**Logo

Description automatically generated with medium confidenceLearner Handout: QR Code Basics**

**What is a QR Code?**  
A QR code is like a barcode. You scan the QR code with your smartphone or tablet’s built-in camera app, which connects you to a resource on the Internet, such as a website for viewing a food menu, an advertisement, or an application for making a payment, among other uses.

**What can you do with a QR code?**  
Examples include accessing a restaurant menu, checking in for a doctor’s appointment, paying for parking, downloading an app, watching a video, taking a survey, and more.

**How to Scan a QR Code**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **O P T I O N**  **A** | **A screenshot of a purple screen  AI-generated content may be incorrect.** | **A purple screen with white numbers  AI-generated content may be incorrect.** | **A screen shot of a cell phone  AI-generated content may be incorrect.** | **A qr code on a grey rectangular object  AI-generated content may be incorrect.** | **A qr code scanning on a device  AI-generated content may be incorrect.** |
| Step 1.  Tap the screen of your smartphone or tablet with your finger. | Step 2.  Tap the camera icon. | Step 3.  The camera app opens. | Step 4.  Hold the device so that the QR code appears in the camera’s viewfinder, making sure the entire code is visible on the screen. | Step 5.  The device will automatically detect it’s a QR code and display a link. Do not take a picture of the QR code!  Tap the link on the screen, and the link opens. |
| **O P T I O N**  **B** | A screenshot of a phone  AI-generated content may be incorrect. | Step 1.  From the home screen, navigate to the page with camera icon.  Step 2. Tap on the camera icon with your finger. | A hand with a finger pressing a button  AI-generated content may be incorrect.  Continue to Step 4. |

**Tips to Help You Successfully Scan a QR Code**

* If you accidentally take a picture of the code, return to the camera app and **scan the code again!**
* Remember, **tap the URL** under the QR code in the camera app to open the resource.
* **Keep the camera steady.** The camera can’t read the code if the image is moving or blurry.
* **Check your browser** if you tap the QR code link, but nothing opens.
* **Clean the camera lens** if the image is blurry.
* **Make sure the entire code fits on the screen** with a little space between the code and the edge of the camera screen.
* **Turn on the camera’s flash** if it’s dark.
* **If you have an older device,** you may need a QR scanner from your device’s app store.

## Using QR Codes Safely and Securely

**Do**

* **Do only scan codes from trusted sources.** The item that opens after scanning the code should match the organization promoting the QR code. How can you tell?
  + The QR code name or branding should match the organization’s website.
  + Make sure the organizational name in the URL or logo is spelled correctly — if it's not, be suspicious.
  + The item the QR code opens should look professional, which means no misspellings, typos, or grammatical errors.
  + If it is too good to be true, it probably is!
* **Do go directly to the organization’s website** address if you are unsure the QR code is legitimate.
* **Do make sure your device’s operating system and applications are up to date** to ensure you have the most recent security updates installed.
* **Do** **make sure the URL starts with HTTPS.**
* **Do** **contact the organization to verify it’s safe**. If you are at a store or restaurant and are unsure whether the QR code is safe, ask the staff.
* **Do: If you provide personal or financial information using a fraudulent QR code**, what can you do?
  + If you entered your username and password, change your password.
  + If you provided bank or credit card information, set up a fraud alert and credit freeze. Contact your financial institution for help.
  + Inform your bank and monitor your accounts for unusual activity.
  + Scan your device for malware and spyware.
* **Do watch the PLA DigitalLearn course Online Fraud and Scams** at www.digitallearn.org to learn more about using your mobile device safely and securely.

**Don’t**

* **Don’t scan QR codes that are damaged or covered by a sticker** of a different QR code. Someone may be trying to trick you by directing you to a different website.
* **Don’t** g**ive sensitive information to a company or person you don’t know** like your social security number, credit card, bank information, and passwords.
* **Don’t scan it if you are unsure it’s safe**.

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