

Creating a Safe Online Environment for Kids

A TrendLabs Digital Life E-guide



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The Internet has become the new playground for kids everywhere. Hours are spent playing online games, using social networking sites, streaming music, and researching for homework.

But letting your kids go online requires more than just setting up and paying for the Internet connection. Without your guidance, your kids may end up visiting bad sites and encountering the wrong kind of people. It's important to know the possible online risks in order to create a safe and nurturing online environment for your kids.

Preventing Unwanted Access

The Internet can do wonders for a child's development and growth. They can visit educational sites to supplement and enhance their knowledge. You could say the Internet is an expansive multimedia library with readily available content for children to find and absorb.

But not all available content are appropriate. Kids may be exposed to sites with pornography, gruesome images, violence, and other inappropriate content. Your kids can also end up at unsafe sites through [innocent search results](#) or by clicking links to supposedly safe videos.

How to Keep It Appropriate

By setting a few ground rules, kids can discover content that can enhance their knowledge and development.

Establish limits. Tell your kids about the sites they can or cannot visit. Explain why some sites are inappropriate. Help set up bookmarks for your kids' favorite sites to lessen the change of visiting other sites.

Do a quick check. Make sure that the sites your kids visit are age-appropriate. Some sites specifically state the minimum age required to visit them.

Use parental controls. Most browsers have a built-in filter to ensure that only kid-friendly search results show up.

Establish open communication. When your kids are accidentally exposed to inappropriate sites, initiate a conversation to discuss the issues and concerns they may have with the material.

Preventing Unwanted Contact

Kids can easily socialize with their friends or make new ones online. But online socializing can have risks, particularly cyberbullying or online grooming.

Cyberbullying refers to the act of harassing someone through information technology. Often times, this translates to bullying via the Internet. Cyberbullying can be difficult to address as bullies may hide behind fake personas, making them harder to trace and stop.

Online grooming is a way for online predators to victimize unsuspecting children. Sexual predators may attempt to befriend children online through flattery, sympathy, or gifts.

How to Keep It Friendly

Enable your kids to develop and nurture their friendships with their peers.

Play nice. Tell your kids to treat people online the way they would want to be treated. Encourage them to only befriend people they know in real life.

Report any incident of harassment. Instruct your kids to tell you about any interaction that makes them feel uncomfortable or harassed. Raise these incidents to the site administrators.

Show interest. Find out who your kids talk to online. Ask details about their online friends. This lets you track if any suspicious activity is going on.

Use technology. [Parental monitoring software](#) can help keep tabs on your children's activities. They can monitor interactions in popular sites, regardless of privacy settings and the device used to access the account.

Preventing Unwanted Exposure

Privacy is a major concern for anyone who goes online. However, this may ring true more for adults than children. Children may have a difficult time discerning what type of information is appropriate to share on the different platforms available. They may not also be aware that whatever they share online could wind up public and have [undesirable consequences](#).

Aside from voluntarily sharing personal information, kids could also become inadvertent victims of data leaks via mobile apps.

How to Keep It Private

Here's how kids can go online freely without being monitored or tracked:

Check [privacy policies](#). See how much [personal information](#) is required by your kids' sites before they can sign up or post. Use the available privacy settings to make sure their accounts are not easily accessible by the public.

“Think before you post.” Explain the importance of thinking twice before revealing or posting anything online. Help fill out online profiles. Make sure they don't share contact details online. Encourage them to use nicknames rather than their full names.

Review mobile apps. Take the time to study the [permissions](#) and the data apps can possibly expose.

Double-check your security. You can use [privacy scanning software](#) to check current privacy settings in different social networks to ensure your information remains private.

Keeping It Safe

The Internet can be a wonderful place for kids—but only if you make it so. There are several resources made especially for parents to make sure that their kids are exposed to the right type of material.

- [Internet Safety for Kids and Family](#). This Trend Micro blog talks about the latest technology-driven issues that may affect kids and teens.
- [Internet Safety @ Home](#). This site contains Trend Micro tools and guides to help secure the Internet for kids.
- [Digital Life e-Guides](#). These e-Guides contain tips and steps for securing your digital life, such as [mobile privacy](#) and [parental controls](#).

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