

How to Keep your Children Safe Online

5 ways to help keep your children's online experiences positive and safe

<https://www.unicef.org/>

As your child grows, it is likely they are spending more and more time online. There are so many positive things about being online like staying connected with friends and family, pursuing interests, and being part of communities. But it is not always a safe and positive experience for children. Here's how you can help your child maximize all the good things the internet and digital technologies have to offer, while protecting them against potential harm.

1. Set clear ground rules

Have honest conversations with your children about who they communicate with and how, and who can see what they post online. Explain that anything that goes online – pictures, videos, comments, things they share with others and what others post and share with them and about them – leaves behind a trail of information about them. To make sure they're leaving a positive “digital footprint”, they should be mindful about what they do and say online. Make sure they understand that discriminatory or inappropriate contact is never acceptable. No one should spread rumours or share hurtful or embarrassing stories or photos. What may seem like a harmless joke to one person can be deeply hurtful to others. If your child experiences something online that makes them feel upset, uncomfortable or scared, encourage them to tell you or a trusted adult immediately. Children often ‘know’ the perpetrators of online harassment or abuse, so it is important to help them to be alert and know how to respond to any problematic behaviours they encounter online. Work with your child to establish rules on how, when and where to use devices.

2. Use technology to protect them

Check that your child's device is always updated and running the latest software, and that privacy settings are on and configured to minimize data collection so that people don't see any information that you don't want them to see. Help your child learn to keep personal information private. If your privacy settings are not secure, anyone can see your information. Keep webcams covered when not in use. For younger children, tools such as parental controls like safe search, can help keep online experiences positive. Be cautious of free online resources, including educational ones. If your child is asked to provide a photo or their full name, be sure it is a trusted website.

3. Spend time with them online

Create opportunities for your child to have safe and positive online interactions with friends, family and you. Connecting with others can be an excellent opportunity for you to model kindness and empathy in virtual interactions. Help your child recognize and avoid misinformation and disinformation, age-inappropriate content and content that can potentially cause anxiety or other harm. Introduce them to trustworthy sources of information. Children can be exposed to advertising that may promote unhealthy foods, gender stereotypes or age-inappropriate material. Help them to recognize online ads and use the opportunity to explore together what is wrong with some of the negative messaging you see. Spend time with your child to identify age-appropriate apps, games and other online entertainment. Be alert for apps that may have harmful content or pose privacy risks.

4. Model healthy online habits

Promote positive online behaviour by practicing it yourself. Be mindful of the example you set and what you share online about your child, including their photos and videos. Encourage your child to be kind online and to support friends and family by sending positive messages or emojis. If they have classes online, encourage them to be respectful of others and to be mindful of what can be seen on camera to maintain privacy. Be alert if your child appears to be upset or secretive with online activities. Reassure them that experiencing abuse or harassment is never their fault and they shouldn't keep it a secret. Familiarize yourself with their school's digital learning policies. Seek out local helplines and resources for the latest issues in keeping children safe online and how to report [cyberbullying](#) or inappropriate content.

5. Let them have fun and express themselves

Spending time online can be a great opportunity for your children to be creative, learn, use their voices to share their views and support causes that are important to them. Encourage your child to use resources on the internet to help them get up and get moving, like online exercise videos for children and video games that require physical movement. Remember to balance online activities with an active lifestyle and offline recreation for a healthy balance in all aspects of life.

How to Keep your children safe online

PLEASE COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONNAIRE FOR ½ CREDIT

- 1) True or False: There are many positive things about being online.
- 2) Have _____ conversations with your children about who they communicate with and how and who can see what they post online.
- 3) True or False: Pictures, videos, comments, and things they share with others leave a trail of information about them.
- 4) What seems like a _____ joke to one person can be deeply _____ to others.
- 5) True or False: Children often “know” the perpetrators of online harassment or abuse.
- 6) According to the article, what are three ways to use technology to protect children online? 1) _____ 2) _____ 3) _____
- 7) True or False: Connecting with others is not an opportunity for you to model kindness and empathy in virtual interactions.
- 8) What is one way to promote positive online behavior?
- 9) Be _____ if your child appears to be upset or secretive with online activities
- 10) True or False: you should encourage your child to use online resources to get them up and moving.

Answer Key

- 1) **True** or False: There are many positive things about being online.
- 2) Have **honest** conversations with your children about who they communicate with and how and who can see what they post online.
- 3) **True** or False: Pictures, videos, comments, and things they share with others leave a trail of information about them.
- 4) What seems like a **harmless** joke to one person can be deeply **hurtful** to others.
- 5) **True** or False: Children often “know” the perpetrators of online harassment or abuse.
- 6) According to the article, what are three ways to use technology to protect children online? 1) **Child device should be updated and running the latest software** 2) **Keep personal information private** 3) **Keep webcams covered**
- 7) True or **False**: Connecting with others is not an opportunity for you to model kindness and empathy in virtual interactions.
- 8) What is one way to promote positive online behavior? **By practicing it yourself.**
- 9) Be **alert** if your child appears to be upset or secretive with online activities
- 10) **True** or False: you should encourage your child to use online resources to get them up and moving.