

A woman with dark hair tied back is smiling and looking at a tablet held by a young girl. A young boy is also looking at the tablet. They are all sitting together, possibly on a couch, in a dimly lit room. The image has a dark overlay.

Online Safety & Privacy for Children

A quick guide for parents



Keep Personal Info Private

Information to Protect

- Full name and age
- School name and location
- Home address
- Birthday details
- Daily routines and schedules

Location Safety

- Turn off location tracking in social media apps
- Disable geolocation in games like Roblox
- Check privacy settings regularly

Identity Protection

- Use avatars instead of real photos
- Create nicknames rather than real names
- Avoid usernames that reveal personal details

Children often don't understand the implications of sharing personal information online. Show your child how much information a stranger could potentially gather just by viewing their profile. This practical demonstration helps them understand why privacy matters in the digital world.



Understand What They're Using



Review Platform Details

Check each app's age rating, purpose, and primary audience to ensure it's appropriate for your child



Explore Settings Together

Learn about privacy controls, content filters, and safety features as a team



Identify Risky Features

Be aware of disappearing content, anonymous messaging, or private servers that could expose children to risk

Participating in the app setup process with your child creates a valuable learning opportunity for both of you. This collaborative approach helps you understand their digital world while teaching them about responsible technology use from the start. By staying informed about the platforms your child uses, you can better guide their online experiences.

Teach Smart Digital Habits



Pause Before Posting

Encourage children to ask themselves: "Is this safe to share? Is it kind? Is it necessary?" before posting anything online



Practice Digital Kindness

Discuss how words and actions online can affect others, emphasizing respect and empathy in digital interactions



Recognize Online Dangers

Teach children to avoid clicking unknown links, downloading suspicious files, or responding to strangers online

A helpful question to pose to your child is: "Would you say or share that if I was in the room?" This creates a tangible reference point for appropriate online behavior. Building good digital habits requires ongoing conversations and consistent reinforcement as your child navigates increasingly complex online environments.

Use Privacy & Safety Settings

Account Settings

- Set all social media profiles to private
- Disable "suggest my profile to others" features
- Review friend/follower lists regularly
- Turn off direct messaging from strangers

Parental Control Tools

Several effective tools can help parents manage their children's digital experience:

- Google Family Link: Set screen time limits, approve apps
- Qustodio: Monitor activity across devices
- Screen Time: Set content restrictions and usage limits

Taking control of privacy settings empowers children to manage their digital footprint effectively. Guide your child through the process of securing their accounts, explaining why each setting matters. This hands-on approach builds technical skills while reinforcing the importance of online privacy.

Recognize Online Risks

Cyberbullying

- Hurtful or threatening messages
- Intentional exclusion from group chats
- Fake profiles created to mock others
- Sharing embarrassing photos without permission

Scams & Phishing

- Offers of "free" in-game currency like Robux
- Suspicious links promising gift cards
- Messages claiming account problems
- Too-good-to-be-true giveaways

Inappropriate Content

- Violent or graphic videos
- Age-inappropriate sexual content
- Disturbing challenges or stunts
- Extremist or harmful viewpoints

Online Strangers

- Adults posing as children
- Requests to meet in person
- Excessive interest in personal details
- Requests for photos or video chats

Regularly remind your children they can always come to you without fear of being punished if they encounter something troubling online. Creating this safe space for conversation is crucial - children are more likely to report issues when they know they won't lose access to their devices as a result.

Stay Involved



Keep Tech in Common Areas

Encourage device use in family spaces like the kitchen or living room rather than behind closed doors



Maintain Open Dialogue

Ask questions about their favorite games, apps, and online friends - show genuine interest without judgment



Create a Family Tech Agreement

Develop clear, reasonable rules about screen time, appropriate content, and online behavior that evolve as children grow



Follow Their Accounts

Connect with your child on appropriate platforms to maintain awareness without excessive monitoring

Remember that staying involved isn't about invading privacy—it's about providing support and guidance. Your presence in your child's digital life should be reassuring rather than intrusive. This balance helps build trust while keeping communication channels open about their online experiences.

Know Where to Get Help

Reporting Resources

- Report harmful content: reportharmfulcontent.com
- Report grooming/exploitation: CEOP (Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command)
- Report illegal content: Internet Watch Foundation

Support Services

- NSPCC Helpline: 0808 800 5000 (for parents and adults)
- Childline: 0800 1111 (for children)

It's perfectly okay not to have all the answers when it comes to online safety. What matters most is knowing where to turn for support when issues arise. Save these important numbers and websites on both your devices and your child's. Having these resources readily available ensures you can respond quickly and effectively to any online safety concerns.