

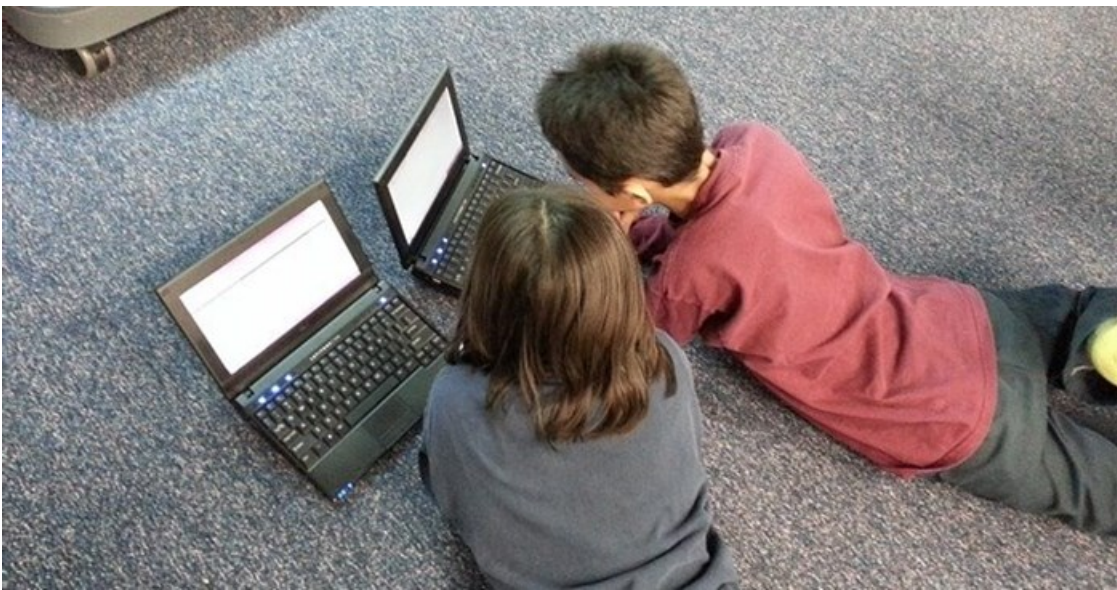
How to keep your children safe online

 By [Carey van Vlaanderen](#)

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Very few parents use parental controls on internet-enabled devices bought for their children, leaving youngsters potentially exposed to online threats. Most parents feel it is suitable for children to use the internet either somewhat supervised or totally unsupervised, and many do so without talking to their children about online safety - even though they are aware that their children may be hiding aspects of their internet activity from them, says Carey van Vlaanderen, CEO at ESET.

The internet is a brilliant playground for children. It allows them to engage, explore and learn - all positive things. However, without the right guidance from parents, children can find themselves in dangerous situations that they are unable to deal with alone. At a young age, it is easy to be confused by online scammers and tricksters, which makes the need for protection all the greater.



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Talking online, instant access to adult material and cyber-bullying are all top of mind when parents worry about their child's online activities. In addition, it is important for parents to feel empowered to teach their children about online threats. Accidentally clicking on the wrong link or downloading dodgy software could spell disaster, as devices become infected and online scammers potentially gain access to your most private possession - your family's data.

Taking a few simple steps can help ensure your children have a healthy, happy relationship with the internet.

1. Don't ban children from technology

Children will use the internet whatever happens and the best way for them to learn about it is from you. This is something you should do at a pre-school age. The key is a gentle, guided introduction.

2. Be wary of webcams

If your PC has a webcam built in, be extra cautious - cybercriminals are known to use malware known as R.A.T. (Remote Access Tools) to spy on victims through the cameras. Criminals who sell access to households in this fashion are known as "ratters". Turn off or disconnect webcams if possible on PCs used by your children - or stick tapes over the lens - and ensure your AV software is up to date.

3. Be open with your children about cyber-bullying

Cyber-bullying is incredibly common and you should ensure that children go to you with problems rather than hiding them. Tell children how common it is and ensure that they never reply to bullies. Much like replying to a spammer, it gives the bully a sign a target is "there". Instead, children should save or print out messages, block senders if they can, and talk to you.

4. Know which gadgets go online

Online gaming is often plagued by foul language and abuse, and gadgets such as games consoles can also have web browsers. Be sure to know which of your children's gadgets can go online - most games consoles can. Consoles such as Xbox and Nintendo DS have parental controls, which block children from inappropriate content.

5. Be friends with your children

Where you can and where it is appropriate, befriend your children on social networks. Create a blank profile if you want, for instance, to have a space on Facebook for more grown up chat, but being friends with children can be invaluable.

6. Learn to use built-in controls

Many gadgets already have built-in controls which can help you protect children from adult content and include the ability to block in-app purchases, which can protect against "bill shock" if children buy extras within games. Windows 8 PC also has upgraded security controls for parents and can monitor the internet use and deliver reports each week on where they have been surfing.

7. Don't leave them to it

The worst thing you can do as a parent is to assume that your children are more tech- savvy than you and you won't catch up. It is not about being the font of all knowledge: they will learn much more if, when you run into a problem, you tackle it together. Even now, many parents are still content to assume that their children are, even at an early age, more competent with computers and software than they are themselves. Even if this is sometimes true, as an adult you are much better equipped to apply your coping experiences of the less salubrious aspects of life in general to online life.

8. Set up separate user accounts for your children

It is tempting to let the family share one Windows user account on a PC, but if everyone has their own OS account, it's easier to keep track of when and how they are using the computer. If you have more than one child, this also means you can customise the level of protection they might need.

9. Watch what browser your children use

More than half of teenagers lie to parents about what they do online - so watch for "extra" browsers installed on PCs. A periodic check on "programs" will allow you to see if any have been added. If your children are using a "secret" browser or deleting their history, it isn't automatically "incriminating", but it is something you should discuss together.

10. Block offensive websites

Choose security software that allows you to block offensive websites in a customisable way - without, for instance, blocking of news stories children might need for a school project. ESET Smart Security allows parents to block 20 categories of website, and to customise the level of blocking according to a child's age. The software is password locked, so children can't modify settings or uninstall without your permission.

ESET has recently launched a Beta version of its new Parental Control for Android app, and ESET is offering free access to the app's security features such as Web Guard or Time Management for six months at no cost. To take part in the BETA phase of ESET Parental Control for Android, you can join the program at [ESET](#).

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Carey van Vlaanderen is CEO of ESET Southern Africa. ESET is a global provider of security software for enterprises and consumers and is dedicated to delivering instant, comprehensive protection against evolving computer security threats.

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