

Digital Literacy 9-12 - LINC'S Vocabulary

Digital Literacy: Your Foundation for a Connected World

Tech for Everyone · LINC'S Vocabulary Sheet

About This Resource

This vocabulary sheet uses the **LINCS strategy**, developed at the University of Kansas, to help students master the key terms in *Digital Literacy: Your Foundation for a Connected World* (Grades 9-12). LINCS turns each new term into a memorable package: a familiar-sounding word, a short story, and a mental picture that together lock the definition into long-term memory.

The sheet is written for both teachers and students. Teachers can use the ready-made cards below for direct instruction, warm-ups, or review stations. Students can use them as models, then build their own cards with the blank template on the last page — the strategy works best when learners eventually create their own reminding words and stories.

The five LINCS steps are:

1. **List the parts** — write the term and its definition.
2. **Identify a reminding word** — find a familiar word that sounds like (part of) the term.
3. **Note a LINCing story** — write a short story that connects the reminding word to the term's meaning.
4. **Create a LINCing picture** — sketch a simple scene from the story.
5. **Self-test** — quiz yourself in both directions until recall is automatic.

Tip

How to self-test: Cover everything on the card except the term. Say the reminding word, retell the story, picture the scene, then state the definition. Next, reverse it: cover the term, read only the definition, and work backward — definition, picture, story, reminding word — until you can name the term. When both directions are fast and accurate, the term is yours.

Chapter 1: Meet Your Devices

This chapter introduces 8 terms.

device

Definition: A piece of electronic equipment you can use to compute, communicate, or access the internet — such as a smartphone, tablet, laptop, or desktop computer.

- **Reminding word:** the vise ("device" sounds like "the vise")
- **LINCing story:** In shop class, the vise on the workbench is the tool you reach for to get real work done; a device — phone, tablet, laptop — is the electronic tool you reach for to compute, communicate, and get online.
- **Picture idea:** A workbench vise gripping a smartphone instead of a piece of wood.

touchscreen

Definition: A screen you control by touching it directly with your fingers — tapping, swiping, and pinching — instead of using a mouse.

- **Reminding word:** touch a movie screen ("touch" + "screen" splits into "touch a screen")
- **LINCing story:** Imagine walking up to a movie screen and touching it — and the film actually responds, pausing and scrolling under your fingers. A touchscreen is exactly that: a screen you control by tapping, swiping, and pinching, no mouse required.
- **Picture idea:** A person at a giant movie screen swiping the picture sideways with one finger.

mouse

Definition: A hand-controlled pointing device that moves a cursor on the screen; a laptop's built-in version is a touchpad.

- **Reminding word:** mouse, the animal ("mouse" sounds like "mouse")
- **LINCing story:** A small gray mouse scurries across the desk, and everywhere it runs, an arrow on the screen scurries the same way — the mouse in your hand steers the cursor on

the screen.

- **Picture idea:** A cartoon mouse running on a desk while an arrow on a monitor traces the same path.

hardware

Definition: The physical parts of a computer or device that you can see and touch, such as the screen, keyboard, and ports.

- **Reminding word:** hardware store ("hardware" sounds like "hardware store")
- **LINCing story:** Everything on the shelves of a hardware store — hammers, hinges, screws — is physical stuff you can pick up and hold. A computer's hardware is the same idea: the physical parts you can see and touch, like the screen, keyboard, and ports.
- **Picture idea:** A store shelf stocked with keyboards, monitors, and cables next to hammers and nails.

storage

Definition: Where a device keeps your files and data, either physically on the device (hard drive, flash drive) or on the internet (cloud storage).

- **Reminding word:** storage unit ("storage" sounds like "storage unit")
- **LINCing story:** A rented storage unit holds your boxes safely until the day you come back for them; a device's storage holds your files and data — on a drive in the machine or out on the internet — until you need them again.
- **Picture idea:** A roll-up storage unit door open to reveal neatly stacked photos, songs, and documents.

cloud storage

Definition: Storing your files on servers on the internet — like iCloud, Google Drive, or OneDrive — so you can reach them from any device and they're backed up automatically.

