

Digital Literacy: Your Foundation for a Connected World

High School Digital Literacy — Grades 9–12

Tech for Everyone

CHAPTER 1

Meet Your Devices

Know Your Tools Before You Use Them

You've probably used a phone your whole life, and maybe you feel like you already know all of this. But digital literacy isn't about being able to *poke around* until something works — it's about understanding your tools well enough to use any of them, including ones you've never seen, and to fix things when they go wrong. That's a skill that pays off in every class, every job, and every part of adult life.

This chapter starts at the foundation: the devices themselves. What are the different types, what are their parts called, how do you interact with them, and how do you log in safely? Get this solid, and everything else in this book — and every other technology course — becomes far easier.

1.1 — The Family of Devices

A device is any piece of electronic equipment you use to compute or connect. They come in a few main types, and knowing the differences helps you pick the right tool for a task:

Device	What It Is	Best For
Smartphone	A pocket-sized touchscreen computer that also makes calls	On-the-go tasks, messaging, quick lookups, photos
Tablet / iPad	A larger touchscreen device, bigger than a phone	Reading, drawing, watching, light schoolwork
Laptop	A portable computer with a built-in keyboard that folds shut	Writing, research, most schoolwork and jobs
Desktop	A non-portable computer that stays on a desk	Powerful work, gaming, offices

Touch, Type, or Point

The biggest practical difference between devices is how you *control* them. Tablets and phones use a touchscreen — you tap, swipe, and pinch directly with your fingers. Laptops and desktops use a mouse or **touchpad** to move a pointer, plus a physical keyboard. Many modern devices blur these lines — an iPad can connect to a keyboard and even a mouse, and some laptops have touchscreens. Being comfortable with *all* of these input styles is part of being digitally literate.

Key Takeaway

Devices differ mainly in size, portability, and how you control them — touch, touchpad, or mouse. A digitally literate person can move between all of them, because the underlying ideas are the same.

Try It

Do the "Two-Second Test" on Any Device

Real fluency isn't knowing one device — it's being able to sit down at *any* device and get oriented fast. Try this: on a device you use, time how quickly you can find four things — the power/lock control, the way to open an app, the search function, and the settings. If it takes more than a couple of seconds each, that's a skill worth practicing, because the day will come (a new job, a library computer, a friend's tablet) when you need to be productive on hardware you've never touched. People who are "good with technology" usually just aren't afraid to explore an unfamiliar device, because they know every device shares the same handful of basics.

1.2 — The Hardware: Parts You Can Point To

hardware is the physical stuff — the parts you can touch. You should be able to name

the common ones:

- **System unit** — on a desktop, the box that holds the "brains" (the processor, memory, and storage). On a laptop or phone, this is built into the body.
- **Monitor / screen** — displays everything you see.
- **Keyboard** — the keys you type on (physical, or on-screen on a touchscreen).
- **Mouse / touchpad** — moves the pointer.
- **Ports** — the slots where you plug things in (USB, charging, headphones). Newer devices increasingly use **USB-C**, a small oval port that handles charging, data, and video all in one.
- **Camera and microphone** — for photos, video calls, and voice input. Nearly every modern device has both.
- **Printer** — an external device that puts documents on paper.

Storing Your Stuff

Your files have to live somewhere. That's storage, and it comes in two flavors: **local storage** physically inside the device (or on a plug-in **flash drive**), and cloud storage — files kept on the internet, like **iCloud**, **Google Drive**, or **OneDrive**, reachable from any device and automatically backed up. Understanding that your files can live in either place (and knowing *which*) prevents the classic panic of "where did my document go?"

Try It

Look at your own device and find three ports or physical features. What is each one for? On a phone, you might find a charging port, a speaker grille, and camera lenses.



Career Takeaway

"Comfortable With Technology" Is on Almost Every Job Description

Look at nearly any job posting — retail, healthcare, trades, offices, warehouses — and you'll find some version of "must be comfortable using technology." Employers rarely mean advanced coding; they mean exactly the skills in this book: logging in, finding files, sending email, using a tablet or point-of-sale system, joining a video call. Workers who can do these without hand-holding are more valuable and more promotable, and increasingly, the ones who *can't* get left behind. The good news is that these are learnable, and demonstrating calm competence with everyday devices is one of the easiest ways to stand out early in any job.

1.3 — Turning On, Logging In, and Getting Started

Every device needs two things before you can use it: power, and proof that you're allowed in.

