

Respecting Creative Work

This discussion guide will help you facilitate a conversation with parents about how kids learn to respect creative work. Use the following questions and stories to get parents thinking and talking about this issue. You may also want to show the Respecting Creative Work Parent/Teacher Intro video and hand out the Respecting Creative Work parent tip sheet to help spark the discussion.

What's going on with your kids?

Questions to encourage parents to share experiences, concerns, and solutions

1. The Internet has completely changed the way we think about creative expression and collaboration. What excites you about this? What concerns you?
2. What can you do as a parent to stay informed about piracy, plagiarism, and fair use?
3. How can we teach kids the difference between being inspired by something and outright stealing or copying it? How might the Internet complicate this?
4. How do you talk to kids about downloading stolen or “pirated” movies or music?

What would you do?

Stories to discuss, role play, and deepen conversation

Elementary school child

Hector’s ten-year-old son asks him to gloss over his book report for any obvious mistakes. At first, Hector is impressed by the insights that his son points out in his paper. But reading further, he becomes concerned by the fact that some paragraphs are written in a much more advanced way than others. “Any chance you asked someone else for advice while writing your paper? Or did you read something online?” he asks. His son explains that he wasn’t able to finish reading his book because of his soccer tournament that weekend, so he turned to SparkNotes—an online study guide database—for some last-minute help.

- » If you were Hector, what would your next step be? What questions would you ask?
- » How can parents help young kids understand the problem with plagiarism?
- » What are some appropriate uses of online study tools like SparkNotes? Inappropriate?
- » What are some strategies parents can use to instill in their kids the value of ownership and original work?

Middle school preteen or teen

Fourteen-year-old Rachel has a knack for creating video mash-ups. She especially likes to remix clips from Disney movies and turn them into funny music video parodies. In order to show one of her projects to her friends and relatives, Rachel decides to post it on YouTube. A few days after uploading her video, she discovers that its audio component has been disabled. Upset that her project was considered a copyright infringement, Rachel vents to her mom. "It's not fair! I bought the CD. I made a soundtrack from a song I paid for. What's wrong with that? And my video won't work to any other soundtrack, so I can't fix it."

- » Why does YouTube take the audio out of some videos that contain copy written material?
- » What might Rachel's mother say to help her see her situation from another perspective?
- » Some argue that user-created videos online serve as free promotions for songs and artists, which is why they shouldn't be regulated. Others say that people should get copyright permission before using someone else's work? What do you think?

High school teen

Charlie, a seventh grader, has become very interested in food photography. His mother is a chef, and Charlie likes to take pictures of her dishes as a hobby. He wants to start a portfolio on a photo-sharing website called Flickr to try and get some public attention for his work, but he's hesitant to let people do anything they want with his photos and he wants to be sure he gets credit if someone uses his photo for a Web site or article. Charlie's Dad suggests checking out Creative Commons: a free kind of copyright that makes it easier for people to copy, share, and build on your creative work – as long as they give you credit for it.

- » Creative Commons allows you to decide how flexible you want your copyright to be. What should Charlie and his dad take into consideration?
- » "Copy-Paste" commands have become second nature to most Internet users. What are the benefits and drawbacks of this? Have you ever run into any problems?
- » Is The Golden Rule ("Treat others as you would like to be treated") an effective way to discuss respecting creative work with kids? Why or why not?

Sixteen-year-old Clara is on an airplane with her mom, flying across the country. "Look what I brought!" Clara says, pulling out her laptop. "My friend knows how to copy movies from the Internet, and he transferred some to my laptop. You really wanted to see this one, remember? It's not even out on DVD yet!" Clara's mom has mixed feelings about this. On one hand, she is grateful to have something fun to watch during their long flight. On the other hand, she feels uncomfortable knowing that Clara's friend downloaded these films illegally.

- » What would you do if you were in Clara's mother's shoes?
- » As a parent, would you respond to this situation differently if your child had downloaded the movies herself? Why or why not?
- » How can parents weave Internet ethics into a large conversation about doing what's right over doing what's convenient?

Common Sense Media, an independent nonprofit, is dedicated to improving the lives of kids and families by providing the trustworthy information, education, and independent voice they need to thrive in a world of media and technology.