



Keeping Children Safe Online

The internet plays an important role in modern family life, especially for children and youth who frequently use it for schoolwork, gaming, entertainment, and socializing. However, as technology evolves, so do the risks children face online. It is crucial for parents and guardians to provide proper guidance on safe and responsible online behavior.

Parents play a vital role in helping children navigate the online world safely.

Risks on the Internet for Children

As children explore the digital world, they may encounter certain risks that could affect their safety, privacy, and well-being. Understanding these risks is the first step in helping kids navigate the internet safely.

- **Deceptive content.** Kids may be exposed to misleading information, misrepresentation, and deceptive advertising.
- **Privacy concerns.** Sharing personal details can put children at risk of identity theft or unwanted contact.
- **Scams and phishing.** Scammers may trick children into giving away personal information or money.

While risks exist, parents and guardians can take measures to ensure children have a safe and positive online experience. Implementing good online habits and safety measures can help reduce these dangers.

The Role of Parents in Internet Safety

Parents play a vital role in helping children navigate the online world safely. Open communication is key.

Regularly talking to children about their internet use fosters trust and makes them more likely to seek help if they encounter problems. Setting clear guidelines, such as appropriate websites, screen time limits, and social media rules, can help create healthy online habits.

Parents should also lead by example with responsible online behavior and showing children how to engage with digital content critically. But nothing replaces the importance of active parental involvement and education.



Educating Children About Internet Safety

Educating children about internet safety should be an ongoing habit, not a one-time conversation. Parents should consider making digital safety a priority by incorporating discussions about online behavior into daily life. Just as they teach kids about real-world dangers like looking both ways before crossing the street, parents should also reinforce safe online habits regularly. Creating an open, judgment-free space for children to ask questions and share experiences helps build trust and encourages them to seek guidance when needed.

For Young Children (Ages 5-10)

- **Supervise online activity.** Keep devices in shared spaces and use parental controls to filter content.
- **Teach basic privacy rules.** Explain why they should never share their full name, address, or school information online.
- **Encourage open communication.** Let them know they can always come to you if they see something confusing or scary.
- **Use child-friendly websites.** Guide them to safe, educational, and age-appropriate content.
- **Introduce the concept of “digital strangers.”** Explain that just like in real life, they should not talk to or trust people they do not know online.

For Tweens & Teens (Ages 11-18)

- **Discuss social media usage.** Talk about privacy settings, the risks of oversharing, and how to handle online interactions responsibly.
- **Explain digital footprints.** Teach them that what they post online stays online and can affect their future, even if they delete it.
- **Warn about online scams.** Help them recognize phishing emails, fake profiles, and suspicious links.
- **Encourage critical thinking.** Teach them how to identify misinformation and avoid online manipulation.

Online Gaming Safety

Online gaming is a popular activity among children and teens, offering entertainment, social interaction, and skill building. Parents should take steps to ensure gaming remains a safe and positive experience.

- **Set up parental controls.** Use built-in safety features to limit interactions with strangers, in-game purchases, and screen time.
- **Talk about online chat risks.** Discuss who they are communicating with and encourage them to avoid sharing personal information.
- **Teach responsible spending.** Warn about in-game purchases, loot boxes, and scams that encourage spending real money.
- **Enable camera controls.** Teach children how to control their device's camera settings, such as turning off the camera or blocking specific users.

Social Media Safety

Social media platforms are a major part of many children's and teens' online lives, allowing them to connect with friends, share experiences, and express themselves. However, these platforms also pose risks such as privacy breaches. Parents should guide their children to use social media responsibly.

- **Set age-appropriate limits.** Many platforms have age restrictions (often 13+). Parents should ensure children are ready for the responsibilities that come with social media.

- **Adjust privacy settings.** Help children set their profiles to private and limit who can see their posts.
- **Discuss what is safe to share.** Teach children not to share personal details or locations.
- **Limit screen time.** Help children balance social media with offline activities and real-world interactions.
- **Recognize scammers and fake money-making opportunities.** Encourage children to identify scammers and fake money-making opportunities and advise them to talk to a trusted adult if they feel suspicious or unsafe.
- **Stay involved.** Talk to children about their social media experience, the platforms they use, and what type of content they view and share.

Internet Safety

The internet offers many opportunities for learning, creativity, and socializing, but it also comes with risks that children may not fully understand. Teaching kids simple safety practices can help them navigate the digital world responsibly and avoid potential dangers. The following tips provide essential guidelines to help children stay safe online.

- **Use strong passwords.** Encourage children to create unique passwords for each account, and never share them with anyone except parents/guardians.
- **Keep personal information private.** Teach kids not to share their full name, address, phone number, Social Security number, or financial information.
- **Enable parental controls.** Use built-in security settings on devices and apps to limit access to inappropriate content.
- **Think before clicking.** Educate kids about how suspicious links and downloads can lead to online scams.

By staying informed and engaged, parents can help ensure that children use the internet safely while taking advantage of its many benefits.

COPPA

As a parent, you have control of the personal information companies collect online from your children under the age of 13. The Children's Online Privacy Protection Act gives you tools to do that.

The COPPA Rule was put in place to protect children's personal information on websites and online services – including apps – that are directed to children under the age of 13. The rule also applies to a general audience site that knowingly collects personal information from children that age. COPPA requires those sites and services to notify parents directly and get their approval before they collect, use, or disclose a child's personal information.

The Federal Trade Commission enforces COPPA, 15 U.S.C. §§ 6501-6506. If a site or service is covered by COPPA, it must obtain your consent before collecting personal information from your child, and it has to honor your choices about how that information is used.

How does COPPA work?

COPPA works like this: Your child wants to use features on a site or download an app that collects their personal information. Before they can, you should get a plain language notice about what information the site will collect, how it will use it, and how you can provide your consent.

The notice should link to a privacy policy that is also plain to read – and in language that is easy to understand. The privacy policy must give the details about the kind of information the site collects, and what it might do with the information – say, if it plans to use the information to target advertising to a child or give or sell the information to other companies.

In addition, the policy should state that those other companies have agreed to keep the information safe and confidential, and how to contact someone who can answer your questions. The notice also should have directions on how to give your consent. Sites and services have some flexibility in how to do that. Some may ask you to send back a permission letter. Others may have a toll-free number you may call. If you agree to let the site or service collect personal information from your child, they have a legal obligation to keep it secure.

What are my choices?

The first choice is whether you are comfortable with the site's information practices. Start by reading how the company plans to use your child's information.

Then, it is about how much consent you want to give. You might give the company permission to collect your child's personal information, but not allow it to share that information with others. Once you give a site or service permission to collect personal information from your child, you are still in control.

As the parent, you have the right to review the information collected about your child. If you ask to see the information, keep in mind website operators need to verify you are the parent before providing you access. You also have the right to retract your consent at any time, and to have any information collected about your child deleted.

For more information or to file a complaint, visit our website or contact:

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