

Helping Children and Teens Understand: What Goes Online Stays Online ... and Everyone Can See It

Children and teens need to understand that how they represent themselves online will be evaluated and assessed by future employers or post-secondary institutes.

- ▶ They should be very thoughtful about what they share through social media.
- ▶ They can't control how other users will share their information.

Explain that once photos are on the Internet, or sent through mobile devices, it is easy to lose control over what happens to them.

- ▶ Explain to your children that pictures / videos should only be shared between family members and friends.
- ▶ Encourage your children to check with you before sending or posting any pictures / videos online or through a mobile device.

Remind your children that anything they post online or send electronically is permanent.

- ▶ Discuss the difference between public and private information. Personal information is private, and shouldn't be shared on the Internet without parental permission, because personal information can be misused. Take care before you share.
- ▶ Teach your children the safety strategy: "If Asked to Share and Your Parents Aren't Aware — SAY NO!" Help your children understand that they should tell you before sharing personal information online. Talk about what they might be asked to share. Practice how they will say no.
- ▶ Explain that not everyone is who they say they are online. People can pretend to be older, younger, or a different gender. Make sure your children know that they should be cautious about what people say online and should not trust strangers.

- ▶ **Let your children know that you will monitor their online activities because the Internet is a public place.**
 - Check your children's files in "My Pictures" to see what images they are sending, receiving, and saving.
 - Monitor your children's webcam use. Find out whether they are posting or sharing pictures or videos using their smartphone.
- ▶ **Explain that appropriate behaviour offline and online is the same.**
 - Encourage your children to trust their instincts and block anyone who asks questions online that seem 'weird' (e.g. questions about puberty, sex, etc.). Explain why it is important to tell an adult if this happens.
 - Explain that it's illegal to threaten someone, and your children should tell a safe adult if they are threatened online.
- ▶ **Teach your children to connect with online friends who they also know offline. Explain that the Internet isn't the best place to make new friends. Talk with your children about what friendship is and isn't. For example ...**
 - Friends will not insist that you keep your online relationship a secret from your parents
 - Friends will not ask you to share information or photos that make you feel uncomfortable
 - Online friends will not ask you to provide confidential details about where you live, how to find you, private information about your family, etc.
- ▶ **Assist your children with the creation of online profiles when they join gaming sites or social networks. Teach them to fill in only what is necessary, leaving out identifying or revealing information.**
- ▶ **Google yourself and your family. Look for your address, emails, phone numbers, social media usernames, etc. See what shows up before others do.**