

Keep your Children Safe Online

The Internet offers many exciting benefits and tremendous opportunities for everybody whether using it to send emails, shop or socialise with friends.

The Internet is an essential part of young people's lives enabling them to connect with friends, learn, play games, watch movies and have fun.

The Internet is an important part of their lives but if not used safely, can expose them to many risks. Understanding these risks can help you to keep your children safer online.

Sometimes a lack of knowledge can make adults feel wary about how to actually keep children safe online. However, there are practical steps we can all take to help keep children and young people safe when using technology.

Encourage conversation - be open

Talk to your children about being safe online, it can be very difficult for a child to understand the risks of using the internet. **What they must understand is that online actions have real life consequences.**

Ensure your child knows the risks of accepting friend requests from strangers online. Explain that once a picture, video or comment is sent or posted online, it can be very difficult to remove it and can be shared with others, without them even knowing. Ensure they know how to report and block people online who may send nasty or inappropriate messages or content. Most importantly, make sure your child knows that they can talk to you and tell you about anything that happens online that makes them feel scared, worried or uncomfortable. **Threatening to take phones or tablets away could stop them from telling you about problems. Removing access to the internet will not solve the problem.** Remember, the vast majority of children use it without coming to any harm.

Let them teach you how to use the Internet

There's nothing a child loves more than to be your teacher, so let them show you how they access social media, how they post messages, what games and apps they like to use or how they visit a website.

This will encourage them to show you what websites they use, what games they play, what's cool right now and what's not and where to find the funniest pictures. This makes having conversations much easier with children about important safety features, using privacy settings and reporting concerns.

Set rules and agree boundaries

Discuss with your child how their internet use will be monitored and the need for your child to earn trust and privacy online depending on their age/ability.

Try to reach common ground with your children about when, what and for how long they can access the Internet.

Be especially aware of setting rules relating to your child's use of webcams and any applications or devices which allow voice or video chat.

Make sure they understand that they must never give away their passwords and be careful about what personal information (date of birth, address, phone number etc.) is shared online.



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Install parental controls

Make sure you read any parental guidance and safety recommendations, including age requirements. Most popular social networking sites and apps are only for users aged 13+.



Use parental control functions for computers, mobile phones and games consoles to block unsuitable content or contact from unknown people and how to report concerns.

You will find free and paid for parental control tools on the internet. There are many options available with different levels of flexibility including what your children can access and even for how long.

Take your time and visit all product pages, read about the features, read independent reviews and choose the product that best suits your needs.

Once you have chosen the product and installed it, take your time to set it up properly.

You can enable a GPS facility on smartphones and tablets that will give you real time location of your child. But again, make sure you discuss this with your child and explain why you might do this.

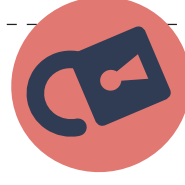
Install a good antivirus, firewall and anti-spyware and keep all software up to date

Install antivirus software

The UK Safer Internet Centre, Internet Matters and Get Safe Online provide in-depth advice about antivirus software.

There are a number of independent organisations that test antiviruses periodically and publish the tests on their websites including PC Magazine, AV-Test and AV Comparatives. You can see the results to find out which product ranks the best.

Once you've installed any software, make sure it's updated every time a new update is released.



Secure your wireless connection

Set up different passwords for network user and administrator and activate network encryption from your router settings.

Check your router for firmware updates periodically and install any new update it finds.

Every now and then check your router to see what devices are connected to it. If you see any unknown devices, create a stronger password and change the SSID name.



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Useful Sites and Resources

Reporting a Concern

- ceop.police.uk - Website for the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre
- virtualglobaltaskforce.com - Report online child abuse
- iwf.org.uk (Internet Watch Foundation) - Report online criminal content
- childline.org.uk
- parentport.org.uk - Report inappropriate content
- actionfraud.police.uk - Report fraud and scams
- crimestoppers-uk.org - Report crime

Kent and Medway Resources

- kent.gov.uk/esafety - Kent County Council's guidance and advice for Parents/carers
- kent.gov.uk/trading-standards
- kent.police.uk/internetsafety - Kent Police's guidance. Report illegal activity to Kent Police via 101 or 999 if there is an immediate risk of danger
- kscb.org.uk - Kent Safeguarding Children Board
- mscb.org.uk - Medway Safeguarding Children Board

Useful Links for Keeping Children & Young People Safe Online

- thinkuknow.co.uk - Online safety advice for parents
- childnet.com – Excellent free resources for educators and parents/carers
- bbc.co.uk/webwise - Guidance and information about using the internet
- nspcc.org.uk/onlinesafety - Information for parents and children about online safety
- net-aware.org.uk - Parents guide to social networks children use
- childline.org.uk - Get help and advice about a wide range of issues
- kidscape.org.uk/cyberbullying - Reporting cyber bullying
- saferinternet.org.uk – UK Safer Internet Centre
- microsoft.com/security - Microsoft Family Safety
- google.co.uk/familysafety - Google Family Safety Centre, includes safety tools and report options
- theparentzone.co.uk – The Parent Zone
- vodaphone.com/parents - Excellent guide for parents on digital technologies
- askaboutgames.com – Advice on computer gaming and how to apply parental controls
- peginfo/en/index/ - Information about age ratings of video games