



CYBERSAFETY FOR KIDS: HOW TO HAVE THE “TALK”

NOTE: This is a reprint of an article from Envision Consulting, LLC, a third-party vendor that Hughes Financial Services uses for its computer networking and cybersecurity issues. The article was authored by Eduardo Ulloa, MBA.

Did you know [1 in 3 children](#) have been a victim of cybercrime and or/cyberbullying? Since our kids are spending so much time on the Internet, the question is how cyber safe are they?

As Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat and other social media sites gain popularity, so, too, is the chance a predator is lurking online. [According to the FBI](#), **70% of kids accept a friend request from a stranger, and more than 95% of teens access the Internet on their mobile devices.**

Amanda, 13, became a [victim of an online predator](#) posing as someone who was a few years older. This stranger sent many texts and funny pictures to her until she was finally caught.

How do you keep your child safe online? Here are some tips:

START AN OPEN AND HONEST COMMUNICATION

“I do talk about the use of social networking sites with my kids, and they know what we believe is inappropriate,” says [Jane Wood, a mother of two](#).

If you want that level of trust to be open, letting your kids know you want to protect them will build their confidence. Make sure you talk to them about the dangers on the Internet.

THE GOLDEN RULE IS NEVER TALK TO STRANGERS

The same rules that apply to real life also apply online. Parents should tell their children not to chat with or email anyone they don't know.

If they have a weird interaction or someone asks them for a private discussion, you should be told immediately.

TEACH THEM TO KEEP PRIVATE INFORMATION PRIVATE

Educate your kids on why their private information should remain private.

For example, if they are signing up on a website, tell them to use their nicknames rather than their real names. Also, let them know they shouldn't give out their home address or date of birth to anyone.

Apart from that, your kids also need to know about the dangers of oversharing pictures as well as broadcasting everything they do on social media. Such practices give predators and cybercriminals a great deal of information about them and your family, which they can then use to engage in conversations.

TRACK YOUR KIDS' CELL PHONES

Rather than checking your kid's cell phone often, you could easily track their online activities by using cell phone monitoring software. This will help you keep track of what your children are doing as well as give accurate data of their contacts and most visited websites.

Some smartphones' device tracking capabilities, such as "Find my iPhone," "My Friends app to know where they are," and "Spybubble" or "PhoneSheriff" are nice tracking apps that can help you monitor your child's online activities. [You can find third-party 2017 reviews or the many options available here.](#)

However, ensure your kids are aware you are tracking their device and understand why you are doing it. They should know it's because you want to guarantee their safety and it's not a sign of mistrust. This will help create an honor system.

RESTRICT THEIR ACCESS ONLINE

You can also restrict your child's Internet access by blocking certain websites that are not deemed appropriate for them.

A good tool for this is [OpenDNS](#). It allows for parental control, customizable filtering, and retains the Internet stats for the past year on the home network.

CONCLUSION

As parents, we must be vigilant in protecting our children from online dangers. No matter how old your kids are, it is always good to check in with them regularly and see what they are doing online. Being proactive will go a long way in helping them remain cybersafe.

[Click here for an additional website that has a variety of resources on this subject.](#)

[Download the E-Guide: Parent's Guide to Protecting Your Family Online](#)

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