

Keeping Up with Technology Issues

Raising children in a digital era can seem overwhelming at times.

The Internet can offer incredible possibilities for kids — as long as parents, children and teens are aware of the risks.

- ▶ Apps and devices are changing all the time, and it can be hard to keep up.
- ▶ With more and more people regularly connected and meeting online, there are new things for parents to think about as we try to protect our children and teach them responsible and appropriate uses of technology.

Internet Safety and Digital Parenting

- ▶ It is increasingly important for parents to teach their children how to use technology in healthy and safe ways. It is critical that parents supervise their children's online activities.
- ▶ Parents should also try to set a good example by thinking about how much time they spend online.
- ▶ Overall, moderation is helpful for managing technology use in homes.
 - It is increasingly difficult to limit access to devices and the Internet, but appropriate rules and boundaries are vital.
 - Finding the right balance of online and offline activities for your family is key.

Key Health and Safety Tips

- ▶ Keep phones and devices out of bedrooms. Many children and teens lose out on sleep because of using technology at night. If possible, keep a charging station in a central location in the house and make sure your children's devices are plugged into it before bedtime.
- ▶ Know your children's login information, passwords and email addresses.
 - It is important that you are able to randomly check how your children are using their devices as a safety measure.
 - Ask what username or character names your children use. Make sure they do not contain any information that could identify your children.
- ▶ Restrict your children's use of adult search engines. Show your children how to use child-safe search engines instead (e.g. Yahoo! Kids, KidRex®).
- ▶ Try to build a trusting technology relationship with your children.
 - Talk openly about the benefits and risks of technologies.
 - Communicate often with your children about their use of devices and what they are doing online. Children need to know they can come to their parents when challenging issues arise in their digital lives.
 - Explain to your children that there is a lot of really good information on the Internet, but the internet is uncensored and there is a ton of inappropriate material online. Finding that material can be confusing or even upsetting. Make sure your kids know they can talk to you anytime.
 - Tell your children what to do if they connect to someone or find something that makes them feel uncomfortable. Reassure them they can tell you about problems without losing their internet privileges or getting in trouble.
- ▶ Make updates on your devices automatic; they add up-to-date "patches" to block threats.
- ▶ Monitor how your children are using their smartphones. Discuss all the things to think about before sending text messages, updating social networking profiles, sending photos/videos, accessing apps, or downloading online content. Once things are sent, they are out of your control.
- ▶ Put tape or a sticky over laptop or iPad cameras when they're not in use. People can find ways to access your images remotely.
- ▶ Many mobile digital devices have GPS, which allows us to use map Apps to find our way around. But that brings with it some dangers. Children should turn off location services on their smartphones / digital device cameras to avoid being tracked by strangers.
- ▶ Vault apps have now come into the social media / application scene. Vault apps give users the ability to hide content (pictures, videos, chat conversations). It is important that parents learn more about this option.

- ▶ Visit the website of the operating system used on your children's computer (e.g. Microsoft® Windows 8, OS X Mountain Lion™, etc.) and the gaming system used by your child (e.g. Microsoft Xbox 360®, Nintendo® Wii, etc.) to find out about the parental controls you can activate to keep your children safer.
- ▶ Teach your children to create secure passwords that others can't easily guess. Make sure they know to use a combination of numbers, characters and letters (both upper- and lower-case). Remind them regularly – do not share passwords with anyone.
- ▶ Tell your children not to open any email attachments if they don't know the sender. Hackers are always looking for ways to spread viruses and get into our devices in sneaky ways.
- ▶ Create family Internet guidelines. Discuss them with your children regularly.

For more information and detailed tips, see the following sources that were used in producing this paper.

<https://bccpac.bc.ca/upload/2017/02/Internet-Safety-Guide-10-12-yr-olds1.pdf>

Raising Digitally Responsible Youth. A Parent's Guide. <https://bccpac.bc.ca/images/Documents/Resources/Raising-Digitally-Responsible-Youth---Parents-Guide-Ministry-of-Education-2018.pdf>

The Canadian Centre for Child Protection. *The Door That's Not Locked. Safety and the Internet.*

