

Technologies like text messages, emails, or social media are popular means of communication and information sharing. People can be in constant contact with each other through their devices such as cell phones, computers, and tablets. Gaming consoles also allow users to talk, text, or video chat through their X-box or PlayStation independent of playing a game. It is now common practice for people to engage with these technologies socially and professionally.

While these technologies have great potential to connect individuals and communities, they also can be misused to intimidate and harass others or to invade their privacy. The following guide includes some of the current technologies and technology terms that may arise in cases involving technology abuse. It is divided into five categories: Social Networking, Group Messaging and Video Chat, Discussion Forums, Location Services, and Anonymous Browsers. Included under these categories are just a few examples of common sites and apps to help familiarize the reader with the types of technology available. The last section is a list of terms associated with these technologies. It is important to note that technology is changing constantly and information becomes out of date quickly. This guide is meant to be a starting place for judges to understand the basic types of technologies and not as an exhaustive list. Judges are encouraged to use this information as a framework for how technology is used and how it can be misused.

➤ An arrow will be used to indicate key terms and phrases associated with the term or platform being defined.

SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

SOCIAL NETWORKING

FACEBOOK

Facebook is one of the most popular social media sites. Facebook allows users to connect with or “friend” other users. Users can share pictures, videos, make “status updates” to share a thought with friends, or even “check-in” to let friends know where they are or what they are doing. Friends can “like”  or react (“love” , “sad” , “haha” , “wow” , “angry” ) to users’ posts. Users also can message privately or in groups with others through the Facebook Messenger feature. Users can control who sees their posts, information, and photos (other than their profile and cover photos) through the privacy settings.



- **POST/ STATUS UPDATE/ LIKE/ PROFILE PICTURE/ TAG/ COMMENT/ FACEBOOK LIVE/ MESSENGER**

TWITTER

Twitter is a social media/networking platform where users share thoughts, links to news articles, photos, videos, or other media in short (previously 140 characters, but now 280 characters) messages called “tweets.” Users select people they know, celebrities, public figures, news organizations, etc., to “follow.” Users can require that their approval be obtained for others to follow them, making the users’ tweets private and available only to those approved. Users also can block someone from seeing their tweets. Tweets can be linked to other user accounts by using “@” in front of the other user’s “handle” or username (i.e. @username). Tweets populate in the user’s feed and the user can “like” a tweet or “retweet” a tweet, sending it out to all of their followers. Users also can send a private message to other users called a “DM” which is short for “direct message.”



- **TWEET/ RETWEET/ #HASHTAG/ MOMENTS/ DM (DIRECT MESSAGE)**

INSTAGRAM

Instagram is a social media/networking platform that is based on sharing photos and videos. Users can connect with others by “following” them. Users do not need to be mutual “friends” for someone to track their posts; someone can follow you without you following them, and vice versa. Users can, however, use privacy settings to share their photos or videos only with people they have accepted as “followers.” Users can comment on and “like” posted photos or videos. Users also can send private direct messages to users through Instagram Direct.



- **STORIES/ TAG/ MENTIONS/ INSTAGRAM DIRECT**

YOUTUBE

YouTube is a video sharing/social media website where users can upload videos, watch, and post comments on other users’ videos. Users can also like (thumbs up) or dislike (thumbs down) videos and can “subscribe” to “channels” for notification when they have uploaded a new video. “Channels” are members’ profiles where all of their original content is posted. YouTube is owned by Google and users interact with the site through their Google accounts. Most videos on YouTube are public and can be viewed without logging into a user account, but likes, dislikes, and comments are restricted to account users.



- **CHANNEL/ SUBSCRIPTION/ THUMBS UP/ THUMBS DOWN/ COMMENT/ TAG**

TUMBLR

Tumblr is a social media/social networking platform where users can post photos, videos, text, or other content to their page or “blog.” Users have a home screen called a “dashboard.” Users can “follow” others so their new blogs show up on the user’s dashboard. Users can comment on other users’ posts or “reblog” (share the post on their own blog). Private messaging is also available for users.



