

**EMPOWER YOUR CHILD(REN) TO
PROTECT THEMSELVES ONLINE. LEARN
WHY THIS IS THE BEST WAY TO
SAFEGUARD THEM AGAINST RISK**

Helping students understand that cybersafety should always be a priority



What We Know

- The onset of COVID-19 has dramatically increased the usage of digital learning formats by schools across the nation and shifted the learning environment to “school at home.”
- The internet is a wonderful place for learning and entertainment, but like the world around us, it can pose dangers if precautions are not taken. Allowing free access puts your child, your computer and your personal data at risk.
- Since students are online more, they are vulnerable to more threats.
- Cyber safety is critical and is a shared responsibility of students, parents, and school personnel.

Raising Digital Citizens

- ❑ **Remain positively engaged:** Pay attention to and know the online environments your children use.
- ❑ **Support their good choices:** Expand your children's online experience and their autonomy when developmentally appropriate, as they demonstrate competence in safe and secure online behavior and good decision making.
- ❑ **Keep a clean machine:** Safety and security start with protecting all family computers with a security suite (anti-virus, anti-spyware and firewall) that is set to update automatically.
- ❑ **Just saying "no" rarely works:** Teach your children how to interact safely with people they "meet" online. Though it's preferable they make no in-person contact with online-only acquaintances, young people may not always follow this rule.
- ❑ **Empower your children to handle issues:** Your children may deal with situations like bullying, unwanted contact or hurtful comments online. Work with them on strategies for when problems arise, such as talking to a trusted adult, not retaliating, calmly talking with the person, blocking the person or filing a complaint. Agree on steps to take if the strategy fails.
- ❑ **Encourage your children to be "digital leaders:"** Help ensure they master the safety and security techniques of all technology they use. Support their positive and safe engagement in online communities. Encourage them to help others accomplish their goals. Urge them to help if friends are making poor choices or being harmed.




Ways to Keep Kids Safe Online

- ❑ **Increase awareness:** Help ensure younger children know the basics of staying safe online by using techniques like online games and videos that will define computer terms (e.g., cyberbullying, netiquette, virus protection) to establish basic understanding.
- ❑ **Protect your kid's identity:** Remind your kids never to give out personal information, such as name, home address, or telephone number, to anyone they don't know through email, Twitter, Facebook, or in online chat rooms or bulletin boards. Talk with your children about the online risks of interacting with strangers through the computer and sending notes and pictures into cyberspace.
- ❑ **Protect your computer:** Regularly updating security software can protect your family against scammers, hackers, and other online threats that can compromise your computer system and, consequently, your family's financial security and other private information. Using software security that automatically updates keeps your technology current and decreases the likelihood of picking up bad programs or malware.

Ways to Keep Kids Safe Online

- ❑ **Create unique passwords:** For [online safety](#), tell your kids to use different passwords for every online account they have to help prevent others from [accessing](#) their personal information. Make sure that you monitor each account and make sure your children know that [strong passwords](#) should include elements like symbols, numbers, uppercase and lowercase letters, and no names or words that others could easily guess.
- ❑ **Monitor online activity:** Monitoring your kids' online activity can help keep them safe. Explore various [parental controls](#) and consider what options may work best for you and your family.
- ❑ **Prevent cyberbullying:** [Cyberbullying](#)—[bullying](#) using electronic technology—can happen anytime and anywhere. Teach your children to think through what they post on the Net about other people and the [consequences](#) those posts could have if they are unkind or mean. Also, keep communication with your child open and speak up if you suspect someone is bullying him or her.
- ❑ **Promote appropriate online interactions:** Use some [online games](#) to help show kids how to make responsible decisions about online communication and learn about key issues of digital citizenship. Online activities can include exploration of [methods of communication](#) in chat rooms and emails, for example.



Basic guidelines to share with your kids for safe online use

- ❑ Follow the family rules, and those set by the Internet service provider.
- ❑ Never post or trade personal pictures.
- ❑ Never reveal personal information, such as address, phone number, or school name or location.
- ❑ Use only a screen name and don't share passwords (other than with parents).
- ❑ Never agree to get together in person with anyone met online without parent approval and/or supervision.
- ❑ Never respond to a threatening email, message, post, or text.
- ❑ Always tell a parent or other trusted adult about any communication or conversation that was scary or hurtful.



Basic guidelines for parental supervision

- Spend time online together to teach your kids appropriate online behavior.
- Keep the computer in a common area where you can watch and monitor its use, not in individual bedrooms. Monitor any time spent on smartphones or tablets.
- Bookmark kids' favorite sites for easy access.
- Check your credit card and phone bills for unfamiliar account charges.
- Take your child seriously if he or she reports an uncomfortable online exchange.

Warning signs of a child being targeted by an online predator

- spending long hours online, especially at night
- phone calls from people you don't know
- unsolicited gifts arriving in the mail
- your child suddenly turning off the computer when you walk into the room
- withdrawal from family life and reluctance to discuss online activities



Resources



- ConnectSafely.org has basic guidelines for teens and parents about cyberbullying, sexting, social networking, and more.
- [FBI's Safe Online Surfing \(SOS\) Internet Challenge](http://FBI's Safe Online Surfing (SOS) Internet Challenge) is a free, fun, and informative program that promotes cyber citizenship by educating students in third to eighth grades on the essentials of online security.
- iKeepSafe.org seeks to give parents, educators, and policymakers the information and tools which power them to teach children the safe and healthy use of technology and the internet.
- OnGuardOnline.gov is the Federal Trade Commission's main consumer-facing page to educate everyone on staying safe and secure online.