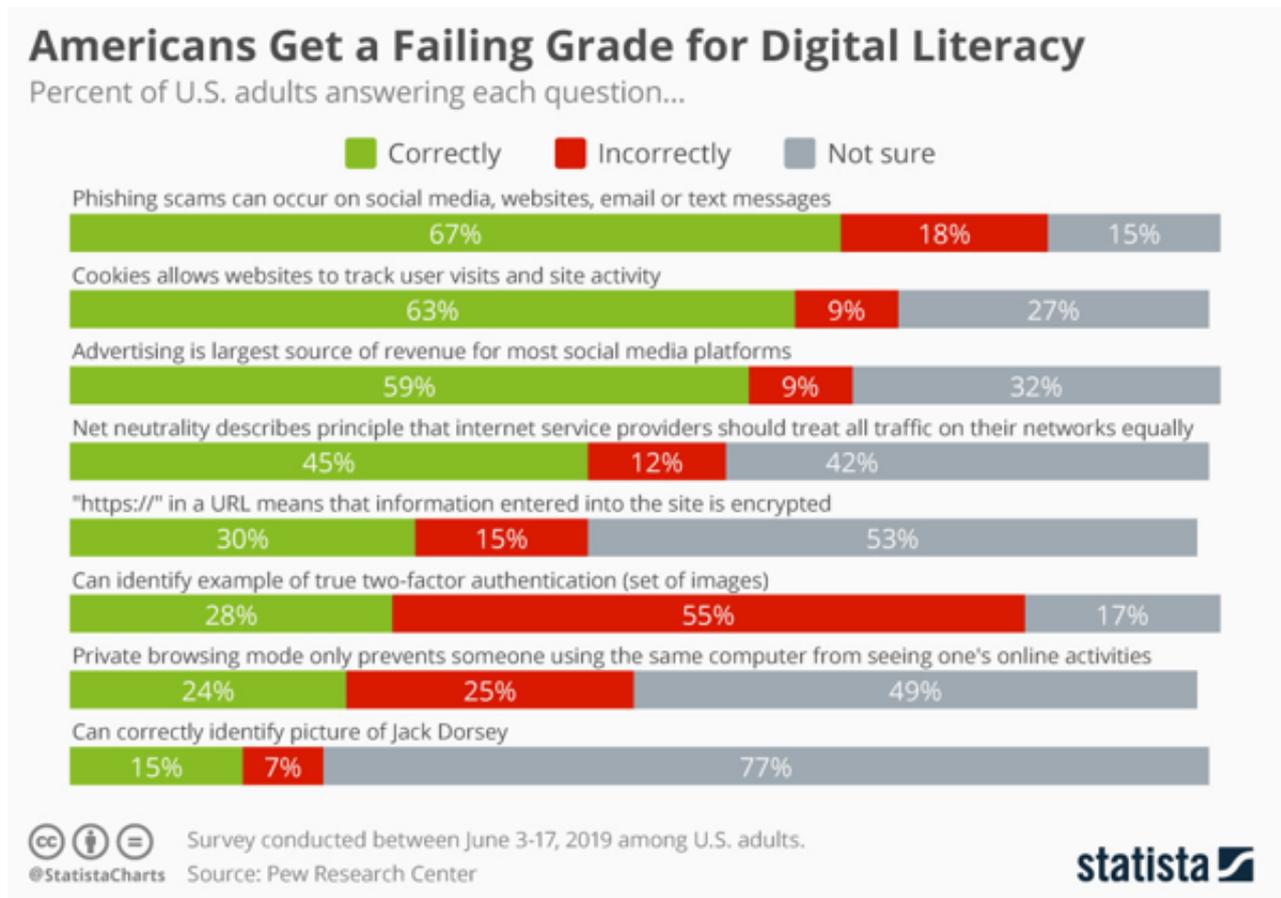
World Internet Usage and Population Statistics 2020 Year-Q3 Estimates



Source: [Internet World Stats](#)

