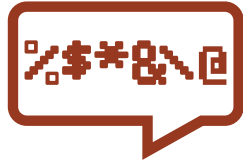


We are living in a progressively online society, where the internet impacts almost every part of our daily lives. It's important to teach your child about the internet, how to use it, and especially, how to stay safe online. Use this guide for some helpful insights on teaching your children the basics of using the internet in a safe and healthy way.

Potential Threats



Malicious Software



Cyberbullying



Stolen Information



Harmful Content

Use parental controls.

Did you know that your computer and already have parental controls built-in? On your Windows PC you can go to "Settings" and then click on "Family Options." From there you can click "View Family Settings" which will open your browser to Microsoft's Family Safety page. This page will allow you to sign up and walk through all the options available. This program will allow you to remotely monitor your child's screentime, see what programs they are running, and set up content blocks to make sure those programs are age appropriate.

Most internet browsers have built in parental controls as well! You can find them by going to your browser settings and navigating to the "privacy," "safety," or "security" settings. Each browser will have different settings, but they share a lot of the same features*.

Some features to particularly look for:

Safe Browsing - To customize your level of protection from dangerous sites and set other security settings.

Site Settings - To choose what sites have permissions for your computer and to block ads and pop-ups. You can also individually block websites.

You can also set up SafeSearch on Google to filter out results that might contain harmful or sensitive content. To do this, go to the Google homepage (google.com), select "Settings," and then "Search Settings." Check "Turn on SafeSearch." Other search engines such as Bing or DuckDuckGo have similar settings.

*From our testing, each browser (Chrome, Firefox, Edge, Opera, etc.) explains what their various control options do. If you need more help there are links available in the help sections of the respective browsers' settings.

Get on their level.

Knowing what kind of content your child is interacting with, or wanting to interact with, is a great way to make staying safe online easier. **Try to familiarize yourself with sites they are using or might want to use.** This will help you understand what they are doing online. It is also a good idea to create their accounts for the sites and apps they use so you can have their password if needed. Creating your own account, having your child add you as a friend, and actively using the same sites they do will show your child that you relate to their online activity.

Utilizing online tools such as Common Sense Media (commonsensemedia.org) will allow you to search sites, games, apps, movies, TV shows, books, and more to determine if they are appropriate for your child. **Common Sense Media does a great job of breaking down what the above are, how they are used, and what sort of things your child might encounter.** You can also see what other caregivers and experts are saying!

Spend time with your child online. Explore websites, social media, and play games with them! Let your child observe your online interactions and tell them about sites they might enjoy that are appropriate for them. If you make being online an activity that you share, you will be better able to monitor what they do and set good examples for them to follow and replicate.

Encourage your child to ask permission before visiting a new website. While it is possible to check browsing history, this can be easily circumvented by private browsing. To check browsing history, click on the "History" option in your browser, usually found in the menu.

Have a conversation.

Talk with your child about what risk they may find online and encourage them to let you know if they experience something. This could be as mild as seeing something they do not understand or need help with, or as serious as seeing something that makes them feel upset, uncomfortable, or scared. Let them know they can communicate these things to you without fear of punishment or anger.

Teach your child how to report inappropriate content. Most platforms include an option to report objectionable content; consult the platform's help articles and videos if needed. Familiarize yourself with these features and relay that information to your child. This can also serve as a time to reinforce to your child what is considered harmful or sensitive content.

Speak to your child about what is and what is not appropriate for them to do online. Set fair rules and restrictions in place that align with your family's values. Explain that what they put online is forever and for the world to see, and not to post things that may contain sensitive information like their name, age, and location. **Teach your child that not everyone online is telling the truth and to be wary of strangers, just like they would be in real life.**

Be on the lookout for signs of distress in your child. If your child is experiencing bullying online, they might not show the traditional signs of bullying. Notice if they are acting withdrawn, anxious, or secretive when it comes to interacting online. These signs may also point to your child coming across upsetting content. If this is the case, talk with them about what they saw and try to provide context.

Establish healthy habits.

We can talk all day long about tips to keep your child safe online, but it is also very important to talk about making sure your child is interacting with the internet in healthy ways. **Try these tips and tricks to establish a healthy relationship between your child and the world wide web.**

- Create a "family technology agreement" with your child about healthy device use.
- Have a "device free zone" in your home to keep your child's screentime in check.
- Limit your child to blocks of time for device or internet use to keep usage in balance with other aspects of life including tasks to be done.
- If your child needs to spend an extended amount of time in front of a computer, set a timer to remind them to stretch and stand periodically and also rest their eyes.
- Explain to your child that while the internet can be a fascinating place, first-hand experience in the real world is also very important.