- **BLOG/ REBLOG/ DASHBOARD/ POST/ FOLLOWER/ TAG**

PINTEREST

Pinterest is a website that allows users to create a profile page made up of “boards.” These boards are like virtual bulletin boards dedicated to specific topics (such as food, style, crafts) identified by the user. Users “pin” or save links to pictures, do-it-yourself projects, recipes, and other content from websites around the Internet. Users also can upload their own pictures to pin to their boards. These pins are shared with other users who choose to pin links they like to their own boards to access later. Users can follow other users to have that person’s pins show up in their feed of suggested pins they might be interested in. Private boards can be created and seen only by the creator. Private messaging is also available for users.



- **PIN/ BOARD/ SECRET BOARD/ FOLLOWER/ LIKE/ MESSAGES**

LINKEDIN

LinkedIn is a social media/social networking platform designed for professional networking. LinkedIn profiles act as an online resume; users add information about their professional experience, volunteer experience, hobbies, and skills. Other users can “endorse” skills on each other’s profiles as well as send direct messages to specific users and general posts to their network of “connections.” The site is also used for employment recruitment. Those who pay for premium status can see who has viewed their profile.



Users also can make “connections” with other users they know or who are in their field. LinkedIn recommends connections based on degree of connection. For example, you are connected to your brother and he is connected to his boss – you and your brother’s boss are 2nd degree connections and may be recommended to each other by LinkedIn.

- **CONNECTIONS/ SKILLS/ ENDORSEMENTS/ MESSAGES**

GROUP MESSAGING AND VIDEO CHAT

SNAPCHAT

Snapchat is a social media/networking platform that allows users to share temporary pictures or videos with other users they have connected with as “friends.” The sender can set the amount of time that an image or video is accessible to the receiver before the image disappears from their app. The site also informs the sender if the receiver takes a screenshot (*See also* Screenshot) of the image. “Friends” can use the “chat” feature to message each other. These chat messages also will disappear after a set amount of time or after both viewers have opened and left the chat, whichever comes first. Snapchat also offers users a location sharing feature called Snap Map. Snap Map allows users to share their location with their friends and to find content shared by others based on location.



- **SNAP/ STORY/ CHAT/ SNAP MAP**

MARCO POLO VIDEO WALKIE TALKIE

Marco Polo is a video messaging app that allows users to communicate through video messages, either in real time (“walkie talkie style”) or send a recorded message (a “polo”). Users can communicate with friends either one-on-one or in groups. Unlike Snap Chat, you cannot send still photos through Marco Polo and videos on Marco Polo do not disappear. Instead, they are stored on the company’s server for users to watch again whenever.



- **POLO/ FRIENDS/ GROUP/ CHAT TILE**

KIK

Kik is a mobile messaging app that allows users to message each other either one on one or in groups. Users also can join public chat groups on specific topics.



- **PUBLIC GROUP/ PRIVATE GROUP/ CHAT/ BOT/ BOT SHOP**

WHATSAPP MESSENGER

WhatsApp is a social networking platform that allows users to send instant messages and call other users over the Internet as opposed to using the phone's cellular plan. This app is often used in place of the device's standard messaging app because it works well across a variety of devices as well as internationally.



- **TEXT/ VIDEO CHAT/ MESSAGE**

ONLINE GAMING

Users can play multi-player games online on computers or on other devices such as video game consoles (i.e. PlayStation or Xbox). Users can play with or against other players and often can communicate with the game's online community through text, audio, or video. Users also can communicate with others over consoles independent of any particular game.



TWITCH

Twitch is a social networking platform for online gamers. Users can post live streaming videos of themselves playing video games. Other users can comment in a chat box connected to the video. Users can subscribe to the channels of other users to follow their latest videos. Twitch also broadcasts eSports tournaments, or competitions between different players in multiplayer video games.¹



- **LIVE CHANNELS/ ROOMS/ STREAM CHAT**

DISCUSSION FORUMS

REDDIT

Reddit is a website where users can post links to articles, images, and videos, and create discussions. Users can



register fairly anonymously and are not required to provide an email address in order to post content. Users can “upvote” or “downvote” submitted content which affects the position of the post on the website. Upvoted content is moved toward the top of the website, with the most popular posts landing on the Reddit “front page.”

CRAIGSLIST

Craigslist is a website that provides classified advertisements for a selected geographical area. Users do not have to have an account to post ads or to review and respond to posted ads. The site works much like the classified section of a print newspaper.



