Online Safety Your family's guide to Internet safety

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Introduction

This booklet is designed to explain to parents what children need to know about staying safe in an online environment. It provides advice about how to protect your family—allowing them to use the internet and mobile devices safely and securely while having as much fun as possible.

Parents should be aware that children can now access the internet whenever they want and wherever they are on a range of electronic devices. As well as your home PC, your child may be using gaming devices (e.g. Nintendo DSi), laptops, smartphones, media players (iPod touch), tablets (iPad). Each device needs to have separate parental controls set up and this guide will give you more information about how to do this.

Useful websites

Www.childnet.com—Childnet International's website offers internet safety advice and links for young people, parents, teachers etc.

https://www.internetmatters.org/ - Helping parents get to grips with what they might come across on the internet.

Www.thinkuknow.co.uk—The CEOP centre's online safety site provides advice and tips to adults and children of all ages.

Www.childline.org.uk—Help and advice on a whole range of issues including cyberbullying and mobile and internet safety.

Online safety—the basics

Safe browsing

Make sure your browser is using the built-in security. For example, Google chrome offers safe searching. These are under "safesearch", found in "settings, search settings" on the main google page. This allows you to restrict explicit sites and content appearing in search results.

Protect your password

How many people would be able to guess your password? You need to make sure that your child's password for email, phones and even social networking sites is secure.

It is a good idea to have the password too so you can see who is communicating with your child and if there is any trouble you will have access.

Secure your wireless network

Home Wi-Fi can create security problems but there are simple steps to follow to ensure that they are secured from unknown intruders who might use it. If you have wifi at home; make sure you do everything possible to make it secure:

- Reset the router password so it isn't easy to guess

- Enable wireless encryption to prevent a stranger from spotting your network

- Restrict the access your system and make sure your Internet security software is kept up-to-date.

Online safety—the basics

Parental controls software

Parental controls allow you to chose which sites your child is able to visit online, and to ensure that they don't view inappropriate subject matter.

Parental controls differ depending on the application offering the feature. Usually there are varying levels so you can customise the program according to the child being protected.

Remember, no software provides perfect protection.

You will need to use a combination of these tools and rules to help protect your child—regardless of their age. The Internet is a rich resource, to defeats the object to lock it down completely. It is important to talk regularly to your child about their online activity to make sure that their beliefs, morals and values are being upheld when they are online, in whatever situation..

Social networking sites

Sites such as Snapchat, Twitter and Facebook are popular with children. They do have security settings that you can find in the help section of each site. YouTube is another popular site that has a setting called 'safety mode' to filter out inappropriate content but please note this is not 100% accurate. Safety mode can be difficult to find. To turn safety mode, log in to your YouTube account, scroll to the bottom of the page and click on 'Safety: Off' then click 'On' option and then 'Save'.

Whatever your child's age ask them about which sites are popular with them and their friends. Ask them which ones they've joined and have them teach you. Be casual about this conversation, try not to make them feel like they are being interrogated!

Personal safety

- Talk about protecting private information and not sharing passwords with friends

- Remind your children never to give out personal information

- Tell them never to chat, type messages or share information with anyone on these sites unless you are with them.

- Remind them about stranger danger and not meeting anyone that they only know from online conversations

- Be sure your child knows it's okay to close a site if they see something they don't like, is surprising or disturbing.

- Encourage them to tell you if they are worried about anything or come across something unusual.

- Discuss the risks of the Internet and devices e.g. photos, webcams, personal information and videos

- Encourage your children to speak to you if anything upsets them online. You can report online abuse to the police at CEOP (https://ceop.police.uk/)

Pre-school and Primary school children using the Internet

Young children are entertained by the Internet and quickly learn from their peers about new sites.

Ideally, you should become involved in a child's online activities at an early age in the same way that you are with their homework so it is easier to monitor their use.

Use of the computer:

- As far as possible, make sure the computer your child uses is within your view and set up in a family room.

- Monitor your child's computer use and sit with them

- Take an active interest in what your child is doing online

- Stick to the fun and positive sides of the internet.

- Limit approved websites and hours spent online

- Consider bookmarking a range of sites which you are happy for them to view. Show them how to access these too.

Safe browsing

- Make sure your browser is set to offer built in security and safety features.

- Turn on all the filtering and security features in your computer's search engine to prevent children arriving at an inappropriate site.

- Parental control software can help you by limiting the sites your child can access, even when you aren't around. The controls can limit any information you don't want your child sharing, whether it's their name, age, phone number or any other private information.

Mobile phones

Your child may have their own mobile phone, smartphone or other device. In addition to the risks browsing the Internet brings there are more specific issues with images as well as general tips and hints.

Use of the device

- Set rules about where, when and for how long they can use their mobile device.

- Remind them to be careful about walking, running, crossing roads with the device

- Make sure your child knows about the cost of any apps, ringtones etc. that they purchase. You don't want a nasty surprise when you get a bill

- Be aware where your device is at all times—never leave it unattended or visible in a bag or pocket.

- Advise them to put a code on the phone and lock it when they aren't using it.

- Check what parental controls you can have on the device

Digital photos

Tell your child:

- To ask permission before taking photos of other people and posting online.

- Not to make private photo albums public

- If you do post photos online, make visitors use a password to access photos.

- To back up photos with software because otherwise previous memories can be lost

- To only use online photo services that provide security

- information