



# 101 INTERNET SAFETY TIPS FOR KIDS

**Make sure your kids are safe online**



# Introduction

Using the Internet has become a way of life for this century's kids. As technology continues to advance, the Internet is essential for communication, education and fun. However, the advances in real-time information sharing can pose serious threats to children. In addition to the Internet predators that many parents are aware of, children are also at risk for stalking, bullying, addiction, legal consequences and other on-line dangers. When allowing children to use the Internet, parents should use the tips listed below to ensure that all members of the family can enjoy a safe and fun on-line environment.

## 1. Set Rules.

Determine what your child needs to use the computer for. This could be school-related or just for entertainment. Make sure your child knows what he or she is and is not allowed to do on the computer. Boundaries can be set based on a child's age and maturity level, and can include site restrictions, program use, and activities. Establish consequences for breaking the rules.

## 2. Make a Pact.

Create a family contract regarding Internet use. This document can contain house rules about on-line conduct. Basic templates can be found on-line, and you can modify the document to include your children's input when preparing a final draft. You may also want to include facts and statistics about on-line safety to remind children of the dangers. Have children read and sign the contract, and post it near the computer area for easy reference.

## 3. Take the Quiz.

Many Internet safety websites offer on-line multiple choice quizzes that children can take to test their knowledge about being safe on-line. After discussing Internet safety with your child, suggest they take one of the quizzes to show you what they know.

#### **4.Create a Schedule.**

While the Internet can be fun and useful, children should be involved in activities outside of using a computer. One child using the Internet more than others can also result in jealousy and arguments. Make a schedule with fair time limits to allow all family members to have access to the Internet when necessary. Determine time limits based on how much Internet use is necessary for homework and other activities. Outside of homework research, no more than an hour on-line daily could be a good rule of thumb.

#### **5.Computer Area.**

Keep the computer in an open, family area instead of in a child's bedroom. This will make it easier to keep an eye on their activities. If there are multiple computers in your home, consider designating one as a family computer and password restricting access to the others.

#### **6.Home Alone.**

Until you are confident that rules can be followed, do not let children use the Internet unless a parent is home to monitor activity. Passwords to block access to the computer can be used to enforce this practice.

#### **7.Block Viruses.**

Be sure that personal computers and laptops are equipped with virus detection software that scans and updates on a regular basis. A good program will also monitor spyware and alert you of any threats.

#### **8.Block Pop-ups.**

Set the Internet browser to block pop-up websites and advertisements. This will allow for cleaner web surfing, as well as minimize the chances of children viewing offensive material.

## **9. Limit Browser Functionalities.**

Modify Internet browser settings so they do not automatically save website information, like user names and passwords. Clear cookies and temporary Internet files on a weekly basis.

## **10. Protect Wireless Networks.**

If wireless Internet access is used, protect the wireless network connection with a password and firewall to keep unwanted users out.

## **11. Consider Kid-Geared Browsers.**

Several companies have created browsers made specifically for younger users. These Internet browsers feature built-in filtering capabilities to protect young eyes from unwanted and explicit material. Browsers like Glubble and Buddy Browser include features to disable external chat and encourage media sharing and social interactions with family and other people the child already knows.

## **12. Suggest Family-Friendly Websites.**

Find educational and wholesome websites for your child to visit, and add them to a bookmark list. Show your child how to access the bookmark menu to view the sites. Good suggestions include the websites for your child's favorite educational television programs, government-sponsored educational websites, and school or community websites.

## **13. Create Separate User Accounts.**

If a home computer is used by all family members, it may be a good idea to give a unique log-on identifier to each user. This can help minimize the risk of important files or folders being accidentally deleted by kids. Parents' user accounts should have full rights to view and change all files saved on the computer, as well the ability to add or delete users.

#### **14. Create Solid Passwords.**

Teach children to create passwords that are easy for them to remember but difficult for others to guess. Strong passwords will include numbers and letters, and should not be obvious (like a name and birth date.)

Teach children how to enter their password when logging in, and show them how to make sure that the Caps Lock is not engaged if the password is case-sensitive.

#### **15. Change Passwords Regularly.**

Get in the habit of changing password for computer access and websites on a regular basis, every 60 days or so. Be sure that all family members update passwords by scheduling a day when everyone makes their changes.

#### **16. Know Your Kids' Passwords.**

Keep a list of websites your child uses and the user names and passwords for each. This is useful for monitoring their activity and reminding them of a password when it is forgotten. Make sure they give you're their new password if they change it.

#### **17. Protect Passwords.**

Teach children not to share their user names or passwords with friends and strangers. Their passwords should be known only by them and their parents. Have them change their password if it is discovered by someone else.

#### **18. Program Installation.**

Don't allow kids to install new programs unless supervised. Knowing what is being installed on the computer and where it came from can prevent risk of virus infection. Adult installation of new programs will also ensure that new programs are installed correctly.