

Children and Internet – Suggestions for Safe Usage

Editor's Note – Technology and children always seem to be steps ahead of our ability to keep both within safe boundaries. By monitoring your children's' behavior and habits, you will have a better handle on keeping them safe. Here are some tips that may help you.

- (1). Age guidelines in allowing your children access to devices like computers and cell phones are not clear. This is usually determined by maturity levels and the intent on how the technology is to be used. For example, if your ten-year-old is walking to and from school by herself over a considerable distance, it's probably a good idea to give her a cell phone. Otherwise, it is a decision you can put off.
- (2). In giving your children cell phones, always have them turn them on when permitted. Cell phones can serve as tracking devices even if they are not currently being used, but they must be powered on.
- (3). Talk to your children continuously about acceptable and unacceptable behavior while using cell phones, computers, and other devices that have the ability to communicate via the Internet.
- (4). Teach your children that technology and devices are not toys, but tools to be used for specific purposes.
- (5). Be aware that devices you purchase for them, such as game consoles, have access to the Internet via Bluetooth and/or Wifi.
- (6). Consider the unintended consequences of banning use of devices as punishments or grounding. The Internet has become so pervasive that these bans may inhibit normal activities, such as school work, safety and family communication.
- (7). Placing software and hardware restrictions on devices and/or access may be effective for small children, but this tends to be either too restrictive for everyone else, or not restrictive enough to filter or prohibit unauthorized uses. In addition, instructions to defeat these restrictions can usually be found on the Internet.
- (8). Children share Internet-enabled games, cell phones and laptops with their friends, so they are able to gain access despite restrictions placed on them at home.
- (9). Discuss online activities with your children often. The online world can become a virtual world for them, and neither you nor their friends may have knowledge of this world.

(10). Swap devices with your children occasionally. You may be surprised about what you find on their devices, as well as yours when you get it back.

(11). As a general rule, you should not buy devices and software for your children that you don't understand, nor allow them to acquire it themselves.

(12). In many cases, each person does not need his own device, and devices should be shared when possible. This will cut down on the time that your children spend using a device, as well as providing for better monitoring and policing.

(13). Engage more in family offline activities, and turn off your devices, too.

(14). Purchase simpler devices, and devices that perform simpler functions. In contrast to this, Apple's iPhone has blurred the lines between computers, game devices, remote controls, GPS, Internet access, and cell phones. For most children, this device is serious overkill.

(15). Children's email addresses should not contain their real names.

(16). The Caller-ID of child's cell phone should contain the name of an adult or the generic "Wireless Caller" ID.

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In addition, Teffecx Company has produced a blog article on Children and the Internet, which can be found at <http://betterwebdesignandgraphics.com>. The title of the blog article is **Children and the Internet – Naughty or Negligence?**