Parenting online

You don't need to be a technology expert to help keep your children safe online. The parenting skills for online safety are the same as they are in the physical world. While children might seem to have good technical knowledge, their online behaviour still requires parental monitoring and guidance. Computer filters and e-security software are good basic protective measures to have in your home. Education and communication are also important in helping to keep your child safe online. Knowing that children can make sound decisions to manage risks online is particularly important when they use the internet outside your home - and you're not able to monitor their activities. Exploring the internet with your child and talking about websites, games and activities is a good way to start conversations with them. If you aren't familiar with the internet, having your child guide you can be a great learning opportunity for both of you. Even with teens, asking them to talk you through the sites they use can be helpful to understand what they do and the risks involved. You can find the information you need to understand the risks and how to manage them with your child on this website. Click the links for some age appropriate safety tips and more information.

Young children

For young children, general internet safety tips are a good starting point to help them to become safe and responsible internet users.

- At this age children's internet use should be closely monitored. To help with this try to keep the computer in a shared or visible place in the home.
- Be aware of how your child uses the internet and explore it with them. Bookmark a list of favourites you are comfortable with your child visiting and teach them how to access this list.
- Teach your child that there are ways they can deal with material that worries or frightens them, they should immediately tell a trusted adult if they feel uncomfortable about something they have found on the internet or received in an email. Teach them how to close a web page or turn off a monitor if they are worried.
- Establish rules around the types of content or information they should report to an adult. For example, one rule may be 'tell Mum or Dad about any swearing or bad words you find'.
- Talk to your child about personal information and why it is special. This sort of information can be used to identify or locate where they live, go to school or activities in which they are involved.
- Set rules, make sure your child knows what information they can share or post online and which websites they can visit. Telling a trusted adult before posting any personal information online, including for competition entry is a useful rule.
- Help your child understand that what they say and do online is important. Encourage your child to use the same manners, communicate with others in the same way and report others who aren't being nice, just as they would in the offline world.
- Advise your child not to respond to any negative messages and to report any negative messages they receive to you or another trusted adult.
- Consider using filters, labels and safe zones to help manage your child's online access.
- Install and update anti-virus and other e-security software to restrict unauthorised access to data on the home computer and protect that data from corruption. Ensure that security features including a firewall are turned on, set to automatic scan and updated regularly to protect against the latest risks.
- If your child shows changes in behaviour or mood that are concerning explore your concerns with them and if necessary seek professional support, including support through the Cybersmart Online Helpline at www.cybersmart.gov.au/report.aspx. The Cybersmart Online Helpline provides free, confidential online counselling for children and young people. Your child's school may also be able to provide guidance and support.

More Information

The Cybersmart program provides a range of cybersafety materials for parents and their children. For more information, resources, advice and tips, visit the Cybersmart website. Encourage your children and teens to take a look around the website. If you have young children, you may like to explore it together to help them understand how to protect themselves against online risks and make the most of their experiences online.

Older children

The following general internet safety tips will help to guide older children in their development of safe and responsible online behaviour.

- At this age children's internet use should be closely monitored. To help with this try to keep the computer in a shared or visible place in the home.
- Be aware of how your child uses the internet and explore it with them. Bookmark a list of 'Favourites' you are comfortable with your child visiting and teach them how to access this list.
- Teach your child that there are ways they can deal with material that worries or frightens them, they should immediately tell a trusted adult if they feel uncomfortable about something they have found on the internet or received in an email. Teach them how to close a web page or turn off a monitor if they are worried.
- Establish rules around the types of content or information they should report to an adult. For example, one rule may be 'tell Mum or Dad about any swearing or bad words you find'.
- Talk to your child about personal information and why it is special. This sort of information can be used to identify or locate where they live, go to school or activities in which they are involved.
- If your child uses social networking websites help them sign up safely and use privacy settings to restrict their information to 'friends'. Help them decide who to agree to have as a 'friend'. You may also like to help them to develop an avatar or user name that doesn't identify them or provoke unwanted attention.
- Set rules, make sure your child knows what information they can share or post online and which websites they can visit. Telling a trusted adult before posting any personal information online, including for competition entry is a useful rule. They should also report to you before uploading images or video of themselves or others.
- Help your child understand that what they say and do online is important. Encourage your child to use the same manners, communicate with others in the same way and report others who aren't being nice, just as they would in the offline world.
• Advise your child not to respond to any negative messages and to report any negative messages they receive to you or another trusted adult.
• Talk to your child about cyberbullying before it happens. Work out strategies to address cyberbullying with which you are both comfortable so your child knows what to expect if they do report concerns to you.
• Consider using filters, labels and safe zones to help manage your child’s online access.
• Install and update anti-virus and other e-security software to restrict unauthorised access to data on the home computer and protect that data from corruption. Ensure that security features including a firewall are turned on, set to automatic scan and updated regularly to protect against the latest risks.
• If your child shows changes in behaviour or mood that are concerning explore your concerns with them and if necessary seek professional support, including support through the Cybersmart Online Helpline at www.cybersmart.gov.au/report.aspx. The Cybersmart Online Helpline provides free, confidential online counselling for children and young people. Your child’s school may also be able to provide guidance and support.

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