

Internet Safety- Tips for Parents

1. **Talk with your child about internet safety:** Make it part of your regular safety talks, just like you talk about things like wearing a bike helmet, looking both ways before crossing the street, and drugs and alcohol. Include topics such as privacy with personal information, passwords, not meeting with people you meet online, the difference between a friend you know and an internet friend, and not accepting “friend requests,” or “followers” that you don’t know off-line.
2. **Begin early:** Begin talking about Internet Safety when your child shows an interest in using computers, tablets, or phones.
3. **Use the internet to educate yourself:** At least 4 times a year, check these two websites to find out current trends, how to increase safety, and how to talk to your children about the internet: www.connectsafely.org, www.netsmartz.org. Make sure you learn about current trends with social media, file sharing, live-streaming, texting, and popular apps.
4. **Show interest in what your child is doing on the internet:** What apps do they like? What are other kids their age using? What social media programs are they, and their friends using? Let them show you how they work.
5. **Talk to youth about “netiquette” and create guidelines together:** Frame all your conversations as creating healthy, and happy relationships online. Talk with your child about the importance of having manners online. Have conversations about texting, posting, and messaging, and how everyone deserves to be treated with respect. Basic Rule: Don’t say anything you would not say in real life.
6. **Discuss cyberbullying:** Try to use the language they are using. Talk to your kids about online, and text messages “drama.” Discuss mean or rude behavior on line. Ask about rumors and arguments among their friends and peers. Encourage kids to take some time before they respond to these things and think long and hard about what they want to say and whether what they say will ultimately be helpful or hurtful.
7. **Discuss pornography and cyber-predators:** Children are intentionally, or accidentally viewing pornography at younger and younger ages. Tell them they can come to you or another adult they trust if something happens online that makes them feel uncomfortable. Ask them if they have accidentally, or on purpose seen pictures or videos of naked people online. Tell them that questions about sex or sexuality are best answered by an adult(s) they trust. Be an “askable parent.” Bottom Line: If you see something online that makes you feel uncomfortable, unsafe or worried: leave the website, turn off your computer if you want to, and tell a trusted adult immediately
8. **Discuss sexting:** Sexting can include text messages, live video-streaming, or videos. Discuss what makes a healthy relationship and include the idea that being pressured to do anything is not respectful. Ask tweens and teens directly if anyone has asked them to send naked pictures or sent them naked pictures. Talk about how the photos and messages really are not private. Emphasize how forwarding sexts they receive is violating someone’s trust and their body. See Netsmartz’s “Talking to teens about sexting.”
9. **Discuss social media platforms:** Ask your child about the Social Media platforms that are popular. Learn about them by asking your child to share about them, and going online.
10. **Find a way to have fun with your child online:** Find an app, game, or social media platform that you can use to connect with your child.

