

# Keeping up with children on the internet:

## A guide for parents



### The internet

The internet always changing, keeping up to date with children's use of technology is challenging for many adults. It can be hard to supervise what young people are viewing and creating online, who they are chatting to and texting, and what they are downloading. Many children may have better technical skills than you; however they still need advice and protection when using internet and mobile technologies.

**This guide will help you to understand online safety issues and give you practical advice as you talk to your children so they can get the most out of the internet and use it positively and safely.**

*Child net SMART rules have been written especially for young people to remind them how to be careful online.*



**S—SAFE:** Keep safe by being careful not to give out personal information - such as your name, email, phone number, home address, or school name - to people who you don't trust online.

**M—MEETING:** Meeting someone you have only been in touch with online can be dangerous. Only do so with your parent's or carer's permission and even then only when they can be present.

**A—ACCEPTING:** Accepting emails, IM messages, or opening files, pictures or texts from people you don't know or trust can lead to problems - they may contain viruses or nasty messages!

**R—RELIABLE:** Someone online may be lying about who they are, and information you find on the internet may not be reliable.

**T—TELL:** Tell your parent, carer or a trusted adult if someone or something makes you feel uncomfortable or worried.

### The internet on mobile phones

The issues about being safe online apply equally to mobile phones, especially as most phones now have internet access. Whilst there are opportunities in terms of communication, interaction and entertainment in young people having mobile phones, children can be at risk of accessing and distributing inappropriate content and images and talking to strangers away from your supervision. Children can receive abusive text messages, and be vulnerable to commercial mobile phone pressures and run up large phone bills. It is very important to encourage your children not to give out their mobile numbers to strangers either online or in real life and help them to use their mobile safely and responsibly.

### Can't I just use a filter?

Filtering and monitoring software can help to block a lot of inappropriate material but **they are not 100% effective and are no substitute for adult involvement and supervision.**

For more advice see:

<http://kids.getnetwise.org/safetyguide/>

### So what are the risks?

The risks for children when using the internet and mobile phones include **inappropriate**:

**CONTACT:** Potential contact from someone online who may wish to bully or abuse them. It is important for children to remember that online friends may not be who they say they are, no matter how long they have been talking to them or how friendly they seem. Children must keep personal details private and agree not to meet unsupervised with anyone they have only contacted via the internet. It's also important that you discuss with your child who they can report inappropriate conversations to and how.

**CONTENT:** Inappropriate material is available to children online. Consider using filtering software and agree ground rules about what services you are happy for your children to use. Give them strategies for dealing with any content they are not comfortable with - such as turning off the computer screen. There can also be legal consequences of copying copyrighted content. Young people need to be aware that plagiarising content and downloading copyrighted material without the author's permission is illegal.

**COMMERCIALISM:** Young people's privacy can be invaded by aggressive advertising and marketing schemes.

Encourage your children to keep their personal information private, learn how to delete pop-ups and block spam emails, and use a family email address when filling in online forms.

## What you can do right now?

- **Get involved in your children's internet use.** Discussing the opportunities and risks with children involves helping them to see for themselves how they might get into and out of difficulty.
- **Make sure your children know the SMART rules.**
- **Agree rules as a family about personal information, time spent online, and contacting people via the internet.**
- **Create a family email address for registering online.**
- **Bookmark your family's favourite websites.**
- **Add [www.virtualglobaltaskforce.com](http://www.virtualglobaltaskforce.com) to your favourites if you ever need to report online abuse to the police.**
- **Encourage children to talk to someone they trust if they feel worried or upset by something that happens online.**



The CEOP button shown above is a safe and secure way to report any online abuse to the police. The button is found on many websites and reports can also be made online by visiting:

<http://ceop.police.uk/safety-centre/>



tumblr.

## Social networking sites and blogging

These are places online where young people can create personalised web-pages in order to express themselves and share ideas and opinions with others. The sites enable them to meet and socialise online by linking to other sites and therefore create an environment for the whole of their social network to easily exchange information and chat.

### What are the risks?

Personal information and contact details can be contained in a profile or could be disclosed during online conversations. Such information can lead to children and their social network receiving unwanted contact from inappropriate people. Children can also post comments or images of themselves or others online, which may compromise their or their friends' safety or be used as a means to bully others.

### What can you do?

Learn about and teach children how to use these applications responsibly. Check the privacy preferences available and insist children make their blogs accessible only to people known offline. Encourage young people to keep their personal information to a minimum and think very carefully before including a personal photograph of themselves or their friends in their profile. Photos online can easily be copied, changed and used elsewhere, and can potentially stay online forever. **For further information visit:**

[www.childnet-int.org/blogsafety](http://www.childnet-int.org/blogsafety).

# More Resources

The Childnet International website gives internet safety advice and links for young people, parents, teachers, and other organisations.

[www.childnet-int.org](http://www.childnet-int.org)

Childnet's Chatdanger website gives details about the potential dangers on interactive services like chat, IM, online games, email, and mobiles. Read true stories and find out how to keep safe while chatting online.

[www.chatdanger.com](http://www.chatdanger.com)

Childnet's Sorted website is a resource produced entirely by young people for young people and adults on the issues of internet security. It gives important information and advice on how to protect computers from the dangers of viruses, phishing scams, spyware and Trojans.

[www.childnet-int.org/sorted](http://www.childnet-int.org/sorted)

The Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) Centre's website houses a range of information on how to stay safe online. It includes a unique link to the Virtual Global Taskforce that enables parents and young people to make reports of actual or attempted abuse online which the police will investigate.

[www.ceop.gov.uk](http://www.ceop.gov.uk)

The Internet Watch Foundation website is the UK's hotline for reporting illegal online content. It deals specifically with child abuse images hosted worldwide and criminally obscene and incitement to racial hatred content hosted in the UK.

[www.iwf.org.uk](http://www.iwf.org.uk)

Childnet runs a special parents seminar which can be held in your school and there are further advice and resources for parents on Childnet's Kidsmart website, see: [www.kidsmart.org.uk/parents](http://www.kidsmart.org.uk/parents)

Or come in to school and speak to your class teacher for further advice or support about any E safety issues.

Also have a look on our school website

<http://st-gregorys.co.uk/>

If you go to the tab - E safety you will see a really useful booklet 'What App Parent guide,' which is great at explaining the types of popular social networks and websites children are using today. It describes issues you may encounter with these sites and explains how any issues can be reported.