

Didactical Tool: Digital age gap

Authors: Danijela Birt, Jadranka Brkić-Vejmelka, Ines Cvitković Kalanjoš

Digital age gap means that there are different starting points connected to digital tools based on the age of the users. Digitalisation varies when comparing different countries of the world including Europe. Different factors have impact on the digital tools used by elderly people: gender, socio-economic context, networks availability, education level, location (rural/urban), motivation, etc. Digital age gap is appearing very often, especially because the 65+ population is growing, for example in EU member states this demographic increased to 20,3% in 2019. At the same time, developing technology is offering new digital tools to overcome the age gap.

What is it about?

To begin, it is advisable to read the concept on the Digital age gap. It can help explain the meaning of the concept. Many elderly without a grasp of the latest digital knowledge and skills are at risk of being neglected. Examples from everyday life are revealing the widening digital gap the elderly are experiencing. Teachers should take steps in order to make students aware of age gap in using digital tools. It could be a game of associations, where each student and teacher express the age gap problem through a particular picture or word, concept, or association. This could show us a variety of problems/aspects that we are maybe not aware of.

Try it out

Example 1:

Help your students to set secure passwords and download a password manager app on their devices so they don't have to remember all the passwords to log in. Take a look at their privacy settings on social networks and show them how to set their information so that only friends can view it. Review privacy policies for websites where they might shop, bank, or share healthcare information and show them that the benefits, in most cases, outweigh the security risks. Provide a notebook where to put log passwords and usernames.

- How do digital security issues impact our lives?
- Do elderly people need secure measures, and if so, why?
- What do you think about saving important words/passwords?
- What is the meaning of data security in digital world?

Example 2:

To help elderly people use digital tools and motivate them, share the idea to your students to persuade their parents, grandparents, or neighbor, in writing a letter to their family members (children, parents, friends) via email.

- Do you find yourself capable of preparing teacher training for students?
- How is it possible to sensitize students for working and helping elderly people?

Example 3:

Lets use the internet! We can open an interesting page and start exploring. Try to find the most interesting topics for elderly people. Learn how to skip undesirable links, pages etc. Try to find an appropriate application for free digital learning (<https://seniorplanet.org>)

- Are you aware of any initiatives in your local community promoting digital literacy for elderly people?
- How much attention is your school is paying to the topic of digital literacy, especially for older staff?

Example 4:

There are some applications that enable elderly to use digital tools more often. Because of possible problems, there are Voice-activated Internet of Things (IoT) home appliances for users with limited mobility; an AI-powered speech recognition system that can communicate in a variety of dialects. All of these things are improving communication, especially for older users.

- Do you find existing apps suitable for elderly users?
- Try to use some of those applications with your students and ask their opinion.
- How do you find yourself in this concept, do you have age gap problems?

Example 5:

Some exercises can be used with smart phones and smart watches in order to use very useful applications (pedometer), Fitbit (<https://www.fitbit.com/global/eu/home>), MyFitnessPal (<https://www.myfitnesspal.com>), and Health (<https://www.health.com/#main>).

We recommend starting with the simplest apps.

- Is it possible to follow (all) innovations in the digital world?
- Do you find the increasingly faster improvement of digital tools frustrating?

Tell your colleagues

Discuss digital age gap problems with your colleagues and students. What are the most common types of problems? Suggest short, monthly meetings (in person or online) to discuss recent/current issues in using digital apps.

The examples you create working with your students can be shared in any case with colleagues in your collective, but we suggest that you can share it via the Digital Inclusion Map on the Website of DigitClue. The D.I. Map is a map of the world; you can enter your own projects, materials, and ideas, and leave comments on digital literacy in their own country.

Thinking further

Try to think about the meaning of the age gap in the context of digital or what does it mean for an individual. If you are aware of the problem, do you know some other possibilities to escape the gap. Imagine yourself at a certain age and any possible problems that could arise when using digital apps.