



Help Your Child Surf in Safety

The Internet has huge educational and social benefits. It is widely used in schools and colleges and your children will be expected to research their homework online.

Most children and young people also go online for entertainment and to socialize. The internet offers great opportunities but children and young people must understand that the risks to their privacy and safety are real.

What are the Dangers?

- Coming across disturbing information or images.
- Unwittingly opening or sharing files that can expose your family to internet thieves or virus software which damage, delete, or copy your data.
- Children can be the victims of online bullying when other users try to embarrass or intimidate them, spread rumours or images about them.
- Some sexual predators do pose as children in the hope to befriend vulnerable children; some will go as far as trying to persuade children to meet in person.

Talk with your children

It is important that you talk with your children about the possible dangers online. Maintain an ongoing dialogue and have regular conversations; make sure they can talk to you if they are worried or concerned.

Guidelines

It is also a good idea to learn about the technology they use and to follow the guidelines below:

1. **Place the computer where the whole family can use it** rather than out of sight in a bedroom.
2. **Use filtering software** available to screen out some inappropriate sites. Remember that filters aren't foolproof – sites and users can get round them – so do stay involved. All internet providers have parental controls available – enable them.
3. **Talk with your children** and agree what kinds of sites are safe. Check regularly to make sure that they stay within these agreed limits. You should always have a good idea of what your children are doing online and who they are talking to. **Keep communication open** and make sure your child knows **it's never too late to tell someone** if something is wrong or makes them feel uncomfortable.
4. **Tell your child to keep their identity private**; they should not share personal information, including name, address, phone numbers, name of school or messenger id to anyone over the net. **Use of an online nickname** can help here, as long as they don't pretend to be a completely different person. If they send or publish **pictures or videos** of themselves or their families and friends they need to be aware that these can be changed and shared by anyone.
5. If your child receives spam/junk emails & texts, remind them never to believe them, reply to them or use them. It is best to **delete files and attachments from unknown senders** which can contain viruses, or worse – inappropriate images or films. Visit www.childnet-int.org/sorted for advice on how to protect yourself online and install various protection software such as anti-virus anti-spy and pop up blockers.
6. Your children should not accept gifts (electronic or otherwise) from strangers, or arrange meetings with new friends unless you go with them. Help your child to

understand that **some people lie online** and that therefore it's better to keep online friends online. **They should never meet up with someone they've met online without first telling you or an adult they trust.**

7. Social networking sites are the main way to meet people online and can be lots of fun. But since they can be open to misuse, **make sure your children are as cautious of strangers online as they would be in the world outside.** Ensure privacy settings are changed to be **only my friends can see my information.**
8. **If they see or receive any obscene, abusive or threatening messages, they shouldn't respond.** They should save the content, let you know and you consider reporting it – see below.

Some chat rooms are moderated, so messages get screened to some extent, but this is not an absolute guarantee.

9. **Your children should know what to do if they come across anything bad.** Teach them and yourself how to block someone online and to report illegal material to the **Internet Watch Foundation.**
 10. Remember that mobile phones, some TV's and game consoles now have internet facilities. It is important that your children understand that **the same safety rules apply** and that they should **not give their mobile number** and any personal details to strangers and **think carefully before sending on pictures of themselves.** Encourage your children to talk to you if they are worried or receiving unwanted messages.
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Other sites with useful information on internet safety

Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) tackles child abuse on the internet. Parents and young people can use this site to report abuse or attempted abuse.

NCH – The children's charity has information in internet safety and a guide to technology.

ThinkUKnow – is the Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) Centre website for children and young people; with information on internet safety and safe.

Childnet – Childnet International works in partnership with others around the world to help make the internet a great and safe place for children.

Internet Watch Foundation Hotline – The UK's hotline for reporting illegal content on the internet, including images of child abuse, criminally obscene as well as racist content.

Facebook has a very good safety site for parents: – <http://www.facebook.com/safety>

Website links:

- <http://www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-and-resources>
- <http://www.parents.vodafone.com>
- www.thinkuknow.co.uk
- www.childnet-int.org
- <http://www.cybermentors.org.uk>
- <http://www.nspcc.org.uk/help-and-advice/> For Parents
- www.internetmatters.org