

5 things every parent can do to keep their kids safe online

“It’s 10 PM. Do you know where your children are?”

Some of you may remember this public service announcement from years ago. The same concept applies more than ever these days when referring to where your child is when he or she uses an internet device. With the advent of so many social media apps the ability for your child to be in communication with predators is more of a danger now than ever before. The ability to view inappropriate material is yet another concern for busy parents who often have little idea of what their child is doing on the internet.

It’s a frustrating problem for many parents who wonder what they can do to get an idea of what and whom their child is seeing on the internet.

Here are 5 ways to better protect your child from the dangers of the internet.

1. Talk openly with your child about their online activity

As soon as your child starts accessing the internet, talk to them about what they are reading, watching and who they are communicating with online – and keep the conversation going as they grow older. Ask your child what sites they visit or apps they use, write a list, and look at them together. Talk to your child about what you think is appropriate, and remind them that this may be different for other parents and their children.

Listen to your child and reach an agreement about what is right for your family. Remember the time will come when they will access the internet outside the safety of home and you want them to be prepared for that.

It’s vital to teach them about their online reputation, too, and how they must be careful about how they behave, interact with people and represent themselves in such a public forum. **They must always remember that the internet isn’t private and that what they do today can remain in their digital footprint forever.**

2. Keep screens and devices where you can see them

Always monitor your child’s time online, particularly younger children. Keep the computer in a central spot in the home where it’s easy to keep an eye on what your child is doing and viewing online.

You might also consider checking browser histories after your child has been online to see what sites they are visiting. This approach obviously gets harder as

children grow older and work out how to clear histories – which is more reason to open the lines of communication about internet use at an early age

3. Be Social Network Savvy

Sign up to the social networks and apps your children are using and find out how to use the privacy settings and reporting mechanisms. Talk about how they can stay safe on social networks, including talking to a trusted person when they are worried, and being aware of what constitutes online bullying – both as a perpetrator and a victim.

If your child uses social networks, be sure they know how to:

- Report inappropriate and/or offensive posts
- Block someone
- Keep information private.

4. Keep track of online time

The Australian Physical Activity and Sedentary Behavior Guidelines recommend children between the age of five and 17 should have no more than two hours of screen time a day. So, it's important to monitor your child's online time, particularly younger children, to ensure they do not develop bad habits.

Get your children to agree on a period of time, say 30 minutes per session, and set a timer to go off – don't forget to make this a non-negotiable finish time.

You should also switch off the home Wi-Fi at a set time each night before bedtime so everyone has some 'time-out' from the internet.

You can also try making some days 'screen-free' in your home to encourage everyone to pursue other more active and/or less technology-driven ways to entertain themselves.

5. Know your parental controls

Innocent searches online can lead to not-so-innocent results, so it's wise to know how to use the parental controls/search restrictions offered by web browsers, internet service providers and devices.

Below is a list of websites that provide controls that you can install on your child's devices that includes Windows computers, Macintosh computers, Android and Apple cell phones. Although not 100 per cent accurate, parental controls can help prevent your child from seeing and accessing most violent or sexual material.

Know your parental controls and know that you do have some control over what your child experiences on the Internet.

Internet Family Filter and Controls for Windows and Macintosh OS

<https://famisafe.wondershare.com/internet-filter/internet-filter-reviews.html>

Internet Family Filter and Controls for Android phones

<https://famiguard.imyfone.com/web-filter/best-free-internet-filter-for-android/>

Internet Family Filter and Controls for iPhones

<https://www.greenspringsschool.com/best-free-parental-control-apps-for-iphone/>