



You're a Teenager Now! Read and Learn More About Internet Safety

You've probably heard it a hundred if not a thousand times: "Be careful when you're on the internet!" How do you show your parents and the other adults in your life that you're almost an adult? Well, it's a matter of earning their trust and respect. These ten tips will help you master online etiquette.



1 Trust your parents' or other trusted adult's judgement. It's hard to listen to adults tell you what to do as you get older and make more of your own decisions. While they might not know a lot about modern technology, they know a lot about people and how they think. The internet is technology powered by the people that use it. Talk to your parents or another adult you trust about what you're doing online. They can help you learn how to know if someone or a website is legit or trying to scam you.

2 Do you have a desktop of your own in your room or a laptop to use? Depending on your parents and what kind of schoolwork you have, you might be fortunate enough to have your own computer. Show your parents that you can be trusted with the computer. It may be tempting to talk to people in chat rooms or look at suggestive websites but it's never worth the trouble you might get into. You wouldn't walk around at night in a dangerous neighborhood so why go looking for trouble on the internet?

3 When setting up user accounts on websites, chat functions, online games and other programs, be sure to choose login names and passwords that don't reveal any personal information. Don't use any part of your name, birthdate, phone number or any other sensitive data. Keep your password private and only share with your parents, a trusted adult or law enforcement. Guard your information and online accounts.

4 Shopping online is like window shopping heaven! You can look at all of your favorite stores whenever you want. Buying things online has gotten much better with many sites using secure checkout systems but it's still important to talk to your parents or guardian before making any purchases.



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. Be sure to remember that you're interacting with people who think and feel just like you do. Right and wrong still applies on the internet. Don't participate in anything that could harm someone else.

6 Respect: the more you give, the more you get. Remembering your manners like saying "Please" and "Thank you" may seem obvious but it's amazing how many people forget to be polite when they're online. Practice writing respectfully with your friends and you'll be ahead of everyone else when it's time to go to college and start a career, places where written courtesy is an everyday necessity.

7 Downloading programs and files can give out private information and possibly infect your computer with a virus or worm. It's also stealing someone else's work. It's not a good idea to download movies or music or share your computer's files with anyone over a public network. Purchase music and movies only through authorized sites like Napster or iTunes. Otherwise, you never know what could happen.

8 Your online friends may seem like your closest buddies, but it's best to be cautious if the topic of meeting in real life ever comes up. Even if you feel like you know them, talking to people online doesn't necessarily mean that they are who they say they are. Never give out an address or phone number to anyone and tell an adult if someone asks to meet outside of your online interactions. It's best to keep your online buddies in the virtual world. Even adults need to use extreme caution when meeting their internet buddies.



9 There's so much information and so many people on the internet that it's easy to get confused and let your judgment be clouded. Be careful. If any website or person makes you feel uncomfortable, step away from your computer and go talk to your parents or guardian.

10 The adults in your life may or may not use parental controls when you use the internet. Whether they do or do not, it's important to remember that they're looking out for your safety. It's annoying but the sites they've blocked are not something that you need to be looking at 99% of the time. If you feel like your parents or guardian has made a mistake about blocking a website, talk to them. Give them your reasons for wanting to use the site. See what they say. If they still are unwilling, ask them if they'll sit down with you and watch you use or look at the site. If it's a good website and you're respectful in asking, you will probably unblock the site for you to use. Show the adults in your life that you can be trusted to be responsible



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