

7 Ways to help keep your Children Safe Online

1: I will regularly talk to my child

Good communication is one of the most important things you can do to keep your children safe.

If your child is pre-teen, talk honestly about the things they might encounter and the benefits/drawbacks of social networks before they start using them.

Make teens aware what they do online can impact their future, so they should think carefully before they post or share. Don't be afraid to talk about issues such as sexting and pornography – however embarrassing it might be.

Encourage them to be a **good digital citizen** and treat others how they want to be treated.

Let your child know they can always talk to you if they have an online issue – whatever it is.

2: I will take an interest in what my child does online

When it comes to the keeping children safe, it can be easy to just leave them to their gadgets. But by understanding what they are doing online, you can pre-empt any problems and both feel at ease talking about it.

With young children, explore the internet, apps and games together - show them suitable apps and websites.

Ask older children to show you what they are doing online. When they start using social media, talk to them about some of the risks.

3: I will use parental controls

All UK broadband providers offer router-based filters you can use to regulate the type of content your children can access when they connect to your home wi-fi. They take minutes to activate, but allow you to block inappropriate content such as violence and pornography.

As well as broadband controls, phones, tablets and games consoles have native parental controls you can activate.

4: I will take control of my children's technology use

As a parent or guardian, you need to determine when and for how long your child goes online or uses tablets, phones and games consoles.

Whatever your child's age, you can set rules about how often they use technology, this could be a set time each evening or weekend. With young children, agree the type of sites they can visit.

5: I will encourage social technology use

Tablets and smartphones are so portable they can be used anywhere, but try to encourage your children to use them in a kitchen, living room or social area, rather than being shut away in their bedroom.

You'll be able to see how long they spend online and gauge their emotional reaction to what they are doing online.

6: I will do my online safety homework

Facebook and Snapchat you've probably heard of, but what about Kik or MyLOL? Social networks are launching all the time, some more suitable for children than others. Ask your child what they like using, then do your own research.

Social networks, along with apps and games have age ratings, which are a useful suitability guide. Remember you don't have to stick to them, Facebook has a minimum age rating of 13, but you may feel your child isn't emotionally mature enough to use it.

If your child wants a new game or app, check out **Common Sense media**. It has independent reviews of apps, games and TV programs, which include ratings for violence, language and sexual content, along with suggested family talking points.

7: I will check privacy settings

There will be a point when your child wants to start using social networks like Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat.

Once you've talked to them about the risks, take practical steps to make sure their social network profile is secure. This includes controlling who can see their posts, send them friend requests and turning off location information.