

Internet Safety Talk for Teenagers and Parents

Staying Safe, Smart and Respectful Online

Introduction

Good evening everyone, and thank you for taking the time to be here.

The internet is an amazing tool. It helps us learn, communicate, play games, watch videos, connect with friends, and access information instantly. Most teenagers today have never known a world without smartphones, social media, and online gaming.

However, while the internet offers tremendous opportunities, it also presents risks. Tonight, I want to talk about how teenagers and parents can work together to stay safe online, build healthy digital habits, and make the most of technology while avoiding the dangers.

Part 1: Understanding the Online World

For teenagers, the internet is a normal part of everyday life. Whether it's Snapchat, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, Discord, WhatsApp, online gaming, or whatever platform comes next, young people are often connected for much of the day.

While these platforms help us stay connected, it's important to remember one simple rule:

Anything you post online can become permanent.

Even if a message disappears, a screenshot can last forever.

Before posting anything, ask yourself:

- Would I be happy for my parents to see this?
- Would I be comfortable if a teacher saw it?
- Would I want this appearing in a future job interview?

If the answer is "no," don't post it.

Part 2: Protecting Personal Information

One of the biggest online risks is sharing too much personal information.

Teenagers should never publicly share:

- Home address
- Phone number
- School details
- Daily routines
- Passwords
- Financial information
- Live location

Many people online are exactly who they say they are.

Unfortunately, some are not.

Someone with a profile picture, friends list and convincing story can still be a stranger.

Remember:

Online friends are still strangers until you've met them safely and verified who they are.

Parents should encourage open conversations about online friendships without immediately judging or criticising.

The goal is communication, not fear.

Part 3: Strong Passwords and Account Security

Most cybercrime begins with weak passwords.

A good password should:

- Be long
- Be unique
- Contain a mix of words, numbers and symbols
- Not be shared with friends

For example:

✗ football123

✓ BlueTiger!River47Moon

Even better, use:

Two-Factor Authentication (2FA)

This means that even if someone obtains your password, they still need a second verification code to access your account.

Parents should ensure that important family accounts also have 2FA enabled.

Part 4: Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying can happen through:

- Social media
- Messaging apps
- Online gaming
- Group chats
- Anonymous platforms

Unlike traditional bullying, cyberbullying can follow someone home and be accessed 24 hours a day.

If you're being bullied online:

Don't:

- Retaliate
- Join in
- Share hurtful content

Do:

- Save evidence
- Block the account
- Report the behaviour
- Tell a trusted adult

Parents should remember that if a young person comes forward about bullying, the first response should be listening and supporting rather than immediately taking away devices.

The internet is often where young people socialise, so removing access can sometimes prevent them from seeking help in future.

Part 5: Online Gaming Safety

Online gaming has become one of the biggest social spaces for young people.

Gaming can provide:

- Teamwork
- Problem-solving skills
- Friendships
- Entertainment

But there are risks:

- Inappropriate conversations
- Scams
- Grooming
- Toxic behaviour
- Unwanted contact

Teenagers should:

- Keep profiles private
- Avoid sharing personal details
- Be cautious with voice chat
- Never send images to people they don't know

Parents should take an interest in the games their children play.

You don't need to become a gaming expert, but understanding what your child enjoys can create valuable opportunities for conversation.

Part 6: Fake News and Misinformation

Not everything online is true.

Anyone can create a website, post a video, or make a claim on social media.

Before believing or sharing information, ask:

- Who posted it?
- Is it from a trusted source?
- Can it be verified elsewhere?
- Does the headline seem designed to shock or anger?

Critical thinking is one of the most important digital skills young people can develop.

Part 7: Online Scams

Scammers target people of all ages.

Common scams include:

- Fake giveaways
- Free gift offers
- Prize notifications
- Phishing emails
- Fake customer support messages
- Cryptocurrency and investment scams

Remember:

If something seems too good to be true, it probably is.

Never click suspicious links.

Never share passwords or verification codes.

Always check with a parent, guardian, or trusted adult if you're unsure.

Part 8: Healthy Screen Time

The internet itself is not the enemy.

The goal is balance.

Signs that screen time may be becoming unhealthy include:

- Lack of sleep
- Reduced physical activity
- Falling school performance
- Increased anxiety or stress
- Withdrawal from family and friends

Healthy habits include:

- Device-free meals

- Screen-free time before bed
 - Outdoor activities
 - Face-to-face social interaction
 - Family discussions about online experiences
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Part 9: What Parents Can Do

Parents play a crucial role in internet safety.

The most effective approach is not surveillance—it is communication.

Try to:

- Talk regularly about online life
- Show interest in apps and games
- Set reasonable boundaries
- Keep devices updated
- Use parental controls where appropriate
- Encourage children to report concerns without fear of punishment

A teenager is far more likely to seek help if they know they won't immediately lose access to their devices.

Key Messages for Teenagers

1. Think before you post.
 2. Keep personal information private.
 3. Use strong passwords and 2FA.
 4. Be cautious about online friendships.
 5. Report bullying and abuse.
 6. Question what you see online.
 7. Never be afraid to ask for help.
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Key Messages for Parents

1. Stay involved in your child's digital world.
2. Keep communication open and non-judgmental.
3. Set clear expectations and boundaries.
4. Teach digital resilience, not fear.

5. Encourage responsible online behaviour through example.
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Closing

The internet is not going away, and neither should it. It offers incredible opportunities for learning, creativity and connection.

Our goal is not to keep young people away from technology. Our goal is to help them use it safely, confidently and responsibly.

When teenagers and parents work together, communicate openly, and stay informed about online risks, the internet becomes a place of opportunity rather than danger.

Thank you for listening, and stay safe online.

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