

21st century digital skills

We live in a time of great advances and innovations, which provide new opportunities for learning inside and outside schools. Technology is a way of life for everyone, making it easier to connect people, information and digital resources from across the globe. All this calls for new knowledge, skills and social behaviour to ensure these powerful tools are used in a responsible and ethical way. Today's youth are digital natives who are unaware of life without internet access, instant communication, mobile phones and a lot of on-demand information available. Although this generation can navigate the digital world with ease, it is unreasonable to assume that they fully understand how to leverage technology for best possible outcomes. Research shows that most young people use the internet to view media outlets and to communicate with friends through social media applications. However, teenagers are not more digitally literate or skilled than adults. Most of them have not been exposed to the tools they need to boost their careers, such as writing, web design or content production. In addition, online security, legitimate dangers and potential digital footprint consequences are important items they should be aware of. In a few words, students need to develop specific digital skills, ranging from the ability to communicate and learn properly to the compliance with rules and standards of good practice.

What are 21st century digital skills? They have been grouped into categories so as to be more easily identified and cared for. Here are some examples.

Technical skills: this definition involves the digital skill of being able to use devices (including mobile devices) and applications to complete practical tasks and recognise specific online environments to navigate and maintain orientation.

Information management: it includes the digital skill of being able to use ICT to efficiently search, select, organize information to make informed decisions about the most suitable sources of information for a given task.

Communication: it involves the digital skill to be able to use ICT to provide information to others, while ensuring that meaning is expressed effectively and succinctly.

Collaboration: it involves the ability to use ICT to develop a social network and work in a team to exchange information, negotiate agreements, and make decisions with mutual respect for each other towards achieving a common goal.

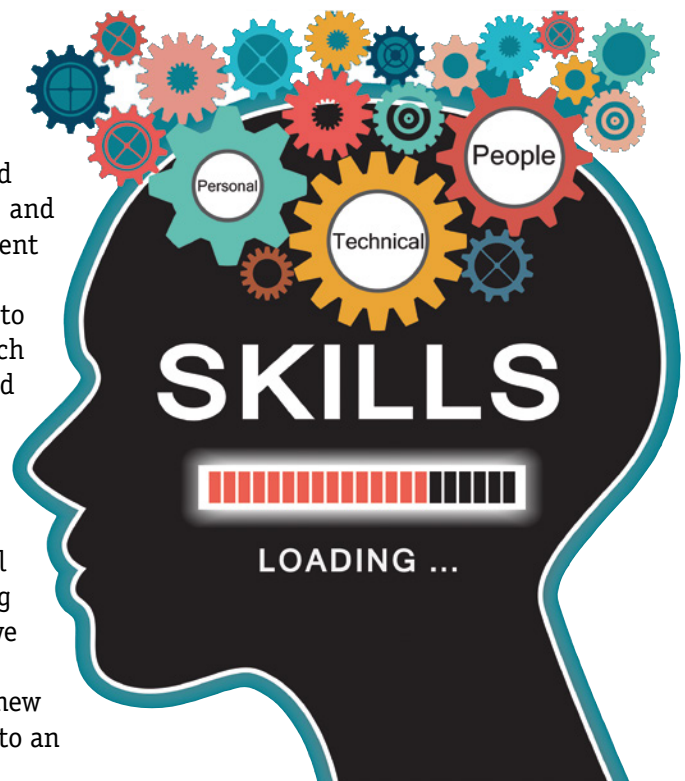
Creativity: it means being able to use ICT to generate new or previously unknown ideas, or treat familiar ideas in a new way and transform such ideas into a product, service or process that is recognised as novel within a particular domain.

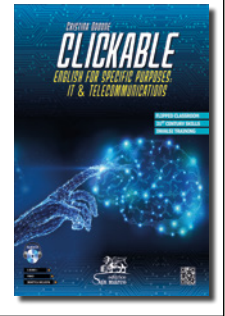
Critical thinking: it is the use of ICT to make informed judgements and choices about obtained information and communication using reflective reasoning and sufficient evidence to support the claims.

Ethical awareness: it involves possessing digital skills to be able to behave in a socially responsible way, which demonstrates awareness and knowledge of legal and ethical aspects when using ICT. It includes understanding the potential risks that exist on the internet and the impact of ICT in social, economical and cultural contexts.

Cultural awareness: it is the ability to show cultural understanding and respect other cultures when using ICT. Attitudes must change according to the people we are communicating with.

Lifelong learning: it is the ability to constantly explore new opportunities when using ICT that can be integrated into an environment to continually improve one's capabilities.





ACTIVITIES

- 1 Answer the following questions.
 - 1 How has technology changed our life?
 - 2 What is the consequence of such a wide use of technology?
 - 3 What is surprising about young people?
 - 4 What should young people learn?
 - 5 What are 21st century digital skills?
- 2 Read the text and fill the table with information.

Skill	Meaning	Purpose
Technical skills	Be able to use tools and devices	
		Make informed decisions about the most suitable sources
Communication		
		Achieve common goals
Creativity	Use ICT to generate new or previously unknown ideas	
		Make informed judgements and choices
Ethical awareness		
	Explore ICT opportunities	

- 3 Use a monolingual dictionary and describe the meaning of the following words or phrases.
 - 1 Away of life
 - 2 To call for
 - 3 On-demand
 - 4 To leverage
 - 5 Media outlets
 - 6 To boost
 - 7 Digital footprint
 - 8 Compliance with
- 4 Consider the 21st century digital skills described in the text. Which skills do you think you have already developed and which ones should you learn more about? Write a short paragraph to discuss this topic.