

## Internet Safety

The Internet provides many wonderful educational and entertainment opportunities for kids. They can use it for research, play games with friends, listen to music, and communicate with teachers or friends.

Internet access also has risks, like inappropriate content, and online predators. Predators target children on websites where kids interact. They may pose as a child or teen looking to make a new friend. They try to entice the child to exchange personal information, such as address and phone number, or encourage kids to call them, seeing their phone number via caller ID.

Parents should be aware of what their kids see and hear on the Internet, who they meet, and what they share about themselves. Talk with your kids, use tools to protect them, and keep an eye on their activities.

### How can you make the internet safer?

Online tools let you control your kids' access to adult material and help protect them from Internet predators. Many Internet service providers (ISPs) provide parent-control options. You can also get software that helps block access to sites and restricts personal information from being sent online. Other programs can monitor and track online activity. Contact your internet provider for details on making the internet safer for your children.

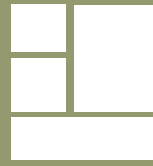
### Teach your children

More important than blocking objectionable material is teaching your kids safe and responsible online behavior, and keeping an eye on their Internet use.

Basic guidelines to share with your kids for safe online use:

- Ensure children follow the family rules, and those set by the Internet service provider.
- Never post or trade personal pictures.
- Never reveal personal or family information, such as address, phone number, or school name or location.
- Do not use your real name. Use only your screen name.
- Don't share passwords (other than with parents).
- Never agree to meet in person with anyone met online without parent approval and/or supervision.
- Never respond to a threatening email, message, post, or text.
- Always tell a parent or other trusted adult about any communication or conversation that was scary, hurtful, or inappropriate.





## Supervise your children

- Share time online together to teach your kids appropriate online behavior.
- Keep the computer in a common area where you can watch and monitor its use, not in individual bedrooms. Monitor any time spent on smartphones or tablets.
- Bookmark kids' favorite sites for easy access. This may prevent accidental access to an inappropriate web site.
- Monitor your credit card and phone bills for unfamiliar account charges.
- Find out what, if any, online protection is offered by your child's school, after-school center, friends' homes, or any place where kids could use a computer without your supervision.
- Investigate any reports from your child of an uncomfortable online exchange.



## Predator Warning Signs

- Spending long hours online, especially at night
- Phone calls from people you don't know
- Unsolicited gifts arriving in the mail
- Your child suddenly turning off the computer when you walk into the room
- Withdrawal from family life and reluctance to discuss online activities

Ensure your children's safe use of the internet. Openly talk to your kids about internet safety. Make sure that they feel comfortable turning to you when they have problems online.

## The Internet and Teens

As your children get older, it may be more difficult to monitor their activity spent online. Many children/teenagers have a smartphone with them constantly. Talk to them about the sites and apps teens use and their online interactions. Continue to discuss the dangers of interacting with strangers online and remind them that people online are not always honest. Include never sharing passwords or private information with anyone online. That includes a boyfriend, girlfriend, or best friend.

Taking an active role in your kids' Internet activities helps ensure that they benefit from them without being exposed to the potential dangers.

Call the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children at (800) 843-5678 if you're aware of the sending, use, or viewing of child pornography online. Contact your local law enforcement agency or the FBI if your child has received child pornography via the Internet.

Resource: Kids Health The Nemours Foundation (a non-profit organization in Jacksonville, Florida dedicated to improving the health of children):

<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/net-safety.html>