

HOW TO STAY SAFE ONLINE: 10 TIPS FOR TEENS

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1. STRANGER DANGER

Remember the old saying “Stranger Danger”? Just as you wouldn’t talk to, share photos with or give out personal information to a stranger on the street, the same applies online. You never know who is really typing those messages, however convincing they may seem! Tell an adult straight away if messages or images you see or receive online make you feel uncomfortable.

2. CHECK YOUR PRIVACY SETTINGS

It’s easy to set up a social media account, but make sure you take your time to choose the highest privacy settings. Go back now and check them! Google yourself and see what information and images come up in the results – this is your ‘digital footprint’. You may be surprised and find your profiles and photos aren’t as hidden as you thought.

3. REMEMBER, POSTING IS PERMANENT

Many people think that deleting something online means removing it from the internet forever. Sadly, that’s not true. After posting something online, anyone can save, download and re-use it! Think twice before posting something you may regret later – remember employers often check social profiles when hiring. Posting something in the heat of the moment or an inappropriate photo can make or break your future.

4. CREATE STRONG PASSWORDS

When it comes to passwords, your birthday just won’t cut it! Keeping your accounts safe online starts with choosing secure passwords with a mix of symbols, numbers and capital letters. Never share your passwords with anyone, even friends.

5. NEVER REVEAL PERSONAL INFORMATION

Anyone that knows you will *never* need to ask for personal information like your address or school online. Never give out this information and be wary of anyone who asks for it.

6. BE AWARE OF FAKE NEWS

Fake news has been on everyone's lips during the past year or so. Normally, if something sounds too good to be true, it is! Understanding how to stay safe online doesn't stop with social media. It's also about picking up on spam emails. Never open links or attachments from an unknown sender, they could unleash a virus on your computer. And never pass on personal information, such as online banking details, when requested by email – your bank or other trusted organisations will never ask for this by email.

7. BE RESPECTFUL TO OTHERS

It's easy to type something when you're hiding behind a screen. But remember, there's also a real person at the other side of the screen, so be respectful and polite to others online. Despite all the interaction, social media can feel like a very lonely place to be.

8. REMEMBER OUR LIVES ON SOCIAL MEDIA AREN'T THE FULL STORY

Recent studies have shown the effect social media can have on how young people feel about themselves and their lives. In a world of impeccable Instagram feeds and seemingly beautiful YouTubers, it's really important to remember that the lifestyles portrayed on social media are only part of the story. Despite how it looks from the outside, *nobody's* life is perfect and follower counts don't define your meaningful offline relationships.

9. KNOW HOW TO BLOCK OR REPORT CONTENT

Part of Safer Internet Day is about taking responsibility for making the internet a better place to be. Knowing how to block and report inappropriate content or instances of cyber-bullying helps shape the community.

10. RECOGNISE WHEN IT'S TIME TO LOG OFF

And finally, using the internet safely is not just about what you get up to online, it's about how much time you spend doing it. The internet is great for keeping in touch with friends and being creative, but being online for excessive amounts of time can have a negative impact on other areas of life, such as school and sleep. It's really important to know when it's time to unplug and spend some time away from screens, especially smartphones.

Get involved with spreading awareness about Safer Internet Day using the hashtag #SID2018!