- **Reminding word:** cloud in the sky ("cloud" sounds like "cloud")
- **LINCing story:** Your homework floats up into a cloud in the sky, and no matter where you stand — home, school, a friend's house — you can look up and pull the same file back

down. Cloud storage keeps files on internet servers, reachable from any device and backed up automatically.

- **Picture idea:** A fluffy cloud holding folders and photos, with arrows connecting it down to a phone, a laptop, and a tablet.

login

Definition: The process of proving who you are to a device or account, usually with a username and password, a PIN, or biometrics like a fingerprint or face scan.

- **Reminding word:** logbook ("log" in "login" sounds like "logbook")
- **LINCing story:** A ship's officer signs the logbook at the start of every watch to prove exactly who came aboard and when. Logging in works the same way: you prove who you are to a device or account with a password, PIN, or fingerprint before you're let in.
- **Picture idea:** A sailor signing a logbook while a laptop screen beside it shows a username and password box.

accessibility

Definition: Features that let people customize a device to fit their needs — such as larger text, screen readers, captions, high contrast, or adjusting a mouse — making technology usable by everyone.

- **Reminding word:** access ramp ("access" in "accessibility" sounds like "access ramp")
- **LINCing story:** An access ramp beside the stairs means everyone — on foot or on wheels — can get into the building. Accessibility features are the ramps of technology: larger text, captions, screen readers, and high contrast make devices usable by everyone.
- **Picture idea:** A wheelchair ramp leading up to a giant tablet whose screen shows big text and a captions icon.

Chapter 2: Finding Your Way Around a Device

This chapter introduces 4 terms.

operating system (OS)

Definition: The main software that runs a device and lets you use it — managing the screen, files, apps, and settings. Examples include Windows, macOS, iPadOS, Android, and ChromeOS.

- **Reminding word:** operating room ("operating" sounds like "operating room")
- **LINCing story:** In an operating room, one lead surgeon directs everything — the team, the tools, the monitors — so the whole procedure runs smoothly. An operating system is the lead surgeon of a device, managing the screen, files, apps, and settings so everything works together.
- **Picture idea:** A surgeon in scrubs directing a table where the "patient" is a laptop surrounded by app icons.

window

Definition: A rectangular frame on screen that holds an open program or document; you can have several open at once and switch between them.

- **Reminding word:** house window ("window" sounds like "window")
- **LINCing story:** Each window in a house frames a different view — one shows the yard, another the street. On a computer, each window frames a different open program or document, and you can look through several at once and switch between them.
- **Picture idea:** A wall with three house windows, each one showing a different app instead of scenery.

file

Definition: A single saved item on a device — a document, photo, song, or video. Each file has a name and a type (shown by its extension, like .docx or .jpg).

- **Reminding word:** file cabinet ("file" sounds like "file cabinet")

- **LINCing story:** In an office file cabinet, every file is one labeled item — one contract, one report — with its name on the tab. A computer file is the same: one saved item, with a name and a type shown by its extension, like .docx or .jpg.
- **Picture idea:** An open file-cabinet drawer with tabs reading "essay.docx," "song.mp3," and "photo.jpg."

folder

Definition: A container that holds files (and other folders), used to organize your work so you can find it later — like a labeled drawer.

- **Reminding word:** folded paper folder ("folder" sounds like "folded")
- **LINCing story:** A folded sheet of cardstock becomes a school folder that keeps all your worksheets for one class together. A computer folder is the same folded container: it holds related files (and even other folders) so you can find your work later.
- **Picture idea:** A bright folded paper folder labeled "History" bulging with small file icons.

Chapter 3: Exploring the Internet

This chapter introduces 5 terms.

browser

Definition: An app used to visit websites — such as Chrome, Safari, Edge, or Firefox.

- **Reminding word:** browsing a bookstore ("browser" sounds like "browsing")
- **LINCing story:** On a free afternoon you go browsing through a bookstore, wandering shelf to shelf and pulling down whatever looks interesting. A browser lets you do the same on the web — wander from site to site with Chrome, Safari, Edge, or Firefox.
- **Picture idea:** A person browsing a bookstore shelf where every book spine is a website address.

