6 Online Safety Tips For Kids

The digital world offers a whole new set of challenges for parents. Fortunately, parents can help children understand and manage the risks of going online, so they can mitigate potential dangers such as privacy breaches, cyberbullying, stalking and exposure to inappropriate content. This article provides parents with 6 practical online safety tips to teach their children.

#1 Talk Openly With Your Children About Online Safety

One of the most effective ways to protect children from online threats is to empower them with the skills and knowledge to assess risk and apply their growing sense of judgment. Families can do this by openly discussing potential risks together to help children develop responsibility online. Some strategies for discussion could include:

- Being aware of the consequences of sharing personal information online
- Understanding the dangers of meeting someone from the Internet in real life
- Keeping passwords private to protect information

#2 Establish Clear Boundaries And Explain Hazards

Outline some expectations and agreed on behaviours to help children understand what is appropriate online and what might be dangerous. As they grow older rules can be

adapted to make sure they're age appropriate. Many parents establish rules around posting pictures, such as no sleepover photos for pre-teens, to avoid unnecessary risks. When establishing this kind of boundary with your children, explain the potential consequences of ignoring the rules, such friends' parents not allowing their children to attend future sleepovers.

#3 Encourage Children To Speak Up And Report Issues

You can help your children to feel secure online by creating a safe space to discuss issues and by teaching them strategies to deal with potential problems. Reinforce that, if online content or behaviour makes your child feel uncomfortable, they can always tell you about it or ask for advice. As a parent, remember that trust goes both ways, so families should discuss how they will respond to issues when they arise, and avoid assigning blame or taking away devices as a 'knee-jerk' reaction. This can make a big difference to your child, so they feel more comfortable to speak up when it matters. Always encourage young people to inform an adult if someone they don't know offline makes contact with them online, as this can be a red flag for online grooming. If you become aware of grooming on social media you should report it on the app or website, block the user, and notify the police

#4 Help Them Understand The Value Of Privacy Settings

Families can change privacy settings together and discuss how this helps to keep personal information secure. Location settings can be switched off at a device level so that the user cannot be tracked. On social media platforms, the location should be

switched off and settings should always be tuned to only allow friends and family to view content. Social media accounts should never be shared, for example between friends, as this creates potential problems as friendship circles shift. Parents can activate safety features on web browsers to block pop-ups and protect devices and personal information [3].

#5 Explain The Benefits Of Parental Monitoring Software

Children can enjoy more freedom on the Internet when parents use non-invasive parental monitoring software to keep them safe. This kind of software can be used to identify risk patterns and flag for threat behaviour without displaying specific content or breaching a child's privacy. Parents should provide context before installing monitoring software, so it isn't seen as a punishment. Consider explaining that monitoring software helps to identify risks and preempt issues, so as a parent, you can feel more comfortable giving your children greater freedom to explore the online world. Monitoring should be a starting point for positive family conversations, rather than a tool to restrict behaviour or to spy on your children.

#6 Support Children To Take An Active Role In Their Own Safety Online

Parents can show children resources to help them find out more about being safe online [1]. Reviews of apps, games and websites are available on trusted platforms like Common Sense Media. Parents can use these reviews as a tool to ascertain if the content is appropriate and, dependent on their age, children can be encouraged to do their own research before asking adults for permission to download apps.

Final Thoughts

Parents can help children by creating a dialogue around potential risks and strategies to stay safe online. Monitoring software, stringent privacy settings, open discussion and awareness are the key tools adults can use to prepare young people for their digital futures.

References

1. https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/online-safety
2. https://kidshelpline.com.au/parents/issues/social-media- and-safety
3. https://www.esafety.gov.au/education-resources/iparent/staying-safe/online-basics