There are a wide variety of topics such as housing, for sale, jobs, personal ads, and community events. There are also public discussion forums on varying themes.

LOCATION SERVICES

PHONE TRACKING

There are a variety of apps that offer the ability to track family, friends, or your phone through GPS. One such app is Find My Family, Friends, Phone. This app advertises as a “real-time location-sharing app” that allows users to view the location of family or friends that are in their “circles,” see past location history for those family and friends, and receive real-time alerts when circle members come and go from home, work, or school. This app also allows users to send photos and texts through a private chat function.



Many cell phone providers also have similar services available for tracking family members’ phones like “Family Locator” or “Family Map.” Apple has a tracking app that comes installed on its devices that allows users to track an iPhone, iPad, or Mac computer associated with the same Apple ID. Various similar apps are available for Android phones as well.

VEHICLE TRACKING

There are a variety of companies with services to track vehicles through GPS. These companies advertise for a variety of uses. Some are focused on tracking the driving habits of the user for their own information, for their insurance company, or for monitoring teen drivers. Others focus on locating a vehicle should it be stolen.



One locator company that has been around for a while is LoJack. This company offers “LoJack Early Warning” that a car may be stolen. This entails a key pass which, when not used with the vehicle, notifies the owner/user of the vehicle’s use. The company also offers a program called “SureDrive” which connects the vehicle’s GPS to an app where the user can login and track the vehicle and set up virtual boundaries which will send notification alerts when a car has passed a certain geographical area. (*See also* Geofence.)

ANONYMOUS BROWSERS

GOOGLE INCOGNITO MODE

Anonymous browsers range in levels of security from the higher end like Tor (below) to simpler add on features for popular web browsers like Incognito Mode. Incognito Mode is a feature available with Google Chrome web browser. This feature allows users to keep Google from remembering their activity such as their browsing history, site data, or information entered in forms.² It does not, however, hide your activity from websites you visit, employers monitoring online activity, or your internet service provider.³



Tor BROWSER

Tor is a privacy software designed to keep others from tracking the users location or browsing habits.⁴ Tor does this by bouncing user’s communications around a network



of relays around the world.⁵ Tor passes these communications through at least three different servers each with a separate layer of encryption before it sends it on to the destination.⁶ Most people use Tor through the Tor Browser, which is a version of Firefox web browser.⁷ Military, law enforcement agencies, global activists, journalists, and others with legitimate needs for anonymity use Tor.⁸ The site is, however, better known for its use by those who want to use the anonymity in the furtherance of criminal acts.⁹ Specifically, Tor is often associated with the “dark web” which is known for human trafficking, drug trafficking, arms trafficking, child pornography, counterfeit currency, among other criminal enterprises.¹⁰

IMPORTANT TERMS TO KNOW

ANONYMOUS EMAILS AND TEXTS

Similar to spoofing, there are many websites and programs that allow a user to send someone an email or a text without connecting it to the user’s known email addresses or phone numbers. Many email accounts also can be made with fake credentials. Unlike anonymous browsing, these methods only add anonymity to what appears to the receiver. They do not hide the user’s IP address (the numeric address of a computer on the Internet¹¹), or other online identifiers.

APP

“An application, especially as downloaded by a user to a mobile device.”¹²

BLOG

“A website that contains online personal reflections, comments, and often hyperlinks, videos, and photographs provided by the writer” or “a regular feature appearing as part of an online publication that typically relates to a particular topic and consists of articles and personal commentary by one or more authors.”¹³

CATFISH(ING)

“A person who sets up a false personal profile on a social networking site for fraudulent or deceptive purposes.”¹⁴ A documentary about this practice entitled “Catfish” was released in 2010 and inspired an MTV reality show about online dating entitled “Catfish: the TV Show.”¹⁵

DARK WEB

A “part of the World Wide Web that is only accessible by means of special software, allowing users and website operators to remain anonymous or untraceable.”¹⁶

DOXXING (DOXING)

“To publicly identify or publish private information about (someone) especially as a form of punishment or revenge.”¹⁷

GEOFENCE

“A virtual geographic boundary, defined by GPS or RFID technology, that enables software to trigger a response when a mobile device enters or leaves a particular area.”¹⁸

GEOTAG

“An electronic tag that assigns a geographical location to a photograph or video, a posting on a social media website, etc.”¹⁹

