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Safety Tips by Age - 11-13-Year-Olds

From pre-teen to teen, is a time of rapid change in kids' lives. Although at this age they are still quite dependent on their families, they want more independence. Also, relationships with friends become more important and they start to take an interest in the world around them.

Kids in this age group use the Internet to research school projects. They also download music, use e-mail, play online games, and vote for their favourite pop stars on fan sites. Their favourite way to communicate with friends is by instant messaging.

11- to 13-year-olds:

- feel in control when it comes to technology
- are intrigued by subcultures beyond the world of their parents
- lack the critical thinking skills to judge the accuracy of online information
- accept entertainment and games uncritically
- are vulnerable to online marketers who encourage them to give out personal information through surveys, contests and registration forms
- are at a sensitive time in their sexual development; particularly boys, who may look for porn sites at this age
- are interested in building relationships (especially girls) with online acquaintances
- may be bullied or they may be bullying others online

Safety tips

- Create a list of Internet house rules with input from your kids.
- Keep Internet-connected computers in an open area and out of your kids' bedrooms.
- Talk with your kids about their online friends and activities just as you would about their other activities.
- Insist that your kids tell you first if they want to meet an "online friend."

- Teach your kids to never to give out personal information without your permission when using e-mail, chat rooms or instant messaging, filling out registration forms and personal profiles, and entering online contests.
- Encourage them to come to you if they encounter material or messages that make them feel uncomfortable or threatened. (Stay calm. If you “freak out” your kids won’t turn to you for help when they need it.)
- Talk to your kids about online pornography and direct them to good sites about health and sexuality.
- Insist on access to your kids’ e-mail and instant messaging accounts to make sure that they’re not talking to strangers.
- Teach your kids responsible online behaviour. File-sharing and taking text, images or artwork from the Web may infringe on copyright laws.
- Talk to them about ethical behaviour. They should not be using the Internet to spread gossip, bully or make threats against others.
- Only allow your kids to use monitored chat rooms on reputable kids’ sites.

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