

Talking to Your Child

It's imperative to keep the line of communication open with your child, especially when it comes to their safety. Don't be afraid to talk to them about the dangers that exist online. Giving them the tools to protect themselves are necessary. Here are some conversation starters to get, AND KEEP, the conversation going:

- What are some of your favorite things to do online?
- What do you feel is personal information that shouldn't be shared online?
- Why do you think your personal information should be kept private?
- When it comes to online safety, what do you think you can do to protect yourself?
- What would you do if someone you met online asked you to meet up with them?
- Who do you feel is safe to go to if you feel scared or uncomfortable after an online interaction?

The Ground Rules

- Do not send inappropriate pictures of yourself on the Internet.
- Avoid giving out your name, address, or phone number to someone you've met online.
- Beware of downloading pictures from an unknown source.
- You should not respond to messages that are suggestive or harassing—tell a safe adult.
- Keep the computer in a high-traffic area of your home, visible to anybody that may be walking by.
- Establish time limits for online sites children may visit.
- Consider that Internet technology is extremely mobile. Be sure to monitor cell phones, laptops, and any other electronic devices.
- Explore the Internet with your children, and let them show you what they like to do online.
- Know who is connecting with your children online and set rules for social networking, instant messaging, e-mailing, online gaming, and webcams. Talk to your children about how meeting someone they talk to online is never safe.
- Continual dialogue with your children about online safety is extremely important. NEVER STOP TALKING.

E-Mail Safety

- If you receive an e-mail from an unknown sender, don't open it.
- If you don't need to send it via e-mail...don't.
- Never open an attachment within an email from a business, organization, or person you don't know.
- Don't reply or click links inside of spam e-mails.
- Use a spam filter.
- Anti-virus software is a must.
- Remember, when using a public computer or a computer that doesn't belong to you, log out!
- Changing your password often is essential, and be sure to use a variety of letters, numbers, and symbols.

Understanding the language

Kids nowadays are exposed to all sorts of language, which can make it tough for adults to keep up. From acronyms to emojis, their language is constantly changing. Whether they're in chat rooms, sending e-mails, posting on facebook, or texting & tweeting, internet slang has become the norm. It's important for parents to familiarize themselves with this language so they can closely monitor their children's technology.

*[Chat Acronyms](#)

Additional Resources

When it comes to online safety, the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children offers an incredible amount of information for parents and children. We encourage you to explore their website and really talk to your children about the dangers that exist online. It is important for children to remember that the Internet is forever, so using it responsibly is imperative.

- *[Netsmartz](#) (A program of the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children)
- *[Protecting Your Kids Online](#)
- *[Tips for Teens](#)

For further information on child safety, or to file a report, please contact:

- Your local law enforcement
- Children's Assessment Center 616-336-5160
- Cyber Tipline, National Center for Missing & Exploited Children 1-800-843-5678
- Federal Bureau of Investigation, Office of Crimes Against Children 202-324-3666