GIF (GRAPHICS INTERCHANGE FORMAT)

“A lossless format for image files that supports both animated and static images.”²⁰

GPS (GLOBAL POSITIONING SYSTEM)

“A navigational system using satellite signals to fix the location of a radio receiver on or above the earth's surface.”²¹

HASHTAG

“A word or phrase preceded by a hash sign (#), used on social media websites and applications, especially Twitter, to identify messages on specific topic.”²² All posts or messages that include a specific hashtag can be searched by that hashtag. For example, a Twitter user who wanted to see tweets about the 2018 Winter Olympics could quickly find a list of all tweets marked with #winterolympics2018.

INSTANT MESSAGE (IM)

“A message sent via the Internet that appears on the recipient’s screen as soon as it is transmitted.”²³

MEME

“An amusing or interesting item (such as a captioned picture or video) or genre of items that is spread widely online especially through social media.”²⁴

NONCONSENSUAL SHARING (DISCLOSURE) OF PRIVATE IMAGES (NONCONSENSUAL PORNOGRAPHY/ REVENGE PORN)

“The distribution of sexually graphic images of individuals without their consent. This includes both images originally obtained without consent (e.g. by using hidden cameras, hacking phones, or recording sexual assaults) as well as images consensually obtained within the context of an intimate relationship.”²⁵

ONLINE DATING (INTERNET DATING)

“The practice of searching for a romantic or sexual partner on the

Internet, typically via a dedicated website.”²⁶ Generally, these sites allow for users to choose who they interact with and allow users to get to know each other through the site before they meet (if ever) in person. Examples of online dating sites include Match.com, OkCupid, eHarmony, Plenty of Fish, Bumble, and Tinder.

ONLINE GAMING

Users can play multi-player games online on computers or on other devices such as video game consoles (i.e. PlayStation or Xbox). Users can play with or against other players and often can communicate with the game’s online community through text, audio, or video. Users also can communicate with others over consoles independent of any particular game. Because players have a level of anonymity and often create online alter-egos for games, some users feel emboldened to harass, bully, or threaten other players.²⁷ Some users even use the game as a means to gain personal information from other players which can be used to harass offline.²⁸ In 2014, the harassment of women in the online gaming industry created a heated debate nicknamed

#Gamergate which led to severe threats of violence and some targeted individuals fearing for their physical safety.²⁹

SCREENSHOT

A picture taken of the screen of a phone, computer, or tablet by the device itself. Some apps, such as Snapchat, notify the other user when a screenshot has been taken of their content.

SEXTING

“The sending of sexually explicit messages or images by cell phone.”³⁰

SEXTORTION

“The practice of extorting money or sexual favours from someone by threatening to reveal evidence of their sexual activity.”³¹

SOCIAL MEDIA

“Forms of electronic communication (such as websites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (such as videos).”³²

SOCIAL NETWORKING

“The creation and maintenance of personal and business relationships especially online.”³³

SPOOFING

Spoofing means faking the caller ID number on the phone the user is calling. Spoofing websites and apps can allow users to make the caller ID number appear as any number they choose as well as allowing them to spoof texts, alter their voice, add background noise, or record the phone call. Spoofing has been used by telemarketers and in scams to elicit personal information. Such practices are illegal under the Truth in Caller ID Act.³⁴ Spoofing companies, such as SpoofCard, advertise their services as a way to protect a user’s privacy or to prank call a friend.³⁵ This technology also has been used by some to prank call emergency services, a practice that is often referred to as “swatting.”³⁶

SPYWARE

“Software that is installed in a computer without the user's knowledge and transmits information about the user's computer activities over the Internet.”³⁷ There are also

spyware programs for smart phones and tablets. Mobile spyware for phones can track and transmit information collected on the phone, including GPS location, text messages, internet searches, call details, social media posts, pictures, and even listen in on the other party.

TEXT MESSAGE

“A short message sent electronically usually from one cell phone to another.”³⁸

VIRTUAL PRIVATE NETWORK (VPN)

“A method employing encryption to provide secure access to a remote computer over the Internet.”³⁹ A VPN service acts as a buffer between the user and the external Internet by encrypting data between the VPN server and the user and routing all external Internet traffic through the VPN server.⁴⁰

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