

Kids Online Safety

Keeping up with kids is difficult. Keeping up with changing technology that affects kids can also be difficult without a plan - but don't feel overwhelmed. Providing important guidance on online safety and privacy begins with talking about it and encouraging safe and smart decisions about online activity. **Just as you help them understand stranger danger, teach them online safety, too.**

Risks

The online world has many cyber risks and concerning activities for kids and parents to recognize. The following are some of the cyber risks:

- **Cyberbullying** is bullying that happens online. It can happen in an email, a text message, an app, an online game, or on a social networking site.
- **Phishing/Identity Theft** is when a scam artist sends text, email, or pop-up messages in a browser to get people to share their personal information. They can then use that information to commit identity theft.
- **Sexting** is the sending or forwarding of sexually explicit photos, videos, or messages from a mobile phone. In addition to risking their reputations, friendships, and safety, this could be illegal activity.
- **Social Networking** can help kids connect with family and friends, but it can invite danger if not used appropriately. Sharing too much information, posting pictures, videos, or words can damage reputation, hurt someone else, or invite a predator to contact the user. Once something is online, it may not easily be removed. Oversharing may be leveraged by online criminals to facilitate identity theft.

Misconceptions About Lowering Your Child's Risk

Three main misconceptions to child online safety come down to **trust, online safety methods, and thinking kids know more than parents about technology.**

Trust

You may be able to trust your kids, but you can't trust the Internet. Online predators are real and dangerous. They are sneaky and can take advantage of the fact that a kid's brain does not fully form until their 20s. Scammers are lurking around every corner trying to get any information that may lead them to a payoff and malware hides behind all sorts of links, including advertisements that seem harmless. Teach your kids how to make the right choices.

Online Safety Methods

Have open and direct conversations with kids about online security. Begin as soon as they start using computers or smartphones. Explain that they should never reveal their names or address, any sensitive data or otherwise without asking permission from a parent first. Learn the sites they like to visit and what they are all about. Make their social networks your hangout, too, and create a "village" to help keep an eye on them. No matter how trustworthy they are, you still need to monitor the roads they go down. It's just like making them clean their rooms: if you aren't there to monitor the activity, it probably won't be done the correct way.

Keep up with Technology

Take the time to learn new technologies that are all the rage. Don't assume that you can't figure it out. However, if you truly cannot, ask for help. This includes learning how to use their mobile devices.



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