

Tips for Online Safety

We recommend these universal tips to help keep your family safe on the Internet. We teach these skills at school and partner with you in protecting your children while online.

Keep computers in a central place.

It makes it easier for you to keep an eye on your children's activities.

Know where your kids go online.

If you have young children, you may want to navigate the Internet with them. For older kids, agree on where they can and can't go before they log on. You can also check where your kids have been by looking at the browser history in your computer's web browser menu.

Teach Internet safety.

It's impossible to monitor all online activity, all the time. As kids get older, they need to know how to use the Internet safely and responsibly when they're on their own.

Protect passwords.

It sounds obvious, but remind your kids not to give out their online passwords and not to click on "remember me" settings on public computers, like at a friend's house or at the library.

Follow age limit guidelines suggested by service providers.

Most communication tools or social networks have a minimum age requirement for account creation. Sites such as Facebook and MySpace require users to be at least 13, but they have no practical way to verify ages. There are many young users who pretend to be older when registering or have parent permission for a monitored site. Please be aware that just because you "friend" your child's account does not mean that you are privy to all of their communication or posts with others, nor do all privacy settings guarantee that your child's personal information is not shared with a universal audience.

Beware of stranger danger.

Teach kids to avoid in-person meetings with people they "meet" online, and not to share personal information with online strangers because people may not be who they claim to be.

Teach kids to communicate responsibly and to report harassing behavior.

A good rule of thumb is: if you wouldn't say it to someone's face, don't text it, email it, instant message it, or post it as a comment on someone's social networking page. Despite parents' fears of online predators targeting their children, the most common threats online are peer-to-peer harassment and bullying. Experts advise parents to closely monitor their children's online activities and put a stop to it if they believe there is a problem arising.

View all content critically.

Just because you see it online, doesn't mean it's true. Teach kids how to distinguish reliable sources from unreliable ones and how to verify information they find online. And make sure kids understand that cutting and pasting content right from a website may be plagiarism, and plagiarism is cheating.