

INTERNET SAFETY TIPS

FOR PARENTS AND GUARDIANS



92% of teens report going **online daily**.¹

The Internet and electronic devices can be useful tools for children's education and communication, but it is important to help children understand and respond to online risks.

- 1. Talk with your children about online safety** before giving access to devices and the Internet. Continue the discussion as your children grow older. Engage in honest conversations with your child about topics like sexting and grooming – what is appropriate and inappropriate, what to do if revealing photos of them are shared, and not to ask for or forward pictures of others.
- 2. Set rules for device usage and explain the reasons.** For example, explain to children why they should not share private information such as address, phone number, and school information. Consider signing an Electronic Device Agreement with your children.
- 3. Be aware of account settings and device settings.** Teach children to keep profiles private and to turn off location settings on social apps. Help them set strong passwords, remind them to update passwords regularly, and tell them to never share their own passwords or ask for others' passwords. For young children, use your name and email address when signing up for games and services. Check settings regularly.
- 4. Know the websites and apps your children may use.** Computers, tablets, cell phones, gaming systems, and televisions can be used in ways that parents may not understand. Ask children to show you how they use apps and platforms and take time to learn about them. Recognize that children may have multiple accounts on a platform - be sure to review all of them. Set restrictions on websites and apps.
- 5. Set rules for connecting** through social media, texting, instant messaging, emailing, online gaming, and using webcams. Review your children's activity with them on a regular basis.
- 6. Teach children about good digital citizenship.** Teach not to send mean messages or ask for inappropriate photos from others and to respect everyone's boundaries both offline and online. Remember that children look up to adults, so model good digital citizenship as well.
- 7. Give children tools to stand up to cyberbullying.** Talk about how to support anyone being bullied by not joining in and being a good friend. Help your child think of other trusted adults they can go to for help when you are not there. Report cyberbullying or potential online enticement to the appropriate website or app, cell phone provider, law enforcement, or www.cybertipline.org. Teach children how they can report as well.
- 8. Know the warning signs.** A child experiencing online enticement may spend increasing time online, grow upset when not able to use their device, take extra steps to hide what they are doing online, or receive gifts from people you do not know.
- 9. Do not only "pull the plug" to try to solve a problem.** Continue to talk to your children about safety risks and respecting others online. There are times when suspending usage is in the best interest of the child or teen.
- 10. Collaborate!** Work with your parent-teacher organization to review your school's Internet safety and cyberbullying policies and to raise awareness. Ensure school and youth-serving organization policies state that staff should not communicate privately with children.

TERMS TO KNOW

GROOMING: the process of building a connection with a child, family, or community to lower their inhibitions with the objective of sexual abuse. On the Internet, this may look like **online enticement**. This could be someone engaging a child in sexual conversation, asking them for images or sending images, pretending to be younger, offering incentives or blackmailing them for explicit content.

SEXTING: the sharing of nude or sexual pictures, videos, and language through text or other platforms.

CYBERBULLYING: the use of technology to bully someone. It can range from mean comments to sharing embarrassing photos to posting fight videos. Like other forms of bullying, it involves the person doing the bullying, the person experiencing the bullying, and bystanders.

START A CONVERSATION



RESPOND WITH SUPPORT AND UNDERSTANDING



Children may be hesitant to share online victimization with an adult because they feel ashamed or guilty, are afraid of getting into trouble or having their device taken away, or may not realize that someone is abusing them. Let your children know they can come to you with questions or concerns. If they come to you with any alarming issues, respond calmly, listen attentively, tell them it's not their fault, answer questions, and help them report it if necessary.

- » **Thank you for telling me.**
- » **I believe you.**
- » **I'm sorry that happened to you.**
- » **You are not alone.**
- » **How can I support you?**

INTERNET SAFETY RESOURCES AND TRAINING

Most social media platforms include help centers to assist with adjusting settings and reporting inappropriate content. For links to these, our example Electronic Device Agreement, and other Internet safety resources, visit www.BeauBidenFoundation.org/resources.

To bring an Internet Safety training to your school or organization, please contact us at www.BeauBidenFoundation.org/contact.

¹ Lenhart, A. (2015). Teens, Social Media & Technology Overview 2015 | Pew Research Center. Retrieved from <http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/04/09/mobile-access-shifts-social-media-use-and-other-online-activities>