

Safer Internet Day: 10 tips for keeping your child safe online

Your family can still enjoy the internet and stay safe if you put these simple measures into place

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Are you worried about what your kids are being exposed to? Here are some tips to help them use the web safely

With computers, smartphones, tablets and games consoles in most family homes, our children have greater access to the internet than ever before.

What does that mean for their safety?

According to a recent poll conducted by BBC Learning , more than half of children in the UK (57%) have done something "risky" or anti-social online.

The study, which questioned 2,000 11-to-16-year-olds, found that nearly half (47%) said they had looked at something online that they thought their parents would not like them to see.

Meanwhile **14% admitted to sending pictures of themselves, or others**, that their parents would not like them to share.

The stats make worrying reading, but there *are* measures you can put in place to help your children stay safe when they're browsing the web.

Below is advice from the NSPCC on the best ways to make sure your child can still enjoy the internet without putting themselves at risk.

1. Don't ban it completely

"Preventing your children from using the internet or mobile phones won't keep them safe in the long run.

"It's important to have conversations that help your child understand how to stay safe and what to do if they ever feel scared or uncomfortable."

2. Have the conversation early and often

"Children and young people spend an average of 12 hours a week online and it becomes part of their routine early on in life. That's why it's important to start talking to your child about keeping safe online at an early age.

"It's easier to have conversations about online safety little and often, rather than trying to cover everything at once.

"As your children get older, and technology changes, make sure you keep talking about what they're doing online and how to stay safe."

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Online games can be fun - just make sure they are safe

3. Explore the web together

"Ask your child to show you their favourite things to do online, and show an interest in what they do - just like you would offline.

"This will give you a much better idea of what they're getting up to. And it gives you a way to support and encourage them while learning what they know."

4. Know who your child is talking to online

"Children don't think of people they've met online through social networking and online games as strangers, they're just online friends.

"So it's important to keep track of who your child's talking to. Ask them questions like:

- who do they know that has the most online friends?
- how can they know so many people?
- how do they choose who to become friends with online?

"Explain to your child that **it's easy for people to lie about themselves online**, like their age, for example, because you have never met them.

5. Ask your child to 'friend' a trusted adult on their social network

"You could become 'friends' with your child so you can see their profile and posts but your child may not want to 'friend' you, especially as they get older.

"Agree that your child can 'friend' a trusted adult, like an aunt or uncle, so they can let you know if they see anything worrying on your child's profile."

6. Set rules and agree boundaries

"It's useful to agree on some ground rules together. These will depend on your child's age and what you feel is right for them, but you might want to consider:

- the amount of time they can spend online
- when they can go online
- the websites they can visit or activities they can take part in
- sharing images and videos
- how to treat people online and not post anything they wouldn't say face-to-face.

7. Does your child play online games? Follow these points

- check the age rating before they play
- make sure you know who they're playing with

- talk to them about what information is OK to share with other players
- negotiate the amount of time they spend playing online games.

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Public places may have different Wi-Fi settings

8. Make sure the content they're viewing is age-appropriate

"You know your child best, so check that the websites, social networks and games they're using are suitable for them.

"Check that your browser's homepage (the page that you see when you open an internet window) is set to a website that you're happy for your child to see.

"Online games, movies and some websites will also have an age rating or minimum age to sign up. Age limits are there to keep children safe.

"You shouldn't feel pressured into letting your child sign up or use websites that you feel they are too young for."

9. Use parental controls to filter or restrict content

"You can set up parental controls to stop your child from seeing unsuitable or harmful content online:

- Internet Service Providers (ISPs), such as Virgin Media, TalkTalk, Sky or BT, provide controls to help you filter or restrict content.
- Laptops, phones, tablets, game consoles and other devices that connect to the internet have settings to activate parental controls.
- Software packages are available - some for free - that can help you filter, restrict or monitor what your child can see online.

"Remember that if your child goes online away from home, the same controls might not be in place at other people's houses or on public Wi-Fi.

"Agree with your child how they will use public Wi-Fi or let other parents know what your child is or isn't allowed to do online.

"As your child gets older you can change the level of control that you use. If your child asks you to remove the controls completely, and you are happy to do so, make sure you agree what behaviour is acceptable online first."

10. Check they know how to use privacy settings and reporting tools

"Check the privacy settings on any online accounts your child has, like Facebook or games, and remind them to keep their personal information private.

"And talk to your child about what to do if they see content or are contacted by someone that worries or upsets them. Make sure they know how to use tools to report abuse."