

Digital Safety & Best Practices for Children

Tips for parents on kids' internet safety:

1. **Keep the computer in a common area of your home** — like your living room or kitchen. Have designated areas to use tablets and cell phones. This can help you monitor what sites your child is visiting. Plus, they may be less tempted to visit sites or perform activities they're not allowed to if you're nearby. Check the Google/browsing history.
2. **Allow your child to access the internet for a limited, set time** each day. Homework might be an exception. Social media sites can be a time suck, and you don't want your child spending all of their free time online.
3. **If your child wants to join a social media site, request that you have access to their account credentials.** This can help you check for undesirable activities, such as adding suspicious friends, receiving questionable messages, or posting unkind content.
4. **Stick with age-appropriate sites.** Most social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have an age minimum of 13 years. Some sites have additional security settings for minors. Facebook automatically imposes stricter privacy settings for kids, so be sure your child is using the correct birth year upon signup. Twitter provides the option for an account to be private, the user approves all follow requests.
5. **Review the privacy settings** on your child's profile.
6. **Never send pictures or give personal information** such as: address, age, school, even town
7. **Older teens** may think giving you full access to their account is too invasive. Consider a compromise. Require them to add you as a friend so you can monitor their activities via your own account
8. **Older kids need some privacy.** Have the child write down all his/her passwords and put them in an envelope with the understanding you will not use the passwords unless necessary. You keep the envelope.
9. **Know what a finsta** (fake social media accounts, kids have a public account they show you and a finsta for friends) is and ask your kids about their friends.
10. **Set family rules** around phone use: not at the table, phone charger stays in the parent's bedroom and is plugged in each night at a set time, returned to the child in the morning,

Considerations with friending your child on social media. What do your personal social media sites look like? Do you want your children seeing older posts? As your children and their friends are older and ask to friend you, is that appropriate? What example have you set? Have you documented our kids lives on social media? Can you see how they want to document what they are doing?

Conversations to have with your children:

Have discussions from a young age. Children are using the internet from an early age at home and in school. Help them learn how to be online in a safe and positive way. Think of these talks as if you were talking to your child about their responsibilities regarding the family pet, or about something they watched on TV. They are a normal part of life.

Start talking about the basics early: *What do you want to do online? Why do you want to do it? Do you know what apps or sites you want to use to accomplish that?* Share your own experiences of why they use social media. Share both examples of good and bad things that happened while you were online.

Talk about personal information. "the Internet is forever" once online, something can be found forever. Deleted post can be restored, posts can be screenshotted and shared. Online strangers are still strangers. Don't share too much personal information, especially if it makes them uncomfortable.

Set boundaries, but be realistic. Agree upon basic rules about what kids can do online and for how long. Set timers and screen time limits for apps or devices. Use parental controls to limit access to harmful or inappropriate content online. The goal is kids will learn to manage and make good decisions for themselves. Like teaching your child to cross the road: you hold their hand when they're young, but as they grow older they need to learn how to check for traffic, assess risk, and stay safe on their own.

Parents must "walk the walk" and demonstrate good habits. Lead by example. Establish technology-free zones in the home that are focused on family time; establish technology-free hours when no one uses the phone, including mom and dad; and balance your digital life with your offline life. Spending time cooking, volunteering, enjoying hobbies, and other "real world" experiences are what will ultimately help children learn how to navigate life offline as well as online.

Keep the dialogue open - ask if they've seen anything online that they don't understand or are uncomfortable with. Stay calm; do not overreact. Encourage kids to talk about what they're feeling and ask questions, instead of keeping it to themselves.

Aps to Monitor Phone Activity:

There are a lot out there and most require a monthly fee so do some homework up front. Know what your goals are, what you want to monitor.

Considerations:

1. **Geotracking**
2. **Record sms/text messages**
3. **Record call log:** kids rarely talk on the phone/call but facetime can be a way around sms/text
4. **Record photos**
5. Alerts when new aps are downloaded
6. **Ap tracking: tinder, snapchat, Instagram, whatsapp**
7. **Battery power**
8. Can it work with a desktop/ipads/other devices as well
9. How many devices will it work for
10. Web tracking/filtering
11. Screen time

- Know what is available on your phone right now: find my phone, battery level, screen time
- Older kids are most likely not on facebook or are only there for a specific reason, know what other aps are out there and what aps your kids and their friends are using. Those aps change often.
- Research how to disable/break the monitoring aps. Kids know how
- Gaming: kids meet when playing on-line games. Get interested in the games your kids are playing
- Know the difference between spyware aps and monitoring aps. Spyware is not detectable/known by the user. These have been used in abusive situations. Your kids should know what is being monitored and why you think it is necessary, honesty up front is a good policy.
- Do not allow google history to be erased.
- Be the bad guy. Give your kids an out and let them blame you for social media limits.
- Know your emojis, an eggplant is not what you think it is. You can google what emojis mean.
- Know your punctuation. If you put a period at the end of a text, kids think you are angry; the standard is no period. You can also google this to stay current.
- <https://www.internetmatters.org/> This is a great website with tons of resources!