

# How do I keep my child safe on the internet?

## Project Prevent and Address Bullying (PPAB)

for Students with Disabilities

For Parents

Northern Illinois University | School Psychology Program

It can be difficult to know **what internet content is appropriate for your children and how much freedom** to give them on the internet. These guidelines can help you ensure the safety of your child in the digital world.

### Monitoring your child

- The first step is to have open and honest conversations with your children about internet use. Make your child feel comfortable approaching you about what is happening online and ask questions about what they or their friends are doing online.
- Establish rules for online usage before your child embarks on the internet.
  - Limit the location and amount of time that your child can use the internet. Some parents keep the family computer in a central location or take their child's phone an hour before bedtime.
  - Consider requiring your child to talk to you before downloading new apps and social media.
  - Consider requiring your child to "friend" or "add" you when they open a social media profile.
- Monitoring is important because children may have difficulty thinking through the consequences of their posts. For early users, review posts before they submit them and look for teaching opportunities if you discover something inappropriate, unkind, or unwise that has already been posted.
- As your child demonstrates responsible behavior online, you may be able to monitor them less. While some children require heavier guidance with technology, as your child learns to be safe and responsible online, you can gradually supervise them less.

### Privacy in the digital world

- Discourage your child from sharing private information online, such as their address, phone number, and school name. Remind them to think about what may be revealed in pictures (e.g., a picture in front of their street address or their location being tagged through Location Services).
- Provide guidance to your child about interacting with strangers online.
  - On social media sites, only connect with people you know.
  - Online gaming often involves talking to strangers and parents should monitor closely.
  - Tell your child that a stranger should never tell you to keep online contact a secret and to tell you if this ever happens.
- Explain the importance of privacy controls and how to use them. Show your children how to make themselves harder to find online and how to hide aspects of their profiles from strangers.
- Discuss the importance of using strong passwords and only sharing passwords with you, the parent.



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### Being a good digital citizen

- Teach your child to treat others with respect in person and in online spaces. Teach them that they should not post anything online that they would not say to someone's face.
- Regularly remind your child that anything they post online is permanent. If they say anything mean or damaging to themselves or others, their post can be shared or screenshotted even if they try to delete it.
- Help your child be aware that not everything on the internet is authentic, and encourage them to question sources and ask for your help when needed.
- Model and reinforce appropriate digital behavior. Praise positive behavior as you see it occurring and be aware of how your own online presence can influence your child.
- Talk with your child about when it is appropriate and not appropriate to use their devices. For example, you may want to limit device use at a restaurant or when having a face-to-face conversation.

### Resources

Here are some websites that provide internet safety resources:

Website	Content and uses
<b>PBS Kids Internet Webonauts Academy</b> <a href="http://pbskids.org/webonauts">http://pbskids.org/webonauts</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Has games for 8- to 10-year-olds</li><li>• Provides tips for parents on how to use the games to talk to your child about internet safety</li></ul>
<b>FBI Safe Online Surfing</b> <a href="https://sos.fbi.gov">https://sos.fbi.gov</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Has games for 3rd through 8th graders</li></ul>
<b>Common Sense Media</b> <a href="Commonsensemedia.org">Commonsensemedia.org</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provides games and videos.</li><li>• Reviews apps, providing information on a variety of factors such as educational value, ease of play, violence, language, and more</li></ul>
<b>Family Online Safety Institute</b> <a href="www.fosi.org">www.fosi.org</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Has information about how to be a good digital citizen</li><li>• Provides example online family safety contracts</li></ul>
<a href="Healthychildren.org">Healthychildren.org</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provides applications for creating a personalized family media plan and a personalized media use plan based on your child's age</li></ul>

It is important to note that there are many benefits to the internet. Encouraging your child to be **technology-savvy** and to **use digital tools for learning** will help your child to become a life-long learner. Additionally, it is important to teach your child to behave in the same respectful and responsible way both on and offline.

Find additional handouts on our website at [go.niu.edu/PPAB](http://go.niu.edu/PPAB)



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