A report by [Pew Research Center](#) found that American's digital literacy is lacking, with 40% of adults answering questions correctly on average. This shows that African countries need to enhance their digital literacy, but other developed countries like the U.S. also have a deficit. Even though, in general, younger folks and those with a greater level of education were more likely to answer digital literacy questions correctly. The study asked U.S. adults about a wide range of tech topics, from who owns social media sites to tech and data privacy. The majority of respondents correctly answered three questions: what media phishing scams can occur in, what cookies are, and what social media companies'

largest source of revenue is. The image below shows the findings:



Source: [Statista](#)

While digital penetration is still low compared to other continents for Africa, digital literacy is also poor. On the other hand, different initiatives in Africa have been put in place to take advantage of digital accessibility and affordability. Various schools, institutions, NGOs, and other organisations are working hard to bridge Africa's digital gap and boost digital literacy among the populace.

[Andela](#), for example, is a software developer training company based in the United States. Its business model intends to digitise Africa by training software developers using free online tools to improve human potential by investing in Africa's top talents. The trained developers are hired by Andela or work for Andela clients worldwide once they have completed their training. By 2024, the business hopes to have trained 100,000 African software developers. They are working to improve digital literacy to close global labour gaps and help young people launch long-term careers without going into debt or leaving their home countries.

Why is digital literacy critical?

Literacy skills have always been vital. Letters were used to communicate in the past. These letters were

quickly converted to telegraph messages. We progressed from there to the telephone, the Internet, and finally, text messaging on the phone. The communication choices available today vastly outnumber those available in previous generations. The continuous evolutions happening rapidly is why it is essential to be a digital citizen. A digital citizen is someone accountable for how they use technology to engage with the world around them. Due to the busy restrictions of today's society, digital technology allows people to contact and communicate with family and friends regularly.

Not only do white-collar jobs necessitate digital literacy in the use of media to present, record, and analyse data, but so do blue-collar jobs seeking to raise productivity, assess market trends, and improve job safety. The following are reasons why digital literacy is essential.

It helps to assess the quality of information

We live in an era where the majority of resources are moving online. And it comes in handy, allowing people to study from anywhere globally, which is especially useful during pandemics when all people have access to online learning. According to research conducted by [Bridgewater State University](#), pupils' digital literacy skills are not where they should be. For example, both kids and their parents struggled to collaborate on shared Google Docs documents and had no idea how to join Zoom calls.

The study's authors also found that pupils couldn't tell the difference between a reliable source of information and one that couldn't be trusted. And, because they are not digitally literate, their parents could not assist them with schoolwork or writing papers for kids. All of this highlights the critical importance of including digital literacy courses in the school curriculum and teaching children how to defend themselves online from various cyber risks. Digital literacy is important to help people understand and use their critical thinking to discern which information is good and bad.

It contributes to a successful career

The level of digital and information literacy has a substantial impact on one's ability to succeed in the workplace. Technology is becoming an inextricable aspect of more and more industries worldwide, and people must be aware that it will be an unavoidable part of their future jobs. This is supported by [EdWeek's](#) research. The researchers looked into the role of digital literacy for various employment positions at the Christiana Care Health System in this study. The researchers investigated a janitor, a cook, a registered nurse, and a health information technician.

The findings of EdWeek's study revealed that workers, regardless of their position, required some level of digital and information literacy to complete their tasks successfully. Of course, a qualified nurse should have a higher level of digital literacy than a janitor, but both jobs require knowledge of using technology appropriately. This study demonstrates that digital and information literacy encompasses much more than doing homework, locating a research paper writing service and other study tools online, joining a Zoom session, or working in Google Docs.

How you handle information is also influenced by your digital literacy. For example, tampering with patient data or medical treatment information could lead to a medical worker's dismissal. As a result, this

is yet another critical stage in the process of making digital and information literacy an inalienable element of national education.

