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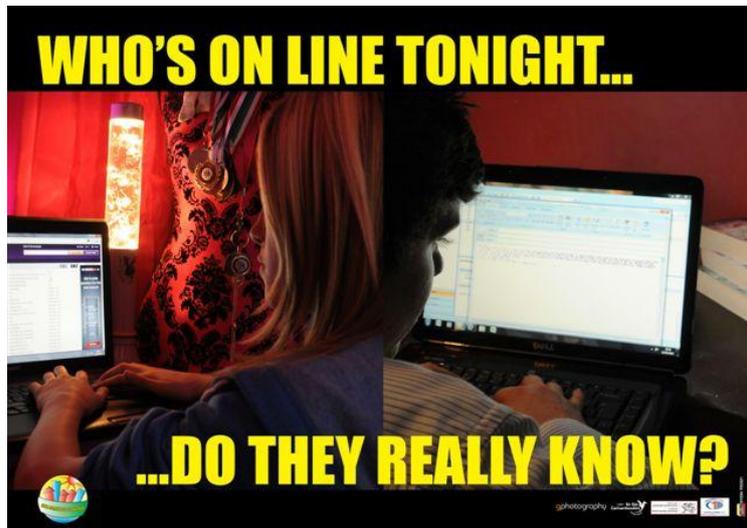
Safer Communities Action Group

Internet safety

The internet can be a wonderful place to learn, shop, play games, talk to your friends, and more. Unfortunately, there are also predators, identity thieves, and other people online who may try to harm you or your family. In order to be safe online, it's important for you and your children to be aware of the dangers.

Many children are confident that they know how to be safe online. However, there are a couple of reasons why children are often more at risk.

1. The first reason is that they may not always think about the consequences of their actions, which can cause them to share too much information about themselves.
2. The second reason is that children are sometimes specifically targeted by cyber bullies or predators.



Below are some general tips that you can use when teaching your children about online safety:

- **Learn everything you can about the internet.** Educating yourself on the latest threats facing children online (e.g., cyber bullying, sexting, etc.) will not only help you understand the risks; it will also help you talk to your children
- **Set standards for what your children can and cannot do online.** It's important to make rules for your children so they know what's expected of them. Don't wait until something bad happens to start creating guidelines.
- **Teach your children to keep personal information private.** It's usually a bad idea to post personal information online such as phone numbers, addresses, or credit cards. If a criminal gains access to this information, they can use it to harm you or your family. For example, your child should understand that he/she should not post detailed information about his/her whereabouts.
- **Teach your children to use social networking sites safely.** Sites like Facebook allow children (and adults) to share photos and videos of themselves, have conversations with friends and strangers, and more. If your children share something with their friends, it's still possible for it to get into the wrong hands. Generally, they should only post something online if they're comfortable with everyone in the world seeing it.



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- **Encourage your children to come to you if they encounter a problem.** If your child gets into trouble online, you'll want them to come to you instead of hiding it. Keep in mind that your children could accidentally encounter a bad site, even if they're doing everything right.
- **Make sure your child knows never to meet someone they met online face-to-face without first talking with you about the situation.**
- **Passwords.** Tell your child to never share their passwords with anyone, including friends.
- **Talk to your children about internet use.** Talk to your children regularly about how they use the internet. If they're in the habit of talking to you about the internet, they'll be more willing to come to you if there is a problem.
- **Monitor your child's mobile phone usage.** Review text messages sent and received, including images downloaded and uploaded.

Minimising Risks at Home

If you have a home computer that your children use, there are some **extra precautions** that you can take to make it safer. Remember that your children will probably use many other computers, and these precautions won't keep them safe when they're not at home. Consider other internet-enabled devices such as mobile phones, laptops and games consoles. Also, keep in mind that these are just suggestions; depending on your parenting style and your children's ages, you may choose not to use all of these.

- **Keep the computer in the living room or in another common area.** By putting the computer in a common area of the house, you can reduce the chances that they'll talk to strangers or visit inappropriate websites. For teens, you may choose to give them more freedom about where they use the computer (especially if they have their own computers).
- **Install antivirus software.** Viruses and other malware are a risk for any computer (although Macs are a little bit safer). To protect your computer, you can install antivirus software such as [BitDefender](#), [Norton](#), or [Kaspersky](#).
- **Use a child-friendly search engine.** Regular search engines may return results with inappropriate content that you don't want your children to see. However, there are some search engines that are designed to only return child-friendly results (although there is still the possibility of inappropriate results getting through). Examples include [ChildrenClick!](#), [Yahoo! Children](#), and [Ask Children](#).
- **Use parental controls.** Windows and Mac OS X allow you to add parental controls to user accounts. These include **time limits**, **website restrictions**, controlling which **applications** can be opened, and **more**. You can also buy parental control software like [Net Nanny](#), which has versions for Windows and Mac.

Further advice

- Please visit our website for more links and advice: www.safercommunitiesactiongroup.org

Sources : <http://www.gcflearnfree.org/internetsafetyforchildren/1> and www.fosi.org