Wi-Fi

Definition: A wireless internet connection from a nearby router, common at home, school, and public places. Usually free and doesn't count against a phone data plan.

- **Reminding word:** hi-fi stereo ("Wi-Fi" sounds like "hi-fi")
- **LINCing story:** An old hi-fi stereo filled the whole house with music and no wires ran to your ears. Wi-Fi works the same way: a nearby router fills the building with wireless internet — usually free, and it doesn't touch your phone's data plan.
- **Picture idea:** A stereo speaker and a Wi-Fi router side by side, both sending out matching curved signal waves.

cellular data

Definition: Internet delivered over the cell phone network (4G/5G), available almost anywhere but usually limited by a monthly data plan.

- **Reminding word:** cellar ("cellular" sounds like "cellar")
- **LINCing story:** Even down in the cellar, far from any Wi-Fi router, your phone still loads videos — because cellular data rides the 4G/5G cell network that reaches almost anywhere.

The catch: your monthly plan meters every gigabyte.

- **Picture idea:** A person in a basement cellar holding up a phone that shows full 5G bars.

URL

Definition: The address of a web page (Uniform Resource Locator), typed into the address bar — for example, <https://www.example.org>.

- **Reminding word:** Earl the mail carrier ("URL" sounds like "Earl")
- **LINCing story:** Earl the mail carrier can deliver a package only if the label has the complete, exact address. A URL is a web page's complete, exact address — typed into the address bar, like <https://www.example.org> — so the browser delivers you to the right page.
- **Picture idea:** A mail carrier named Earl reading a package label that says "<https://www.example.org>."

top-level domain

Definition: The last part of a web address (like .com, .org, .edu, .gov) that hints at the type of organization behind a site.

- **Reminding word:** top floor of a building ("top-level" sounds like "top level of a building")
- **LINCing story:** Look at the top level of a downtown building and the sign there — HOSPITAL, BANK, UNIVERSITY — tells you what kind of organization is inside. The top-level domain (.com, .org, .edu, .gov) is that rooftop sign for a website.
- **Picture idea:** A city skyline where rooftop signs read ".com," ".edu," and ".gov" instead of company names.

Chapter 4: Communicating and Creating

This chapter introduces 4 terms.

email

Definition: Electronic mail — the standard way to send written messages, documents, and formal communication online, used by schools, jobs, and organizations.

- **Reminding word:** mailbox ("mail" in "email" sounds like "mailbox")
- **LINCing story:** A letter dropped in a mailbox carries your written words to someone's home; email is the electronic mailbox — the standard way schools, jobs, and organizations send written messages and documents online.
- **Picture idea:** A classic curbside mailbox with a glowing "@" symbol painted on its flag.

video call

Definition: A live audio-and-video conversation over the internet, using apps like Zoom, Google Meet, FaceTime, or Microsoft Teams — used for classes, meetings, and telehealth.

- **Reminding word:** video game plus phone call ("video call" splits into "video" + "call")
- **LINCing story:** Take an ordinary phone call and switch on the video, and suddenly you're face to face: a video call is a live audio-and-video conversation over the internet — how classes meet on Zoom and doctors see patients through telehealth.
- **Picture idea:** Two people waving at each other through phone screens connected by a wavy internet line.

spreadsheet

Definition: A grid of cells (rows and columns) used to organize numbers and information, do calculations, and make charts — such as Microsoft Excel or Google Sheets.

- **Reminding word:** picnic sheet spread out ("spreadsheet" splits into "spread" + "sheet")
- **LINCing story:** A checkered picnic sheet spread on the grass is a perfect grid of squares — and on a spreadsheet, every square is a cell in rows and columns where you organize

numbers, run calculations, and build charts.

- **Picture idea:** A checkered picnic blanket where each square holds a number, with a small bar chart rising from one corner.

presentation software

Definition: Tools like Microsoft PowerPoint and Google Slides used to make slideshows that combine text, images, and media to present information to an audience.

