

# Technology - Internet safety for kids and teens.

## How to set guidelines to keep your child safe online

How we use the Internet has changed a lot in the past few years. Today's children have less privacy online and greater access to other people. This includes both their friends and strangers.

Social media and the Internet have become part of your child's daily life, as they may be part of your life. But these tools must always be used in a safe, positive way. Alice Ann Holland, Ph.D., ABPP, a clinical neuropsychologist at Children's Health says it is important to set guidelines and monitor your child's online activity to help your them stay healthy when online.

### Internet safety guidelines

To keep your child safe online, use some of these rules talk with your child about setting up limits:

- The computer must be used in common areas (living room, kitchen, family room).
- Never post or trade photographs on sites unless you know they are private.
- Always use the highest privacy controls on social media sites.
- Never share personal info online, like address, phone number or social security number.
- Never buy anything online without your parent's permission.
- Never "friend" or talk to anyone online who you don't know.
- Always tell parents about any scary or negative messages or posts.
- Don't download anything without asking your parent first.
- Never post negative or private information about someone else online.
- Never share passwords with anyone else.

### Signs your child is being unsafe on the Internet

Even with guidelines, it can be easy for children to be involved in unsafe Internet habits. Social media is often a key culprit, especially for online bullying.

"There's potential for negative interactions on both sides," says Dr. Holland. "It's a lot easier to type something mean than to say something mean to someone's face. Kids can share mean things on social media without thinking about the consequences."

Some signs that your child may be involved in unsafe Internet habits include:

- Spending too much time online
- Becoming upset or depressed after going online
- Turning off the computer when you come into the room
- Pulling back from family life or friends

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## How to talk to your child about Internet safety

Talking with your child about what they do while online is the best way to make sure they are following safe practices. Talking with them about how you use social media is also important. If you are willing to talk about what you do online, it will encourage them to talk more about their own use.

When you talk with your child about social media use, approach your child in a loving way. Try to stay calm instead of responding with punishments right away. Talk to your child about why there needs to be changes, focusing on your child's safety

“Express your love and concern for the child's well-being,” says Dr. Holland. “Say, ‘Look I'm not trying to get you in trouble. I'm just concerned.’” If your child is unable to stop these behaviors, you may need to move on to limiting time online. You can also use apps or programs to block your child's access to unsafe sites. Always include your child when making rules for using the Internet. This helps them understand the rules and what happens when the rules are broken.