Digital Safety: Protecting Your Child Online

Protecting Your Child Online

The process of keeping your child safe online may seem hard. Knowing the risks and finding ways to lower those risks will help. There are steps you can take to help keep your child safe. These include:

- Learn the privacy, access, and messaging policies of the apps, websites, social media platforms, and gaming sites that your child uses. Some apps and websites may have hidden features that might be a threat to the safety of your child. These can include chat rooms and location tracking. It is important to know what programs your child uses and how they use them.

- Set up parental controls or restrictions on the programs used by your child. These controls can help stop your child from getting on certain websites. They can also monitor messaging. For example, it is possible to password **protect the Appstore on your child'**s device. Doing this can make sure that they have only downloaded approved apps to their device. Actions such as this can help protect your child from unwanted solicitation or other harmful situations.

- Communicate openly with your child about the dangers and possible harm on the internet. Talk about what type of information should be kept private and appropriate communication with others. Also talk about your **rules for technology usage. If you plan on monitoring your child's technology use, explain why**. Answer any questions they may have openly and honestly. Encourage your child to trust their instincts. Ask them to tell you if something online makes them feel uncomfortable or threatened. Below, you will find more recommendations for talking with your child about digital safety at different ages.

Online Resources to Better Understand Internet Safety

The internet is changing all the time. Websites that are popular among children for online gaming and socializing evolve quickly. Because of this, it can be hard to understand the chances for harm that may exist in the platforms your child uses regularly. However, there are resources to help parents and caregivers understand which websites are appropriate for children and the dangers that may exist within these websites. Some of these resources include:

- A Wired Family- This resource provides education to parents and caregivers about ways to keep children safe online. Stay informed about digital safety and the rapidly changing world of technology at www.awiredfamily.org

- Common Sense Media – This resource provides age recommendations, reviews, and ratings for websites, apps, movies, books, and more. These reviews can help you understand what websites and materials may be inappropriate for your child based upon their age. Learn more at www.commonsensemedia.org.

- Net Smartz Kids – This is a program that offers age-appropriate resources to help teach children how to be safer online. Their resources include videos, games, downloadable activities, and presentations. Learn more at www.netsmartzkids.org.

- Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force Program – This is a website that has many internet resources to help parents and caregivers stay up to date about the dangers facing children. Learn more at www.icactaskforce.org.

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Age-Appropriate Communication and Monitoring*

Below are recommendations for how to practice effective communication with your child as they grow.

Younger Children (0-8 years)	• Younger children should have direct supervision while using computers, smart phones, and tablets. • **Do not include children's personal information on online profiles. Use a parent or guardian's name and email when registering for games and** services. Talk with your child about what information is private and should not be shared. • Tell your child to come to you if anything is said online that makes them feel uncomfortable.
Pre-teens (9-12 years)	• Set reasonable time limits on computer, smartphone, and device use. If possible, limit use to common areas of the house where parents or caregivers are present. • Set privacy settings to the highest levels. Monitor texts, messages, and other digital communication. Explain why this is needed for protection. • Talk to your child about the apps, games, and websites they use and how they use them to communicate. • Talk to your children about topics like sexting and cyberbullying. Tell children if they hear of this happening or if anyone sends them an inappropriate communication - no matter who - to tell you immediately
Teens (13+ years)	• Talk to your teens about the dangers of communication sent digitally, including on social media and blogs. Explain that apps (like Snapchat) that claim to delete images and messages still keep them. Explain that private messages and comments can easily be shared. • Every now and then monitor device use, including emails, photos, messaging, and app use. Make sure teens understand this is not to punish, but to protect. • Let your teens know to come to you if they have questions about a communication, or if anyone makes them feel uncomfortable.

*Table a**dapted from "Talking to Children About Digital Safety."** *Darkness to Light.*

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