



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
2000 Volume III: Constitutional and Statutory Privacy Protections in the 21st Century

The Information Highway & Your Right to Privacy

Guide for Curriculum Unit 00.03.03
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In the twenty-first century we find ourselves surrounded by a world of mass communication, high technology and instantaneous transmissions of words and visions. People all over the globe can communicate by telephone, by computer and by facsimile machine in seconds. We can talk, we can write, and we can send pictures. This ability to communicate via the Internet has enhanced the lives of people around the globe in many ways. It has also raised new legal and ethical questions.

This particular unit addresses some issues regarding the 1st and 4th Amendment rights of American citizens. The 1st Amendment focuses on your right of free speech while the 4th Amendment deals with your right to privacy. However, both these Amendments are limited to the powers of the federal government. They do not protect citizens from other private individuals or businesses.

At the time of this writing, the Internet and its legal boundaries are being tested and defined. Because the Internet is so new and its widespread use has not been as anticipated, laws to protect a person's privacy are not in place. Innumerable legal controversies relating to the Internet and your right to privacy are beginning to surface.

Upon completion of this unit, students will have a better understanding of how they are protected by the 1st and 4th Amendments in the Bill of Rights. Lessons begin with thought-provoking questions to get the students going. Lessons provide students with hands on activities. Lessons are designed to stimulate student thinking about themselves, the Internet and our legal system.

(Recommended for Business Law, grades 10-12.)

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