- **Reminding word:** presenting a present ("presentation" sounds like "present")
- **LINCing story:** When you present a present in front of the whole class, everyone's eyes are on what you reveal next. Presentation software — PowerPoint, Google Slides — lets you reveal information slide by slide, mixing text, images, and media for an audience.
- **Picture idea:** A student unwrapping a gift box on stage while a slide with a title and picture glows behind them.

Chapter 5: Staying Safe and Smart Online

This chapter introduces 6 terms.

cybersecurity

Definition: Protecting your devices, accounts, and personal information from digital threats like hackers, scams, and malware.

- **Reminding word:** security guard ("security" in "cybersecurity" sounds like "security guard")
- **LINCing story:** A security guard patrols the building, checking doors and stopping intruders. Cybersecurity is the guard for your digital life — protecting devices, accounts, and personal information from hackers, scams, and malware.
- **Picture idea:** A uniformed guard standing watch in front of a giant padlocked laptop.

password manager

Definition: A secure app that creates, stores, and fills in strong, unique passwords for all your accounts, so you only have to remember one master password.

- **Reminding word:** team manager ("manager" sounds like "team manager")
- **LINCing story:** A team manager keeps track of every player's schedule so the players don't have to; a password manager keeps track of a strong, unique password for every account, and you remember just one master password.
- **Picture idea:** A manager with a clipboard listing "Email," "Bank," and "School," each next to a long scrambled password.

passkey

Definition: A modern, passwordless way to sign in using your device's fingerprint or face scan instead of a typed password, making accounts much harder to steal.

- **Reminding word:** house key ("key" in "passkey" sounds like "house key")
- **LINCing story:** You never type your house key — you just carry it and it fits only your

lock. A passkey works like a key you can't drop: your fingerprint or face scan signs you in with no typed password for thieves to steal.

- **Picture idea:** A door keyhole shaped like a fingerprint, with a finger about to press into it.

multi-factor authentication (MFA)

Definition: A security method that requires a second proof of identity beyond your password — such as a code from your phone — so a stolen password alone isn't enough to break in.

- **Reminding word:** factors in math class ("factor" sounds like "factors")
- **LINCing story:** In math class, a product needs more than one factor — 6 needs both 2 and 3. Multi-factor authentication needs more than one proof: your password times a code from your phone. Steal just one factor and the login doesn't work.
- **Picture idea:** A padlock printed with the equation "password x phone code = unlocked," with one factor crossed out and the lock staying shut.

phishing

Definition: A scam where an attacker pretends to be a trusted person or company (in an email, text, or message) to trick you into revealing passwords, money, or personal information.

- **Reminding word:** fishing ("phishing" sounds like "fishing")
- **LINCing story:** A fisherman dangles shiny bait so the fish bites the hidden hook. A phishing scammer dangles a fake message from a "trusted" company as bait, hoping you'll bite and hand over your password, money, or personal information.
- **Picture idea:** A fishing hook dangling an envelope labeled "Your Bank" over water where a fish shaped like a password stares up at it.

digital footprint

Definition: The trail of data you leave online through your posts, searches, purchases, and activity — much of it permanent and visible to others, including colleges and employers.

- **Reminding word:** footprints in wet cement ("footprint" sounds like "footprints")
- **LINCing story:** Step in wet cement and your footprints harden there for decades, visible to everyone who walks by. Your posts, searches, and purchases leave a digital footprint the

same way — a lasting trail that colleges and employers can still see years later.

- **Picture idea:** A sidewalk of hardened cement footprints, each print stamped with a like icon, a search bar, or a shopping cart.

Blank LINCS Card

Copy this table into your notebook to make your own LINCS card for any new term.

Step	Your work
1. List the term	
2. List the definition	
3. Reminding word (sounds like...)	
4. LINCing story	
5. LINCing picture (sketch it!)	

Tips for good LINCS cards

- Pick a reminding word that is a real, familiar word — something you already know well — that genuinely sounds like the term or part of it.
- Make the story do the teaching: it must connect the reminding word's sound to the term's meaning, so remembering the story lets you rebuild the definition.
- Draw the story, not the term: your picture should show the scene from your story, simple enough to sketch in about 30 seconds.