

Online Safety

The Internet can be an excellent tool to support education and learning. However, it is not always safe. There are a wide range of apps, websites and information sharing platforms available to young people that open up learning opportunities, but also expose them to potential risks.

The [Internet Matters](#) website provides reliable and up-to-date information to aid understanding about the dangers and minimise risks that young people may face, and enable informed decisions about online safety.

Ten points to consider when online.

1. Think before you share

You wouldn't talk to, share photos with, or give out personal information to a stranger you've just met on the street, and the same should apply online. You never know who is really typing those messages, however convincing they may seem.

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. 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. Unfortunately, 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. Posting something in the heat of the moment or an inappropriate photo can make or break your future. Just think about all the recent scandals around the uncovering of old, inappropriate tweets by a host of now famous people.

4. Create strong passwords

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 well, will *never* need to ask for personal information like your address online. Never give out this information and be wary of who is asking for it.

6. Be aware of fake news

Fake news has been on everyone's lips during recent years. Normally, if something sounds too good to be true, it is! Staying 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 when requested by email – trusted organisations will never ask you to do this.

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

Knowing how to block and report inappropriate content or instances of cyber-bullying helps shape the Internet community. Go to the Internet Matters website for advice on how to do this.

10. Recognise when it's time to log off

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 a great tool 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 sleep. It's really important to know when it's stop using devices and spend some time away from screens, especially our smartphones.