

Helping Your Teenager to Stay Safe Online

The following 10 tips are from www.netsafe.org.nz, and serve as an excellent starting point for ensuring that your son/daughter enjoys safe, rewarding online experiences.

1. SET EXPECTATIONS

Talk to your child about the type of behaviours you'd like them to adopt. For example, how long they should spend online, what apps and social media sites you'd like them to use and what is appropriate content to view. This will be different depending on the age of your child, and what you feel comfortable with. Technological options like parental controls can help, but it needs to be teamed with online safety education.

Find out more about how much time kids should be spending online. Find out about how to use parental controls.

2. UNDERSTAND WHAT THEY DO ONLINE

Talk to your kids about what they're using the internet for. What's involved? Who's in their network? What information do they share? Are they using the internet to learn? To communicate and create friendships with others? To create music or videos? Really listen to what they have to say – what might seem like 'just a game' to you, could in fact be a way for them to connect with people who have similar interests.

Showing an interest in the things they do helps to build your understanding of what their online world looks like and creates an environment that makes it easier to have more difficult conversations about in the future.

3. IF YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND IT, TRY IT

You need to understand the technology to better understand the challenges that young people face online. Explore the websites and apps your child uses to improve your knowledge, and take the time to read terms and conditions. You could even ask them to show you how it works, as a way to start conversation around online safety. As a start, check out our guide to Snapchat for parents.

4. SET A GOOD EXAMPLE

How often do you use your laptop or smartphone at the dinner table? How many angry posts have you published? Take a look at the way you use technology while young people are around. If you see something that troubles you – change it.

How good is your knowledge about online safety, privacy settings and even online shopping?

Be better equipped to help by expanding your own knowledge – read the Staying Safe Online Guide.

5. TEACH THEM THE BASICS

Once your knowledge is up to scratch, teach them the basics of online safety – here's four ideas of what to start with.

a. Strong passwords. A strong password helps protect the information in your online profiles or accounts.

Teach your child how to choose strong passwords, by reading how to choose a good password.

b. Information to protect online. Login details and passwords, Bank account details, Home address, Phone numbers, Birthdate, Personal information that could be used to guess security questions for online accounts.

You should also talk about personal details they could share online, such as where they are and the school they attend. This includes sharing their location – some apps allow you to share your current location with friends, or publicly.

c. Not everything is as it seems

It can seem like common knowledge to adults, but sometimes kids don't understand that people are not always who they say they are online. Talk to them about friending or communicating with people

they don't know offline. For young children especially, they shouldn't friend someone online that they don't know personally offline.

d. Digital footprint

Teach your child that they need to think about what they post online, and that what they post online leaves a "digital footprint" about them. Find out more about digital footprints.

6. SETTING UP SOCIAL MEDIA

How old should kids be before they get social media accounts? The minimum sign up age for Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter and YouTube is 13. Of course, if they're under the age minimum it's always better that they're honest with you about using an app or site, rather than doing it behind your back. This way, you can help them to stay safe online.

Tips for setting up social media accounts: Make sure you've taught them the online safety basics above, Help your child to set up the account, Depending on their age, use your email address to sign up, Enter their actual birth year so they're less likely to see inappropriate content
Become their friend, or follow them, Teach them about the safety tools available.

7. GIVE THEM THE TOOLS THEY NEED

Most social media organisations have a safety centre with tools for staying safe online. Take a look at the safety centres of the apps or websites your child uses, and teach them how to use the tools available. Start with how to block people, how to report content and how to use the privacy settings.

Social media safety centres

Facebook • Snapchat • Instagram • YouTube • Twitter

8. ONLINE BULLYING

One in five young people in New Zealand have been the target of online bullying. Teach your child what to do if they're targeted online, so they have the tools to deal with it if it happens. Ask them what advice they'd give a friend who was experiencing online bullying. This is a good way to understand how they would deal with these kinds of situations if they were to experiencing it themselves.

Make sure you also talk to them about how you expect them to behave towards others online.

Let them know that if it's not acceptable offline, it's not acceptable online

Ask your kids to think about the person on the "other side" of the screen

Lead by example – think about how you're behaving toward others online

Find out more about how to deal with online bullying.

9. WHAT ABOUT "SEXTING"?

When it's appropriate you should talk to your kids about the risks of sharing personal information and sexual images and what can happen to those photos or videos once created and shared. Find out more about sexting and how to deal with it.

10. WHAT IF SOMETHING DOES HAPPEN?

Let them know the options that are available to them – talking to a trusted adult, their school or Netsafe. We have a team of friendly people offering free and confidential advice for everyone in New Zealand. We can help young people with online bullying, abuse, harassment and other challenges they might face online. Let them know we can help.

If they come to you for help, count to ten before you react. When young people ask for help from adults, it's important to understand this was a big decision. If you overreact or take away the technology, then you're less likely to be the first port of call next time something happens. Focus on fixing the issue, not on punishing or confiscating their devices.

If you need help or advice, about any online issue you can contact Netsafe. **0508 NETSAFE (0508 638 723)**
– queries@netsafe.org.nz – [netsafe.org.nz/report](https://www.netsafe.org.nz/report)