A Parent and Carer Guide to Staying Safe Online

A Guide for Parents

The Internet is very much a part of modern-day life and can be used in many amazing ways. For children, it can be used for learning, creating, exploring, playing and connecting with other people. Children are accessing the Internet more than ever, at home and in school, using laptops, phones, tablet computers, mobile devices, televisions, games consoles and more. With an ever-changing digital world and constant access to the Internet, it can be difficult to keep track of what children are doing on games, apps and social media. So how do we ensure our children are safe online?

Just like in real life, children need their parents' and carers' help to stay safe online. There are several common issues which might affect your child online, including cyberbullying, online grooming and inappropriate content. Use these tips to help protect your child online.

Agree Boundaries
This is a great way to begin. Be clear about when and where your child can use the Internet and what they can and can't do. Discuss the type of information they can share online and what they shouldn't share. This is very important – your child should never give any personal information online such as name, school name, where they live, their age, etc.

Communal Internet Use
Encourage your child to stay in a communal area such as the living room or kitchen when using the Internet. This will enable you to keep an eye on what your child is doing while online.

Children's Search Engines
Encourage your child to use search engines that are specifically for children. These can then be saved to your favourites, so they are easy to access each time they go online.

Do Your Research
Check the age ratings on apps, games and social network websites – are they suitable for your child? Also, ensure that you research the latest games and crazes online too. It helps to check if a game is safe to use, how it works and if there is any possibility of your child talking to others through the online game.

Explore!
The best way to see what your child is doing online is to explore together. Show an interest in what they are doing by asking them to explain what they are looking at or playing. If it's a game, ask them how it works (this is a good way to see if the game involves talking to other online players). This enables you to discuss, openly and in context, what information they can share and how to stay safe online.

Use Parental Controls
Use the parental controls on your home Internet and any other device that uses the Internet at home. Also, switch on the 'airplane mode' when children are using an app or game which is downloaded to a device. This will stop them from being able to make any unapproved purchases or interact with anyone online without your knowledge.