



Internet Safety

Tips for Keeping Children and Youth Safe Online*

The Internet offers great possibilities for children and youth to learn and experience things they may not have the opportunity to in their personal environments. The interactive components of online games, websites, apps or social networking sites make them appealing and popular with children and youth. The Internet can also be a door that opens up to dangers. These dangers can be minimized when parents, children and youth are aware and understand the risks of the online world. The online world is far reaching and largely uncensored. Parents need to know what their children are facing as they explore social media.

As a Parent

- Learn about the features of your computer's operating system that set parental controls. Create the expectation that you will be monitoring your child's online and Smartphone activities.
- Be involved, show interest in the online games your child plays. If possible, play the games with younger children.
- Assist children with the creation of their online profiles. They should not contain identifying characteristics about them or their hobbies (e.g. shygirl, bookworm, etc.). When signing up for online games, provide a family or parental email account rather than a child's email address.
- Learn the features of a game that allow users to restrict/block certain players' access. Review the social networking sites and apps your child is accessing to ensure s/he is using appropriate privacy settings.
- Monitor the game apps children download onto Wi-Fi capable devices. Many are free and can be easily downloaded without parental consent.
- Explore the online games children play with to determine if they are age-appropriate. Is the game moderated? Does it contain sexually explicit or violent material?
- Be aware instant messaging programs, as well as chat and social networking sites are widely available on Smartphones.
- Monitor the use of webcams and posting or exchanging of pictures or videos online.
- Do not allow children to communicate in chat rooms that are not moderated. Know the chat rooms your child visits. Be aware of conversations your child is having in chat rooms.
- Set a time every evening in which all technology, including Smartphones, are shut off in the house. Also establish guidelines around texting and gaming.

Connecting with your Child

- Communicate openly with children, talk about what they like to do online, encourage them to share their feelings with you.
- Explain there is a lot of good information on the Internet, there is also inappropriate information and material.
- Review what information is safe to share online. Explain the risks of personal information being misused if shared online. Ensure your child has permission before chatting with other online gamers, or on social networking sites and instant messaging
- Talk with your child/adolescent about online "friends", and what that means. Discuss the difference between healthy and unhealthy online relationships. Reinforce not everyone online is as they appear. Discuss how to terminate or remove themselves from uncomfortable situations.
- Describe what appropriate and inappropriate online behaviour is in the offline world. Create guidelines for online activities. Explain that it is against the law to threaten someone, and they should tell a safe adult if they are threatened on or offline.
- Explain the importance of establishing and respecting personal boundaries when using technology. The information shared should be protected and handled with respect. Emphasize this continues to apply after a relationship has come to an end.
- Express the importance of getting help, and not responding to harassing, harmful, or unsolicited calls or messages. If received; save these types of messages. If harassing calls/messages continue report them to the appropriate school and/or local police department.

* Adapted from resources found at www.cybertip.ca operated by the Canadian Centre for Child Protection