

I've realized through this course that when it comes to downloading applications or software I rarely, if ever, read the "fine print". Instead I've always balanced what private information I'm providing with how much benefit I'm receiving. When it comes to my students, I've taken the same approach but also asked the question, "Would I do this myself?" Of course this question is a little harder to answer. First of all, if I were truly the student, would I consider an educational application beneficial to me and secondly who's to say that my value of private information is the same as every or any of the students.

Having said that I did make the decision to require students to sign up for the program Typing.com. Students login using their Google classroom emails which are provided by the school. Because Typing.com allows the classes to be linked to my Google Classroom classes, a number of benefits occur. For the student, there is no need for them to remember a second user id and password. For the teacher, information linking the class allows classes to be created and populated automatically. Small advantages, but every bit counts.

The program has a free version, which entails watching advertisements and a paid version having no advertisements. For financial reasons, I chose to go with the free version for our school.

Typing.org privacy policy:

<https://www.typing.com/privacypolicy>

Typing.com "conveniently" provides the following Take Home Agreement:

https://www.typing.com/dist/site_typing/images/resources/typingcom-take-home-agreement.pdf

For simplicity and to ease my conscience I would simply send home the Typing.com letter offered. The ease of conscience comes from being able to provide all of the information that I was available to me, to the families so that they could make the choice for themselves and thus eliminate the need for me to place a value for them on their private data. I do foresee two difficulties with this. Firstly, since the letter is coming from me, many parents at our school may trust me to have deemed it safe or as a requirement to sign rather than a decision for them to make. The second is that the length of the letter, 2 pages front and back, may intimidate some parents or wonder further about the why such a long letter is required. While the intent is to offer up the facts for them to make a choice with, it may also prolong or reduce the number of students who return the form and thus reduce the number of actual participants. There are of course ways to work around students not signing in, but they require much more work on both the students part and the teachers.

Reading the take home letter provided, I have a number of questions and concerns, which if answered would allow me to send home an abbreviated letter, or none at all:

Information Collected:

The program says that it collects two types of information, personal: name, email address, grade level and password. By logging in through their Google account they say that they may be able to collect further information but do not specify which information. Do they have access to the students email accounts and to what degree? It then refers to the following, 'other' information it collects:

Typing.com also collects information based on the use of its service. This includes:

- device information, such as the hardware model, operating system version, and unique device identifiers;
- log information, including details of how a user used Typing.com services, device event information, and the user's Internet protocol (IP) address;
- location information, as determined by IP address;
- cookies or similar technologies which are used to collect and store information about a browser or device, such as preferred language and other settings.

Who has access to and for how long?

The teachers and Typing.com to private information and third party advertising providers have access only to the 'other' information. They specifically name Google Ad Manager and Freestar with in this regard.

The area of concern for me is that it says that the third party will not have access to the private information. It says it in a number of locations throughout the letter and in their privacy statement. Later however, it also says it will,

"... share personal information with companies, organization or individuals outside of Typing.com with it has parents' consent(for users below the age of consent), which may be obtained through Typing.com."

Does this mean that just by signing the letter that Typing.com can share/sell, the information? It certainly seems like it does when on the very front page of the letter it says that does seem to that state that very thing on the front page of it's letter.

I give permission for [redacted] to create/maintain a Typing.com account for my child and for Typing.com to collect, use, and disclose information about my child only for the purposes described in the notice below.

Thank you,
[redacted]

The information can presumable be kept forever but does state that parents can , "....request deletion of their child's Typing.com account..." . It does not say whether the information already collected will be deleted or if the student/parent is able to see if the information has already been sold/shared.

How Understandable is their EULA?

The EULA really a combination of their privacy statement and their terms of service. There are 19 sections to the terms of service which are fairly straight forward to myself. But then again many parents or students at my school do not have English as a first language and many that do still struggle with reading and comprehension. The part I found enlightening was that by allowing a student under the age of 13 to use the program, I was providing consent and that I as the teacher must,

"... obtain verifiable parent or guardian consent for the collection and use of personal information before allowing any students under the age of 13 to use the services"

Teaching grade 9, it is possible that I have a student who falls into this category so I will have to be on the look out in the future to ensure compliance with COPPA.

Would I Be Comfortable As A Parent If My Child Used This?

As a parent of a child, I would make feel as comfortable with them using this software as I was with any other software I have downloaded.

Would I Be Comfortable As A Student forced to use it in a class?

Personally, I am never happy or comfortable signing in or entering any information to anything so I would not like feel comfortable. I would probably do it for the convenience it offered me instead of submitting the assignments in another way. The ability to sign in through Google would somehow make me feel safer even if it was potentially worse in reality.

I suspect that many parents and students at our school are oblivious to the act of tracking, data selling and privacy issues when it comes to computer programs, let alone those dealing with education. At the same time, there is almost a presumption by those who use computers frequently that information is tracked and sold so that any sense of danger or privacy invasion has almost been watered down and something to just accept. As I mentioned, sending the long, pre made letter home may cause more headaches than it is worth. I might consider sending the shorter version, if any at all, if I could get some clarification on what signing the consent letter did in terms of releasing the "personal information" .