Microsoft

Let's talk online safety with kids

How and when do you talk to children about safely using tablets and computers, mobile phones, gaming consoles, and other devices? Well, it's never too early—or too late—so let's get started!

For young children. Your best approach is to sit with them and join in their digital activities, staying open to their questions and curiosity. As they grow, help them use new services and tools.

For tweens and teens. The most effective strategy is guidance, keeping communication open and positive. Ask them to show you the sites they visit, pages they create, games they play, what they talk about and with whom.

These can become the basis for agreeing on a clear set of rules for responsible use.

- Discuss the kinds of sites, apps, phone features, and games that they can use, based on their age and maturity and your family values. Discuss whether kids should be allowed to purchase items online.
- Talk about what information to keep private, designated hours for use, and guidelines for respectful communication.
- If you plan to monitor kids with family safety tools, explain why and what they'll do.
- Review rules as children mature and technologies and devices evolve.

Below you'll find practical pointers to help jump-start—or continue—those conversations.

Think before clicking

- When kids get unexpected or odd messages, even from friends, tell them not to open photos, songs, or other attachments or click links in those messages. Instead, they should first check with the sender by some means other than hitting "Reply."
- Talk with kids about downloading only legal software, games, music, and other content.

Be smart about mobile phones

- Help children lock their phones with PINs that they keep secret—even from best friends.
- Help younger ones manage their contacts, possibly restricting contact to approved numbers only. Tweens and teens should share their numbers only with those they know in person, and not on their profile pages.
- Teach kids to use GPS cautiously because it can be used to pinpoint where they are or tag the location of their photos.

Get help from technology

Boost your computer's security against Internet threats. Keep all software (including your web browser) current with automatic updating. Install antivirus and antispyware software from a trusted source. Microsoft can help you do this: **microsoft.com/security/pypc.aspx**.

Learn how to create strong passwords to protect all your computer and online accounts: **aka.ms/passwords-create**.

Family safety tools can help you block harmful content, manage the sites children visit and their time online, filter violent or explicit content, and monitor contacts. Microsoft offers tools like this: **aka.ms/compare-tools**.

Be the administrator of your home computers. Learn to create different user accounts (under step 2) so you can manage your kids' settings: **aka.ms/childsafety**.

Play it safe

Explore with kids the games they want to play. Check the ratings, and stick to well-known games and those from reputable sites. Together create family guidelines for game play:

- Should children play only against the game? Only with friends? Or with anyone?
- How many hours a day or week is appropriate?
- Are they ready to use text, voice, or webcam chat features? If so, with whom?

Think before you app

- Help kids choose apps that are appropriate for their age and maturity.
- Get apps that are well reviewed, and from reputable stores.
- Review the privacy policy together to find out what the app will do with location and other sensitive data.

Share with care

- Teach kids not to share personal information online—age, phone numbers, full names, photos, home and email addresses, even feelings—with anyone but close friends.
- Be clear that children should never say, text, or post anything that would hurt or embarrass someone. NO bullying. Period.
- Emphasize that kids should not make, send, or accept sexually provocative texts, photos, or videos.

Support safer social circles

- Show kids how to make social network pages private.
- Ask kids to think twice about who they accept as friends. Consider adding only those whom they or close friends have met in person or with whom they have friends in common.
- Encourage children to promote a positive image online, and be respectful with comments.

Teach kids what to do if there are problems

- Encourage children to trust their instincts. Ask them to:
  - Tell you if something or someone online makes them feel uncomfortable or threatened. Be clear that you won't punish them or curtail computer, game, or phone privileges because of someone else's actions.
  - Report objectionable behavior or content to the service or app.
- Of course, if the child is in immediate danger—someone threatens, harasses, or tries to lure the child into meeting in person—call the local police.

More helpful info

Protecting young children online:
aka.ms/Kids_safety_online

Protecting tweens and teens online:
aka.ms/tween-teen-safety

Play it safe when gaming online:
aka.ms/gaming_safety

Teach children mobile phone safety:
aka.ms/kids_mobile_safety

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