

PAUSE BEFORE YOU POST

- Hello, Grandpa. I was thinking about you at school today.
- Really? How come?
- We had a lesson about digital citizenship – you know, how to behave online, keeping safe on the internet and stuff, because that's something the EU's concerned about, and we talked about how there are lots of scams out there targeting old people in particular..
- Excuse me! A little less of the 'old', if you don't mind. And I'm perfectly able to protect myself online, you know. I've been around for a while – I didn't come down in the last shower.
- So what about that time when you went to Spain and put all your holiday snaps up on Facebook with the status 'Away for a week in Benidorm!?' You might as well have taken out an advert in the paper saying 'I'm not home! Come and burgle my house!'
- Yes, well, I'll give you that, and I did take that status down as soon as you pulled me up on it. But it's not as if we oldies are the only ones behaving foolishly online. I was reading this article about a young lad a bit older than you who went out on a bender one Saturday night with some of his mates, took some drunken selfies and uploaded them to his profile. The unflattering images might never have crossed his mind again had an interviewer not brought them up when he was applying for his first teaching job several years later..
- Awkward! I'd be mortified if that happened to me. But I bet you had the odd raucous night out back in the day.
- That's for me to know and for you to find out! But, even if I did, at least there's no photographic evidence floating around in the cloud to give the game away..
- That's true, I guess. People often forget that once they upload a photo or post something online it's out there for good. Like if you insult someone online in the heat of the moment. Once it's out there it's very difficult to get it back in the box.
- Be that as it may, those digital skills you so patiently taught me have been an absolute lifeline, especially now I'm not nearly as mobile as I used to be. I can keep in touch with all my pals, I've joined an online book club, I get updates on the cricket in real time, and I've even found this app that's teaching me Spanish! The wonders of the modern world! You just need to keep your wits about you and remember – if you wouldn't say something to someone's face or publish it in the newspaper, it's probably best not to blab about it online!