Facilitating lifelong learning

Once students have graduated from high school or college, they enter the workforce, but they will never stop learning because it will help them develop in their careers and become more well-rounded and informed. PWC's investigation proved this. When asked what impact lifelong learning has had on them, the participants stated:

- Because of lifelong learning, 65% of people have increased their professional network.
- Only 47% of those surveyed were able to advance in their careers.
- A new work chance was praised by 29% of those polled.

Of course, there are other advantages to continuing learning besides career advancement. This phenomenon allows us to stay educated and aware of how the world is changing around us.

For lifelong learning to provide the intended benefits, a person must navigate online resources and use technology effectively. On the other hand, lifelong learning is impossible without information literacy and an understanding of how to interact with technology. This is one of those abilities that we need at any point in our lives and is not limited to our high school or college years.

Do you want to learn more about lifelong learning? Here is an article on lifelong learning. <https://www.thehumancapitalhub.com/articles/Lifelong-Learning-What-You-Need-To-Know>

Examples of digital literacy

Digital literacy plays an important role in our lives as it can improve our lifestyles. The good thing is that we can learn new digital literacy skills, and these can be applied at home, in classrooms, at the workplace or for our personal use. The following are examples of how digital literacy is being used in various aspects.

Digital literacy applied at home

Developing fundamental digital abilities around the house will serve as the foundation for incorporating them into other areas of your life. These are some of the most straightforward skills to master and incorporate into your everyday practice, making them one of the most effective ways to begin increasing your technical abilities. You will be able to browse through various resources, access information, use cutting-edge apps, communicate with more of your loved ones, and much more if you improve your everyday abilities.

- **Computer knowledge** - Many individuals skim over and don't bother to learn in-depth how a computer's hardware and software work and how computers process and transmit information to you. They are, nonetheless, critical components of digital learning.

- One of the most important skills you can learn is **communication**, so many people desire to get online in the first place. Setting up an email account with a service like [Gmail](#) or a [Skype](#) profile will substantially improve your ability to interact with others.
- **Social networking sites** - Social media, like communications, keeps you informed about what's going on with your family, friends, the latest news, and so much more. If you want to expand your online social presence, you should create profiles on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#).
- **Using the Internet** – It is crucial to know how to use the Internet and find what you're looking for. Learning how to use services like [Google Search](#) to discover information is a fantastic place to start.
- **Using personal gadgets and applications** - One of the best methods to improve your skills is to get your gadgets (such as a desktop computer, [laptop](#), tablet, and/or smartphone). The greatest method to learn new abilities and practice old ones is to use your devices regularly and integrate them into your daily routine.
- **Identifying a source's credibility** - Avoiding the various websites that provide incorrect information is an important part of exploring the Internet. Understanding whether or not a website is trustworthy will assist you to avoid becoming a victim of online scams or Internet fraud.
- **Keeping your personal information private** - Many websites demand you to provide your personal information to utilise. Knowing when a website is securely keeping your data and protecting your privacy is an essential digital skill to master.

Digital literacy in schools

You cannot avoid the fact that digital technologies are a learning component, whether you're a student or a teacher in a classroom, or an instructor or a participant in an adult-learning course. These skills can help you enhance your talents in the classroom, whether you are learning yourself or assisting others to learn.

- **Online safety** is a critical skill that everyone should master practically as soon as they begin using technology. One of the first things you should aim to learn is understanding how to safeguard your safety and privacy online and connect correctly with others online.
- **Learning how to make proper use of personal devices** - Instructors can no longer ignore the fact that their students will bring electronic devices to class. Instead of attempting to prohibit the use of these gadgets, consider how to incorporate them into instruction. It's also a good idea to teach your students when it's socially acceptable to use their devices and when it's not.
- **Organising and taking notes** - Learning how to capture and arrange information digitally is terrific for improving your student skills. Great notetaking apps, such as [Evernote](#), can assist you in storing all of your critical class-related details in one, easy-to-access location.
- **Online classes** - Never stop learning! Even outside university institutions, there are fantastic internet sites for taking free (and some expensive) educational courses. Start studying and expanding your knowledge on several topics, including digital literacy, by visiting websites like [Udemy](#), [Lynda](#), and [Coursera](#).
- **Teaching others how to do something** - Even if you started as a student, teaching others allows you to get a deeper knowledge of the things you're teaching while also helping to disseminate

technological skills to even more people!

