right now!

7 things you can do to keep your child safe online

Destiny Rescue™
RESCUING CHILDREN

Times are changing, and things are different from when we adults were children. Safety measures included not engaging with strangers and buckling up your seatbelt. Now, with the world wide web accessible to most of the global population, we must consider other ways of protecting our children from harm.

In 2022, the **Office of the eSafety Commissioner** published a survey of children aged 8 to 17 and their parents. Bravehearts (Australian child protection not-for-profit organisation) broke down these findings to include:

Children's experiences online:

1 in 8 children — has sent a photo or video of themselves to someone they first met online.

7 in 10 young people — aged 14 to 17 have seen sexual images online in the past year.

5 in 10 young people — have received sexual messages from someone online in the past year.

48% of boys have seen porn by age 13. *

48% of girls have seen porn by age 15. *

35% of scenes in porn show non-consensual behaviour. **

* Our Watch 2020, Pornography, young people and preventing violence against women, Our Watch, Melbourne.
** Office of Film and Literature Classification 2019, Breaking Down Porn: A Classification Office analysis of commonly viewed pornography in NZ, Office of Film and Literature Classification, Wellington.

Unfortunately, the increase in internet access has seen a corresponding upward trend in online child sexual exploitation.

Our mission at Destiny Rescue is to rescue children from sexual exploitation and trafficking and help them stay free.

Here, we aim to introduce some initial steps and resources to help you shield your child from inappropriate content, bullies and predators. Ultimately, we don't want to instil fear into families or prevent them from experiencing the internet's educational, entertainment, and social advantages. However, our goal is to give you some skills and knowledge to benefit from online use while avoiding the dangers.

See our **Cyber Safety Checklist** on the following page.

> "Human traffickers who trick people with fake job offers and promises and then exploit them for profit are taking advantage of online technologies for every step of their criminal activities.
>
> Research conducted by the **United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)** shows how victims are being targeted and recruited via social media and online dating platforms where personal information and details of people's locations are readily available.
>
> Sexual abuse and other forms of exploitation are taking place virtually and photos and videos sold further on different platforms to customers worldwide, resulting in even more money for the traffickers at no additional cost.
>
> — https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/Webstories2021/the-role-of-technology-in-human-trafficking.html

Cyber Safety Checklist

1. **Educate yourself:**
   Your first step as a parent is to learn more about the online space. Look at different sites, games and apps for yourself. It is easier to talk to your children when you are familiar with their online environment. Know the privacy settings and recommended age restrictions for these sites. You can learn more about online safety through the websites listed at the end of this checklist.

2. **Keep the conversation going:**
   When your children start accessing the internet, continually speak with them about what they are reading, watching and who they are connecting with online. This includes listening to them with curiosity — not criticism. Keep initiating ongoing dialogue about their online friends and what they are discussing. Know what sites they visit and look at them together. Remind your child that what you think is appropriate may be different for other parents and their children. Eventually, they will access the internet outside your home. Your goal will be to prepare their awareness and discernment to respond safely in non-parented situations.

3. **Teach your children to think through online behaviour:** Encourage them to consider how much they should be sharing online and what happens to information once shared. It's important to teach your children about their online reputation. They must learn to be careful about how they interact with others and represent themselves in such a public forum. We all need to remember that the internet isn't private. Remind them that even though they are online, responsible interactions are essential. They should always consider the validity of what they read and see online. Please remind your children to keep their location private. Most apps, networks and devices have geo-tagging features that make your whereabouts public and lead someone directly to you. We recommend you turn off these features for privacy and safety reasons. Also, be aware that digital photos contain metadata (information about the time, date and GPS coordinates). Some social media platforms hide or remove this data, but not all.

4. **Make all devices safer:** Let them know that their internet usage is never for their eyes only. In other words, for the privilege of using their devices, you can also check in to see how they use them. You are the parent, and this might mean you are their only line of defence.

   Familiarise yourself with sites, games and apps your children use. Check the privacy settings. To heighten security, you can:

- **install safety and security software and keep it updated;**
- **enable internet browser security,**
- **use internet and spam filters and a pop-up stopper,**
- **install monitoring software and monitor downloads to your computer,**
- **and regularly check the internet usage history.** (This approach can get more challenging as children age and figure out ways around these barriers. This is why we emphasise maintaining open lines of communication about internet use from an early age.)

5. **Develop a safety plan:** Even if devices are only used in a public area, remain vigilant and monitor their activity. Discuss ways they can stay safe and how they can respond to anything that might concern them. Give them options for who they can talk to (e.g. yourself, another trustworthy adult, a counsellor).

- Negotiate an agreed screen time. See recommended screen times for children.

- As your teenager becomes more independent, encourage them to be proactive with their safety. For example, they can access information through the eSafety Commission.

6. **School your family in #SocialNetworkSecurity:** If your child uses social networks, be sure they understand how to:

- **Use the privacy settings & reporting mechanisms**
- **Only share with people they know and trust.**
- **Report inappropriate and offensive posts.**
- **Block someone.**
- **Keep their information/details private.**
- **Talk to a trusted person when a situation concerns them.**
- **Be aware of online bullying (as a perpetrator & a victim).**

7. **Lead the way:** Model the positive and responsible online behaviour you would like your children to use. If they see you being mindful online, they are more likely to follow your example. If they observe you limiting your screen time and allowing the internet to service you rather than control your life, they are also more likely to have a healthier balance.

Reporting Suspicious Online Behaviour

Report a child in immediate danger of abuse or exploitation:

Phone: 000

Crimestoppers on: 1800 333 000

Report suspected cases of child exploitation or contact with paedophiles to:

In Australia

Australian Federal Police, Online Child Sex Protection Operations Team

In The UK

National Crime Agency UK

This information was gathered from these useful websites:

- eSafety Commissioner
- Australian Centre to Counter Child Exploitation
- ThinkUKnow
- It's Time We Talked
- Kids Help Online
- Children's Health Queensland Hospital
- Bravehearts

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