

A Guide for parents!

Does your child have?

- **A mobile phone;**
- **The internet;**
- **a social networking site such as Facebook, Myspace, Twitter or Bebo;**
- **YouTube;**
- **MSN?**

If the answer is yes, then read this guide to find out how to protect your child in the virtual world.

The internet is such an integral part of children's lives these days. It opens up so many educational and social opportunities, giving them access to, quite literally, a world of information and experiences.

Whether on a computer at school, a laptop at home, a games console or mobile phone, children and young people are increasingly accessing the internet whenever they can and wherever they are.

As you would protect your child in the real world, you will want to make sure that they are safe whatever they are doing. If your child understands the risks and can make sensible and informed choices online, they can get the most from the internet and stay safe whilst doing so – particularly from those people who might seek them out to harm them.

So, how can you protect your child online?

The answer is simple. If you understand the internet and understand what the risks are, there are a number of things you can do that will make your child safer online.

According to Ofcom 7 out of 10 young people aged between 12 and 15 years old in the UK have a social network profile. A large percentage of these access these sites through their mobile phone rather than a computer. This has changed the way that children and young people communicate with their friends and family.

On the whole, young people have a very positive experience surfing the web or chatting with their online friends; however, as a parent or guardian there are some potential risks you should be aware of:

- **Cyber bullying;**
- **Downloading and copyright;**
- **Excessive use of technology;**
- **Identity theft;**
- **Inappropriate and harmful content;**
- **Illegal content; and**
- **grooming.**

If your child is experiencing problems or is being cyber bullied encourage them to come to you for help.

If they are uncomfortable speaking with you, tell them to speak with a trusted adult - an aunt, uncle, teacher, or older sibling - to lend an ear. Be sure your child knows how to report abuse or inappropriate behaviour to social networking sites. With Facebook, for example, they can report abuse by clicking the report link. Other social network sites also have reporting mechanisms.

- **Make sure your child knows how to change their privacy settings.**
- **Don't allow anyone to bully you online, encourage your child to speak to an adult or teacher.**
- **Not to spend too much time online, using a mobile phone, gaming console etc.**

Good communication between a parent and child is critical:

Check the privacy policy of your child's internet, mobile, social networking and games providers so that you understand what kind of information they collect and what they use it for. Encourage your child to only share their personal information with people or companies they know.

Suggest that they use a nickname (not their real name) on websites, chat rooms and other online forums.

Help them to set up strong passwords (a combination of letters, numbers and symbols) and explain why they shouldn't share them with anyone.

Make sure they use a PIN lock on their mobile.

Discuss the fact that not everyone on the internet is who they say they are.

Explain how information they use to register for websites, competitions, downloads and other internet and mobile services could be used by the companies in question (e.g. to send marketing emails). Advise your child to get permission from friends and family before taking photos or videos of them and to check that they're happy for the images to be published - not everyone wants to be famous.

Make sure you have up-to-date anti-virus and anti-spyware software on your child's computer and make the most of built-in tools like pop-up blockers and spam filters.

Teach them the risks and dangers of sharing passwords, phone numbers, addresses and other personal information.

Consider where you place your computer; keep an eye on what your child is looking at.

Be sure you have computer security software with parental controls.

Not to spend too much time online, using a mobile phone, gaming console etc.

Encourage other activities and sports.

Ask about your child's online friends; encourage them to have their "real" friends as their friends on social networking sites. If your child has online profiles ask if you or a close relative can be an online friend (to help and support them).

Apps: An abbreviation for application. An app is a piece of software. It can run on your computer, or phone or other electronic device.

Bebo - A popular social network site that combines community, self expression and entertainment. Bebo allows users to express their individuality through their own customised profile, play games and keep in touch with friends.
www.bebo.com

Blog: Short for web log, this is an online journal that users update.

Cyberbully: A cyberbully is like the traditional playground bully, but the harassment of his/her victims' takes place online. Harassment can include teasing another person, posting rumours/lies about someone, or publishing unwanted pictures of the targeted person in public forums such as social networking profiles, message boards, chat rooms etc.