Power

Turning devices on and off sounds trivial, but doing it *properly* matters. Computers should be **shut down** through the menu (not by yanking the power) so they can save their work and close programs safely. Knowing how to fully **restart** a device is also one of the most useful troubleshooting skills there is — you'll use it constantly in Chapter 2 and beyond.

Logging In

Most devices are protected by a login so that only you can get in. You'll encounter several methods:

- **Password or PIN** — something you know.
- **Biometrics** — something you *are*: a fingerprint or a face scan (like Face ID). Fast and hard to fake.
- **Usernames** — the name that identifies your account, often your email.

A good username and a strong password matter enormously, and you'll go deep on

password security in Chapter 5. For now, know two rules: a strong password is **long and unique** (not reused across sites), and the little **"see password" (eye) icon** lets you check what you typed before submitting — useful, but not on a shared screen where someone could look over your shoulder.

Watch for Scams Already

The moment you can log in, you can be targeted. A **text message** claiming your account is locked and demanding you "click here to verify" is a classic scam. Real companies don't work that way. If a message creates panic and urgency and wants you to click or type a password, treat it as suspicious — a habit you'll sharpen in Chapter 5.

Current Events

The iPad Turned the Tablet Into a Real Computer

When Apple released the iPad in 2010, many dismissed it as "just a big phone." A decade and a half later, tablets are used for everything from filling prescriptions in hospitals to taking orders in restaurants to running entire small businesses, and students in many schools are issued iPads or Chromebooks instead of textbooks. Modern tablets with keyboards and styluses now handle writing, design, video editing, and note-taking that once required a laptop. The line between "tablet" and "computer" has largely dissolved — which is exactly why being fluent on touch devices *and* traditional computers matters more than ever.

Think: Some people are comfortable only on a phone or tablet, others only on a laptop. Why is being fluent on both an advantage — and which are you less confident with?

1.4 — Tablets and iPads: The Touch-First World

Tablets — and Apple's **iPad** in particular — deserve their own section, because touch-first devices now dominate schools, homes, and many workplaces, and they work differently enough from a laptop to trip people up.

Key things to know about touch devices:

- **Everything is an app.** Instead of a desktop with a taskbar, you have a **home screen** full of app icons that you tap to open.
- **Gestures replace buttons.** Swiping up goes home, swiping between apps switches them, pinching zooms. There are fewer physical buttons, so the *movements* carry the controls.
- **They can do real work.** A modern iPad with a keyboard and stylus (Apple Pencil) can write papers, edit photos and video, take handwritten notes, and run the same document and video-call apps as a laptop.
- **The App Store is the front door.** You install new apps from an official store (the **App Store** on iPad, **Google Play** on Android tablets), which also helps keep out malicious software.

Being fluent on both a touch device *and* a traditional computer is a genuine advantage — many people are comfortable on only one and feel lost on the other.

Key Takeaway

Touch-first devices like the iPad organize everything around apps and gestures rather than a desktop and mouse. They're powerful enough for real work, and comfort with both touch and traditional computers is part of modern digital literacy.



If technology sometimes makes you feel anxious, embarrassed, or "behind," you are far from alone — and it is not a reflection of your intelligence. Devices are designed by teams of experts and then changed constantly, so *everyone* feels lost sometimes, including adults who seem confident. The difference between people who stay stuck and people who grow isn't fearlessness; it's a willingness to poke around, make harmless mistakes, and ask questions without shame. You genuinely cannot break a device by tapping the wrong menu. Give yourself permission to be a beginner, to explore, and to ask — that mindset, more than any specific skill, is what turns technology from a source of stress into a tool you own.

1.5 — Making Devices Work for You: Accessibility

A device isn't one-size-fits-all, and one of the most empowering things you can learn is that you can **change how it works** to fit you. This is accessibility — the built-in settings that adapt a device to different needs and preferences.

Every major device lets you:

- Make **text larger** or increase contrast for easier reading.
- Turn on a **screen reader** that reads the screen aloud, or **captions** for videos.
- Adjust the **mouse** — for example, swapping buttons for left-handed use or changing how fast the pointer moves.
- Change **screen resolution** and brightness for comfort.

These aren't just for people with disabilities (though they're essential for that). Larger text helps anyone reading in bright sun; captions help in a noisy room. Knowing these settings exist — and where to find them — makes every device more comfortable and more usable.

