

Digital Literacy: Getting Confident with Technology

Middle School Digital Literacy — Grades 6–8

Tech for Everyone

CHAPTER 1

Meet Your Devices

Know Your Tools Before You Use Them

You use technology every day, but do you really *understand* it? Being digitally literate isn't about tapping around until something works — it's about knowing your tools well enough to use any device, and to fix small problems yourself. That confidence helps in every class and every job you'll ever have. Let's start with the devices themselves.

1.1 — The Family of Devices

A device is any electronic tool you use to compute or connect. The main types:

Device	What It Is	Best For
Smartphone	A pocket touchscreen computer that also makes calls	Messaging, quick lookups, photos
Tablet / iPad	A bigger touchscreen device	Reading, drawing, watching, schoolwork
Laptop	A portable computer with a keyboard that folds shut	Writing, research, schoolwork
Desktop	A computer that stays on a desk	Powerful work and gaming

The biggest difference is *how you control them*. Tablets and phones use a touchscreen — your fingers. Laptops and desktops use a **mouse** or **touchpad** to move a pointer, plus a keyboard. Being comfortable with both is part of being digitally literate.

Key Takeaway

Devices differ in size, portability, and how you control them — touch, touchpad, or mouse. Learn to move between all of them.

Try It

Get Oriented on Any Device in Under a Minute

Being "good with technology" isn't about memorizing one device — it's being able to sit down at *any* device and figure it out. Try this: on a device you use, find four things fast — the power or lock button, how to open an app, the search, and the settings. People who seem like tech wizards usually just aren't afraid to explore, because they know every device shares the same basics. You genuinely can't break anything by looking around a menu, so explore freely.

1.2 — The Parts of a Device

hardware means the parts you can touch. The common ones:

- **Monitor / screen** — shows everything you see.
- **Keyboard** — the keys you type on.
- **Mouse / touchpad** — moves the pointer.
- **Ports** — slots to plug things in (charging, USB, headphones). Many new devices use **USB-C**.
- **Camera and microphone** — for photos and video calls.

Your files are kept in storage. It can be **on the device**, or in cloud storage — online, like **Google Drive** or **iCloud**, reachable anywhere and backed up automatically.

Try It

Find three parts or ports on your own device. What is each one for?

Career Takeaway

"Comfortable With Technology" Is on Almost Every Job

Look at nearly any job — a store, a hospital, an office, a warehouse — and you'll see "must be comfortable with technology." They rarely mean coding; they mean exactly what's in this book: logging in, finding files, sending email, using a tablet or a checkout system. Workers who can do this without help are more valuable. The great news is these are learnable skills, and getting comfortable now means you'll walk into your first job already ahead.

1.3 — Turning On and Logging In

Computers should be **shut down** through the menu — not by pulling the plug — so they can save and close safely. Knowing how to **restart** a device is also one of the most useful fix-it tricks you'll learn.

Most devices need a login so only you can get in. You might use a **password**, a **PIN**, or **biometrics** — a fingerprint or face scan. A strong password is **long and unique** (you'll learn more in Chapter 5). The little **eye icon** lets you check a password as you type — handy, but not on a screen others can see.

Watch for Scams

A text saying your account is locked and telling you to "click here right now" is a classic scam. Real companies don't create panic like that. If a message rushes you to click or type a password, be suspicious.

Current Events

The iPad Turned the Tablet Into a Real Computer

When the iPad came out in 2010, people called it "just a big phone." Today, tablets are used in hospitals, restaurants, and classrooms — many schools give students iPads or

Chromebooks instead of textbooks. Modern tablets with keyboards and styluses can handle writing, drawing, and video editing that used to need a laptop. The line between "tablet" and "computer" has mostly disappeared, which is why being comfortable on both touch devices and regular computers matters.

Think: Some people are only comfortable on a phone or tablet, others only on a laptop. Which are you less sure about — and why is knowing both an advantage?

1.4 — Tablets and iPads: The Touch World

Touch devices like the **iPad** work a little differently from a laptop, and they're everywhere in schools:

- **Everything is an app** you tap on a **home screen** — no desktop or taskbar.
- **Gestures replace buttons** — swipe up for home, swipe to switch apps, pinch to zoom.
- **They can do real work** — with a keyboard and stylus, an iPad writes papers, edits video, and takes notes.
- **Apps come from an official store** (the **App Store**), which helps keep out harmful software.

