

10 tips for keeping your children safe online

- 1. Have a conversation with your children**

Children are getting their first internet-connected gadgets at pretty young ages. So, start talking to them early. Warn them about malware, dangerous websites, and sex offenders. Let your children know you are looking out for them. Speak honestly with them and give them a chance to share their thoughts with you.
- 2. Keep your computer in a common area of the house**

It is more difficult for sex offenders and online bullies to harass your child when you can see what your child is up to. So, make sure your children are not going to bed with their laptops and phones. Keep internet time in the common areas.
- 3. Know which other computers your children are using**

Your children most likely have access to computers at school or their friends' houses. Ask them where else they go to get online and talk to their friends' parents about how they supervise their own children's internet use.
- 4. Remind your children, "Don't talk to strangers – or meet them"**

Make it clear that online strangers are not friends. Remind your children that people often lie about their age, and online predators often pretend to be children. Emphasize to your children that they should never reveal personal information like their name, address, phone number, school name, or even their friends' names. Knowing any of this could help an online predator find your child. And under no circumstances should your child ever meet up with someone they met online without your permission. If you do agree to a meeting, go with your child and meet in a public place.
- 5. Make internet time family time**

You watch movies together. Why not browse the web together? Making it a family event can be fun. You'll learn more about your child's interests and can guide them to websites that are more appropriate to their age.
- 6. Know your children's passwords**

If you have a younger child, create an account for them in your own name to avoid exposing your child's name —so you will have the password. But please respect the age limitations on accounts. If a site says you should be 13 or older to sign up, then maybe your child should wait. Whatever your choice, make sure you get their passwords and warn them that you will be checking their accounts from time to time to make sure everything is safe. (Spying on your child's accounts without their knowledge could weaken their trust in you.)
- 7. Watch for changes in your children's behavior**

Being secretive about what they do online, withdrawing from the family, and other personality changes could be signs that an online sex offender is preying on your child. So, keep an eye out for any behavioral changes.
- 8. Pay attention to any gifts anyone gives your children**

Sexual predators may send physical letters, photos, or gifts to children to seduce them. Stay alert and ask your children about any new items they bring home.
- 9. Check your children's browsing history**

Open your child's web browser and look for "History" to see a list of websites they may have visited. Also check the recycle bin to see if any files have been deleted. You may be surprised.
- 10. Set rules — and stick to them**

As a parent, you have the control to limit your child's screen time, set boundaries for inappropriate content, and make sure your children stick to them. Talk to your internet service provider about filters you can use to block pornographic or violent websites or invest in a Wi-Fi router with parental controls.

Additionally, there are third party solutions you can explore to see if they are appropriate for your home computing environment. CCSD does not endorse any of these solutions, we simply offer them as an option for families to consider on your own.

- <https://www.opendns.com/home-internet-security/>
- <https://www.securly.com/hub>
- <https://www.netnanny.com/features/internet-filter/>