Digital literacy at the workplace

Specific technological abilities are frequently required for employment in the digital technology industry. Even if you are hired, it is critical to understand when it is and is not suitable to use technology in your workflow. With this in mind, you must learn how to use the appropriate technology in your business. Check out these ideas to introduce some technical abilities into the office, whether you're the boss or an employee.

- **Word processors, spreadsheet generators, and presentation software** are all examples of software that may be used to create documents. The most popular apps to master are undoubtedly Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint, but Google Docs, Sheets, and Slides. The ability to utilise these types of computer tools used to be a plus on résumés, but it's now a need for many office jobs.
- **Safely storing company data** - The data that your business generates and stores is critical. As a result, you must ensure that you choose a secure solution to store your company files with and train personnel about correct data storage procedures. Ascertain that your co-workers are aware of how digital data is handled and safeguarded, as well as how to avoid losing it.
- **Choosing the best platform for displaying your content and assets** - The way your firm handles outreach is critical, but there may be more than one way to convey what you do. The ability to discern the most effective ways to communicate information via digital media is a highly useful skill.
- **Collaboration among co-workers** - Many jobs demand you to work as part of a group. Consider learning how to use a service like Dropbox, Google Drive, or Evernote if your task requires other people's contributions. These services allow your team members to see real-time revisions to project documents, which helps you get work done as part of a team.
- **Creating a professional online profile** - Once you've nailed down all of your capabilities, make sure to create a LinkedIn profile to show off your abilities to potential employers. If you're the boss, look at LinkedIn and other professional networks to discover what your potential future employees are capable of.

Digital literacy for personal use

Although not as popular as the other categories, honing skills to help you achieve your own goals or find ways to make your activities easier (or more enjoyable) is just as vital. It's all about being online these days - and doing it effectively - if you want to get noticed and show off your skills.

- **Creating a blog** - Do you have anything to say (or otherwise share)? Setting up your blog (short for "weblog") is a simple method to get some information online; a website like WordPress may assist you with this. Many current blog platforms allow you to upload photographs, videos, and anything else that inspires you, in addition to writing down your ideas and opinions. If your blog becomes well-known, people may start following, sharing, and responding to your entries!
- Making your website is a great way to express yourself. You may learn how to use it as you go

along and make anything you can think of. Try a drag-and-drop website builder like Wix or Weebly if you have a brilliant idea or collection of work to show off but no coding knowledge.

- **Video editing and creation** - Working with digital video is a valuable talent to have in your personal life. Furthermore, many people succeed in making a good recurrent series of videos on the Internet. If you're serious about it but don't have a website, create a [YouTube](#) channel and upload your videos there.
- Though it may not appear so, having the will to learn at any age is one of the most vital qualities to possess! Even if you learn several of the abilities we've outlined, you must make an effort to practice them regularly. You must also stay up to the ever-changing trends in the technology field. Otherwise, improving your talents or even surviving will be challenging.

Are you digitally literate?

Well, if you are reading up to this end, then you are literate. The following is a typical scenario of being digital literate:

It is a Saturday, and you have the day off, but there's still a lot to do. You need to locate a few new recipes for a family gathering tomorrow, so you go to a few websites and blogs. You still have to finish a PowerPoint presentation that is due for work on Monday. Finally, you have a few emails to respond to from people who have enquired about the furniture you've advertised for sale online.

In our 21st-century, tech-savvy world, all of these chores may appear to be second nature. Our rising knowledge and capacities have been aided by the Internet, search engines, email programs, blogs, and online movies. Therefore, if you have ever experienced something similar to the above chores then you are digitally literate. Digital literacy refers to the capacity to choose, use, and comprehend technological tools correctly.

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