Facebook: A popular and rapidly growing social networking site based on circles of networks. A person selects a network, such as a school or geographic location, and can then make friends with others in that network.
www.facebook.com

Flickr: Online photo management and sharing application.
www.flickr.com

Friending: "Friending" describes the act of making friends online through sites such as Bebo, Myspace and Facebook. **Google:** A company which is best known for its internet search engine. The term "Googling" means that a person is doing an internet search using www.google.co.uk. People often "Google" others in an attempt to find out more information about them.
www.google.co.uk

Hotspots: A term used to describe locations where there is a Wi-Fi or wireless connection available. People can connect to the internet from their wireless internet devices (laptops, personal digital assistant (PDAs), mobile phones) from this area.

Instant Messaging: Also known as AIM and IM'ing. Instant messaging is communicating using a program, such as AOL Instant Messenger™ or MSN, which allows you to communicate via text in real time. It's like a phone conversation conducted with your finger tips. Some mobile phones also support instant messaging.

Myspace: A popular social networking site offering an interactive way for people to connect with each other by creating user profiles, posting pictures, sharing music, and blogging. People can easily create their online profile and then share their page with others through friending.
www.myspace.com

Podcast/vodcast: Downloadable items that can be listened to via your computer and/or portable music player. Podcasts usually contain only audio while a vodcast contains audio and video. An example of a popular vodcasting site is YouTube.

Profile: Sometimes referred to as a "page", a profile is a user-created web page that enables the user to enter information about him/herself that they want to share online.

Skype: A software application that allows users to make voice and video calls and chat over the internet. Calls to other users within the Skype service are free, while calls to both traditional landline telephones and mobile phones are chargeable.

www.skype.com

Smartphone: A mobile phone that offers more advanced computing ability and connectivity, example a Blackberry or iPhone.

Social Network: Internet social networks focus on building online communities with like-minded people. They allow people to communicate and share information on a wide scale, and to find others who share similar interests. People share information by creating a user profile and then updating their profiles with status alerts, pictures, and other items of interest to them, e.g. Facebook, Bebo and Myspace.

Spotify: An online music provider where registered users can listen to free music which is supported by audio and/or visual advertising. Users can also choose to pay for the Spotify service and access ad-free music as well as other benefits.

www.spotify.com

Spyware: A software downloaded onto a computer without the user's consent or knowledge that can monitor and track a user's behaviour. It can collect information about web sites visited, and interfere with computer activity by redirecting to other web sites, install other software, and slow connection speeds. Installing and regularly running programs such as anti-spyware or anti-virus software can help detect and eliminate spyware on your computer.

Tablet: A tablet PC is a wireless, portable personal computer with a touch screen. Usually a tablet is smaller than a notebook computer but larger than a smartphone, examples include the iPad.

Tagging: A label assigned to content on the internet in order to find it through searches more easily. Users on social networking sites such as Facebook can tag pictures with the name of the person in the picture so that others can find and view pictures of that person more easily.

Texting: Also known as SMS (text message) or MMS (multimedia message). Texting is sending a message via a mobile phone that is typed out instead of spoken. A MMS message includes multimedia content such as a picture or

video and may also include a text message.

Twitter: Sometimes also called a “tweet”. Tweets are live updates from a person sent via the web, SMS, or IM using the social network www.twitter.com allowing users to keep their friends posted on what they are doing at that moment.

Virus: A computer virus is malevolent software designed to copy itself and spread to other computers without the user's knowledge.

Wiki: A website where users can add, remove, and edit pages using a web browser, e.g. Wikipedia the online free encyclopedia.
www.wikipedia.com

Wireless Connection (or just wireless): A connection that can be made to the internet without the need for a cable or wire to be connected from the access point to the computer.

Wi-Fi: Short for “Wireless Fidelity”. A Wi-Fi enabled device such as a laptop or a mobile phone can easily connect to the internet when it detects that a wireless network is available. Wi-Fi hotspots make it convenient for owners of such devices to connect to the internet when away from home or work.

www.ceop.police.uk

The Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) Centre's website houses a range of information on how to stay safe online. It includes a unique facility that enables parents and young people to make reports of actual or attempted abuse online.

www.childnet.com

The Childnet International website gives internet safety advice and links for young people, parents, teachers and other organisations.

www.childnet.com/music

Childnet's leaflet “Young People, Music and the Internet” has concise information to help parents, carers and teachers get up to speed about online music and the legal issues raised when copyrighted music is used on social networking sites.

www.digizen.org/socialnetworking

A 2008 report t by Childnet providing teachers with a comprehensive guide to social networking services.