Question: How do I keep my kids safe online?

Answer :

Three steps to protecting your kids online

You can help keep your kids safe online using these three basic strategies.

1. Communicate openly with your kids

It's not possible to supervise your kids 24/7 so finding ways to establish and maintain trust is really valuable.

- Talk to them about their online activities, from chatting about their favourite websites to asking who they are talking to and if they are having any online issues.
- Give them strategies to deal with upsetting online content, from turning off the screen, telling a trusted adult, and showing them how to block and report people.
- Research the age ratings for the games and apps your child uses so you can determine age appropriateness and suitability.
- Explore the sites and apps your kids love, play online games together and consider setting up your own accounts with the sites they frequent. This will help you familiarise yourself with the operation of those sites and potential risks. Ask your kids to show you how they work – they'll love teaching you something!
- Set age appropriate rules for using the internet and devices and, where practicable. Seek your child's input – this will help your child understand risks. As they get older you can review your rules to align with their maturity level.

2. Use technology tools to keep them safe

There are so many technological advances that can enhance the experience for your child online and help keep them safe – both within the site or app and for their devices.

- Use parental controls and install filtering software to help block unwanted content and pop-ups and to restrict access to specific content and pages.
- Help your child to set up the privacy settings on all sites and devices they use.
- Locate the computer in an area of your home that can be supervised. Parents of older children may have an 'open door' policy when devices are used in bedrooms and to ensure that screens are facing outward. And make sure you check in regularly to see what they're viewing.

- Consider rules for internet-enabled handheld devices – where and when.
- Install and update anti-virus and other e-security software to restrict unauthorised access to data on the home computer. Ensure all security features are turned on and set to automatic scan and regular updates to protect against the latest risks.
- Activate safety features on web browsers to protect your devices and personal information.
- Show your child how to block and report users or pages on the sites they use.

3. Encourage safe and responsible behaviour

Setting rules for your child's internet use and establishing clear boundaries and expectations is imperative. Your rules will depend on the age of your kids and the level of responsibility you are willing to give but is underpinned by conversation, education and trust.

- Consider a family online safety contract as a tool to negotiate agreement about rules and renegotiate as required. It could cover the type of websites that can be visited, time spent online and acceptable online behaviour. ThinkUKnow Australia http://www.thinkuknow.org.au/ can be a good starting point for your own family contract.
- Educate your kids about safe and positive online behaviour and encourage them to think before they post, text or share; be respectful online; avoid posting things that may upset others; and understand that content can remain online forever and can be shared by others without permission.
- Help them keep their personal information private. This means avoiding using full names, phone numbers, home address, school name and date of birth.
- Set their online profiles to the maximum privacy settings. Online conversations, images and videos might be viewed by others and can't always be removed.
- Ensure your child uses strong passwords on devices and explain the importance of not sharing passwords, even with friends.
- Talk to them about cyberbullying behaviour and how to report and manage it.
- Explain the dangers of meeting face to face with someone they have only chatted with online.
- Encourage your child to talk to a trusted adult if any content they view or if contact with someone online makes them feel uncomfortable.

Office of the Children's eSafty Commissioner https://www.esafety.gov.au/