

What's the best way to ensure that your child is safe on the Internet?

Imagine leaving your child in a room filled with strangers showing every film ever made. This thought would worry most parents but this is what is available to children through the Internet.

Some of the material available online is clearly not suitable for children and there are many problems that can arise. It is very easy to stumble across (or search for) inappropriate content online. You will probably have heard about other e-safety issues concerning the use of Internet chat rooms, social network sites such as Facebook, grooming by sex offenders, cyberbullying, addiction to playing online games, illegal music downloads to name but a few....

e-Safety risks:

- Cyberbullying;
- grooming by sex offenders;
- access to inappropriate materials including: pornography, racist, violence, pro-suicide, self-harm, eating disorders;
- addiction to playing online games and social networking;
- security: viruses, hacking, identity theft.

General advice

- Install software to protect your computer's security and block SPAM.
- Set up search filters on your computer. Getnetwise provides video tutorials on changing safety settings & e-safety tools <http://www.getnetwise.org/>.
- Know what your children are doing online and who they are talking to. Share their online experiences.
- For younger children, use a child friendly search engines eg [CBBCsearch](#), [askjeevesforkids](#), [yahooligans](#).
- Keep the computer in a family room or visible.
- Help them understand why they should never give out their personal details or photos to online friends. Remind them that if they publish a photo or video online, anyone can change it or share it.
- The age limit to create a profile on Bebo and Facebook is 13. However, if they do have a profile make sure they have set the Privacy settings.

Protect your children - 8 Stage Action Plan

1. Prepare your child for accidental exposure to pornography and inappropriate content. Tell your child not to hesitate about telling you about anything they see online, which upsets or disturbs them.
2. Make an effort to get computer literate if you want to support and understand your children, you need to have a reasonable understanding of their world! Ask your children to show you what they can do on the computer.
3. Ask retailers about adult-content filters whenever you buy a new computer for family use.
4. Ask your internet service provider (eg. BT, Virgin, Tiscali etc) how to switch on the adult-content filters that they already provide.
5. Apply safe-search filtering to search engines that your family regularly use, eg Google preferences for safe search filtering.
6. Set up different user accounts on home PCs/laptops for every member of the family and activate parental controls on the child's accounts.
7. Shop around for software and content that provides extra content filtering.
8. Keep an eye on your child's browsing history – not to censor or spy on them, but to keep them safe online.

Links to e-safety information for parents and carers

1. **Directgov:**
<http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Parents/Yourchildshealthandsafety/Internetsafety/>
2. **BBC online safety:** <http://www.bbc.co.uk/online/safety/>
3. **Wise Kids:** http://www.wisekids.org.uk/parents_internetsafetyguidelines.htm
4. ThinkUKnow: <http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/>
5. **Childnet:** <http://www.childnet.com/>
6. **Digizen:** digital citizens <http://www.digizen.org.uk/>
7. **BBC Newsround Special - Caught in the web:**
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/cbbc/help/web/staysafe>
8. **Getnetwise: video tutorials on changing safety settings & e-safety tools**
<http://www.getnetwise.org/>