

Tech Medics Tech Notes

Brought to you by South Central Communications - Home of the Tech Medics

Internet Safety Tips for Tweens and Teens

We live in a digital age. People of all Ages are using virtual online communities much more often for their social interactions. Social networking sites, chat rooms, and games are some of the ways to socialize online. It is important to follow certain safety measures when visiting these types of sites.

Here is an article from *Scholastic* that shares some good online safety tips.

“Get tips on how to keep your connected child safe online.

By Deb Levine

If you’re reading this, I don’t need to tell you that for many tweens and teens, social networking is practically synonymous with social life. Now that they’ve hit middle and high school, it may be unrealistic to expect our kids to be open books about what they do online. But talking to them frankly about the real risks of social networking is more important than ever. Get the conversation started with these tips:

1. **Keep It Real:** It may sound totally lame to a teen’s ears, but following the Golden Rule when social networking is the best way to keep from being bullied or harassed. Research has shown that those who harass others online often become victims of harassment themselves. Encourage your kids to avoid trouble by being themselves, being honest, and treating others with respect — just like they would in the real world.
2. **Protect Your Passwords:** Kids are never too old to be reminded that passwords should never be shared with anyone, even friends. The strongest passwords are combinations of letters and numbers and don’t include names or other identifiable information that can be easily guessed. Promote safety while respecting your kids’ privacy by inviting them to seal their passwords in an envelope and promise to open it only in an emergency.
3. **Post With Caution:** Posting personal information or inappropriate messages can put kids at risk with strangers as well as friends. Once a message or picture is e-mailed or posted, it’s almost impossible to get it back. Friends break up, but a picture on the Internet is forever. If they have profiles on networking sites like Facebook or Tumblr, remind your kids that whatever they post becomes public. Anything they wouldn’t want a stranger — or their college advisor — to see should be kept offline.
4. **Keep It Clean:** Talking about sex or sharing explicit images online may sound like fun, but it can lead to anything from embarrassment among friends to a predator’s “grooming” (online stalking). And in the case of photos, it’s actually illegal. If your kids are on the receiving end of sexual messages or images, the first thing they should do is tell you or another adult. Together you can contact the police and/or report it to CyberTipline.com.
5. **Don’t Meet Online Friends Offline:** The fact is, there’s no way to be sure that someone you met online is really who they say they are. And once you meet in person, you put yourself in actual real-world danger. So why do it? If you know your kids are going to do it anyway, however, remind them to always bring friends along and let you or another trusted adult know where they’ll be.”

Another tip, learn Internet lingo so you will know what your children are talking about when they use acronyms. You may know that LOL means Laugh Out Loud, but did you know that CD9 is code for a parent being around?

Visit NetLingo.com for more net speak information.