Key Concepts Checklist

- ☐ I can name the main types of devices and what each is best for
- ☐ I can explain the difference between touchscreen, touchpad, and mouse control
- ☐ I can identify common hardware parts, including ports, camera, and microphone
- ☐ I can explain the difference between local storage and cloud storage
- ☐ I can properly turn on, log in to, restart, and shut down a device
- ☐ I can describe different login methods, including passwords, PINs, and biometrics
- ☐ I can recognize a suspicious "your account is locked" scam message
- ☐ I can explain how touch-first devices like the iPad organize apps and use gestures
- ☐ I can find and use accessibility settings to customize a device
- ☐ I can compare a touch device and a traditional computer for a given task

CHAPTER 1 · ACTIVITY

Activity: The Device Detective

Meet Your Devices

You'll build a clear, practical map of a device you use.

Part 1: Identify and Label

Choose one device (your phone, a laptop, a tablet). Create a labeled diagram or list identifying at least **six hardware parts** and what each does. Include how you *control* it (touch, touchpad, or mouse).

Part 2: The Login and Power Checklist

Write out, in order, the exact steps to:

1. Properly turn the device on.
2. Log in (note which method it uses — password, PIN, or biometrics).
3. Properly shut it down or restart it.

Part 3: Personalize It

Explore your device's accessibility or display settings. Change one setting (text size, brightness, contrast) and describe what it did. Then explain one situation where that setting would genuinely help someone.

Part 4: Compare

In a short paragraph, compare a touch device (phone/tablet) with a traditional computer (laptop/desktop). Name one task each is better for, and explain why.

CHAPTER 1

Chapter Review

Meet Your Devices

Chapter Summary

- **Devices** come in main types — smartphone, tablet/iPad, laptop, desktop — differing in size, portability, and how you control them (touchscreen, touchpad, or mouse).
- **Hardware** is the physical parts: system unit, monitor, keyboard, mouse/touchpad, ports (increasingly USB-C), camera, and microphone.
- **Storage** can be local (inside the device or on a flash drive) or **cloud** (iCloud, Google Drive, OneDrive) — reachable anywhere and automatically backed up.
- Devices should be **shut down properly**, and knowing how to **restart** is a core troubleshooting skill.
- **Logging in** proves who you are, using a password, PIN, or **biometrics** (fingerprint, face). Strong passwords are long and unique.
- **Touch-first devices** like the iPad organize everything around apps and gestures, install apps from an official store, and can do real work.
- **Accessibility settings** let anyone customize a device — larger text, screen readers, captions, contrast, mouse adjustments — improving it for everyone.

Multiple Choice

1. Which device is controlled primarily with a touchscreen rather than a mouse?
 - A) A desktop computer
 - B) A tablet or iPad
 - C) A system unit
 - D) A monitor
2. What is the main advantage of cloud storage over storing files only on one device?
 - A) It makes the device faster
 - B) Files are reachable from any device and are automatically backed up
 - C) It uses no internet
 - D) It deletes files automatically
3. Which is an example of a biometric login?
 - A) Typing a password
 - B) Entering a 4-digit PIN
 - C) Unlocking with a fingerprint or face scan
 - D) Clicking a username
4. A text message says your account is locked and you must "click here immediately to verify your password." This is most likely:
 - A) A normal security feature
 - B) A scam using urgency to trick you
 - C) A software update
 - D) A cloud backup
5. Why should you use a device's accessibility settings?
 - A) They are only for programmers

- B) They slow the device down on purpose
- C) They let anyone customize a device to be more usable and comfortable
- D) They delete your files

6. What is the correct way to turn off a computer?

- A) Unplug it from the wall
- B) Hold the power button until it dies
- C) Shut it down through the menu so it can close programs and save safely
- D) Close the lid and walk away

Short Answer

1. Compare a touchscreen device (like an iPad) with a laptop. Give one task each is better suited for, and explain why the difference in how you control them matters.
2. Explain the difference between local storage and cloud storage. Describe one real situation where cloud storage would save you from losing important work.
3. Name three accessibility settings a device offers. For each, describe a person or situation it would help — including at least one that helps someone *without* a disability.

Key Terms

Term	Definition
Device	Electronic equipment used to compute, communicate, or access the internet
Hardware	The physical parts of a device you can see and touch
Touchscreen	A screen controlled by touching it directly with your fingers
Storage	Where a device keeps files — locally or in the cloud
Cloud storage	Files kept on internet servers, reachable from any device and backed up
Login	Proving your identity to a device with a password, PIN, or biometrics
Biometrics	Login using a physical trait, like a fingerprint or face scan
Accessibility	Settings that customize a device to fit different needs and preferences

Answer Key

Multiple choice: 1. B • 2. B • 3. C • 4. B • 5. C • 6. C