Being comfortable on both touch devices *and* regular computers is a real advantage.

Key Takeaway

Touch devices like the iPad use apps and gestures instead of a desktop and mouse — and they're powerful enough for real schoolwork.

SEL Connection

If technology sometimes makes you feel behind or embarrassed, you are not alone, and it says nothing about how smart you are. Devices are built by huge teams and then changed all the time, so *everyone* feels lost sometimes — even adults who look confident. What

separates people who grow from people who stay stuck isn't being fearless; it's being willing to explore, make harmless mistakes, and ask questions. Give yourself permission to be a beginner. That mindset, more than any single skill, turns technology from stressful into something you own.

1.5 — Making a Device Fit You

You can change how a device works to fit you. These are accessibility settings, and every device has them: make **text bigger**, turn on a **screen reader** that reads aloud, add **captions** to videos, or change **brightness and contrast**. These help people with disabilities — and everyone else too (bigger text in bright sun, captions in a noisy room).

Key Concepts Checklist

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

CHAPTER 1 · ACTIVITY

Activity: The Device Detective

Meet Your Devices

Part 1: Label It

Pick a device and make a labeled diagram of at least **five hardware parts** and what each does. Note how you control it (touch, touchpad, or mouse).

Part 2: Power and Login

Write the steps to properly turn on, log in to, and shut down or restart the device. Note which login method it uses.

Part 3: Personalize It

Change one accessibility or display setting (text size, brightness, contrast) and describe what it did and who it would help.

Part 4: Compare

In a short paragraph, name one task a touch device is better for and one a laptop 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 (touch, touchpad, or mouse).
- **Hardware** is the physical parts: screen, keyboard, mouse/touchpad, ports (often USB-C), camera, and microphone.
- **Storage** can be on the device or in the **cloud** (Google Drive, iCloud, OneDrive) — reachable anywhere and backed up.
- Devices should be **shut down properly**, and knowing how to **restart** is a key fix-it skill.
- **Logging in** uses a password, PIN, or **biometrics** (fingerprint, face). Strong passwords are long and unique.
- **Touch devices** like the iPad use apps and gestures, install from an official store, and can do real work.
- **Accessibility settings** let anyone customize a device — bigger text, read-aloud, captions, contrast.

Multiple Choice

1. Which device is controlled mainly with a touchscreen?

- A) A desktop computer
- B) A tablet or iPad
- C) A monitor
- D) A mouse

2. What is a benefit of cloud storage?

- A) It makes the screen brighter
- B) Your files are reachable from any device and backed up automatically
- C) It works without any internet
- D) It deletes old files

3. Which is a biometric login?

- A) Typing a password
- B) Entering a PIN
- C) Using a fingerprint or face scan
- D) Clicking a username

4. A text says your account is locked and to "click here right now to fix it." This is most likely:

- A) A normal safety feature
- B) A scam using urgency to trick you
- C) A software update
- D) A backup

5. What's the correct way to turn off a computer?

- A) Unplug it
- B) Hold the power button until it dies

- C) Shut it down through the menu so it can save and close programs
- D) Just close the lid forever

6. Why use accessibility settings?

- A) They're only for programmers
- B) They let anyone make a device easier and more comfortable to use
- C) They delete your files
- D) They slow the device down

Short Answer

1. Compare a touch device (like an iPad) with a laptop. Name one task each is better for, and why.
2. Explain the difference between storing files on a device and in the cloud. Give one time the cloud would save you from losing work.
3. Name two accessibility settings and describe who each one helps — including someone *without* a disability.

Key Terms

Term	Definition
Device	Electronic equipment used to compute, communicate, or go online
Hardware	The physical parts of a device you can touch
Touchscreen	A screen controlled by touching it with your fingers
Cloud storage	Files kept online, reachable from any device and backed up
Login	Proving who you are with a password, PIN, or biometrics
Biometrics	Login using a fingerprint or face scan
Accessibility	Settings that customize a device to fit different needs

Answer Key

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