



# INTERNET SAFETY FOR CHILDREN – TEN ONLINE SAFETY TIPS FOR PARENTS



It's easy to protect your child from dangers you can see. What about the dangers you can't see? The internet is an amazing tool that makes daily life easier and connects us with friends and family around the world but a child is just as vulnerable online as in real life. Sitting in front of a computer does not ensure safety. With a little effort, you can keep those unseen dangers away from your children.

**1 Build a relationship based on communication with your children.** Ask them about what they like about the computer and the internet. Encourage them to talk to you about discoveries and the



things they learned. When your child is talking to you about their experiences online, it's easier to discover if anything or anyone they've interacted with seems unsafe. It's also a wonderful foundation for building trust with your child. They'll know that they can talk to you if anything makes them uncomfortable.

**2 Keep the computer for family use in common family areas.** It may be an exciting prospect for a child to have their own computer in their room but late night browsing and online activity is more difficult to monitor. Teach and enforce the basics of online safety and keep the prospect of their very own computer as a reward.

**3 If your kids participate on websites, chat functions, online games, or anything else that requires registration and a user name, help them create one.** Show them how to create something memorable without using their name or birthdate. Encourage them to use the same login information for all their accounts and teach them about keeping passwords private. This is a good habit for them to develop and will make it easier for you to check on any account in case you suspect any foul play.

**4 Personal information is sometimes necessary for making purchases online but firmly enforce that only adults can give out personal information on the internet.** Your child should not give out addresses, their name, birthdate, phone numbers or any details about their school, where they like to play, names of friends or relatives.

**5 Sitting in front of a computer can create the sense of operating inside a technological "bubble" where our words and actions don't affect anyone.** Help your child to understand that they're still talking to and interacting with people. They may not know them but it's still important to be polite and use their manners. The rules of right and wrong apply on the internet as well as in life.

**6 Respect is crucial for healthy use of the internet.** With most online interaction taking place through typing, show your children how to write respectfully and with courtesy. It's a difficult skill to master and many adults fail to learn these basics.

**7 File sharing can give out private information and possibly infect your computer with a virus or worm and should not be allowed.** Explain to your child why it's wrong to download or share any copyrighted material. It's stealing someone else's creative property. If your child is still too young to understand copyright, talk about computer viruses and how downloading files can make the computer "sick" if you're not careful.



**8 Help your child to understand that an online friend may not be a good person to meet in person.** People aren't always what they say they are. Meeting internet friends is something only adults should do and only with certain precautions. Under no circumstances should a child meet someone they've met online.

**9 It's easy to be misled with all the information and people on the internet.** If your child is unsure about anyone or anything, tell them that they can talk to you. Communication is key to a child's online safety and cannot be enforced enough.

**10 Make good use of parental controls with Internet software and programs.** Once set in place, they can monitor where your child goes online, who they're talking to and what they're looking at. Set restrictions and block websites or select just a few websites for your child to visit.

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