

# My Online Safety Handbook (Ages 8-12)

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## Introduction

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Welcome to your Online Safety Handbook! The internet is an amazing place where you can learn, play games, and connect with friends. But just like in the real world, there are some rules to follow to stay safe. This handbook will teach you how to be smart online, protect your privacy, and know what to do if something feels wrong. Think of it as your guide to becoming a super online safety hero!

## Understanding Online Risks: What to Watch Out For

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The internet is full of fun things, but it also has some tricky parts. It's important to know about these so you can avoid them and stay safe [1].

### Common Online Risks for Kids:

- **Inappropriate Content:** Sometimes, you might accidentally see pictures, videos, or words that are not meant for kids. These can be scary or confusing [1].
- **Cyberbullying:** This is when someone is mean to you online, like sending hurtful messages, spreading rumors, or leaving you out of online games on purpose. It can make you feel sad or angry [1].
- **Identity Theft and Privacy Breaches:** This happens when someone tries to steal your personal information, like your name, address, or passwords. They might use it to pretend to be you [1].
- **Exploitation and Abuse:** This is a very serious risk where someone online might try to trick you or hurt you. They might pretend to be a kid your age or someone nice to get you to share personal things or meet them [1].
- **Scams:** These are tricks people use online to get you to give them money or personal information. They might offer you something that seems too good to be true [1].

- **Misinformation:** This is when you see information online that isn't true. It can be hard to tell what's real and what's fake [1].

## Your Online Safety Rules: Be a Smart Surfer!

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Following these simple rules will help you have more fun and stay safer online. Remember, adults like your parents or teachers are there to help you understand these rules and what to do if you have questions [1].

### Essential Online Safety Tips:

1. **Be Smart About Passwords:** Your password is like a secret key to your online accounts. Make it strong by using a mix of big letters, small letters, numbers, and symbols. Never share your password with anyone, not even your best friend, except for your parents or a trusted adult. Change your passwords often to keep them extra safe [1].
2. **Check Your Settings:** Many apps and websites have privacy settings. Ask a parent or trusted adult to help you turn on all the privacy settings and turn off location tracking. This helps keep your personal information private and stops apps from collecting too much data about you [1].
3. **Do Your Research (with an Adult!):** Before you download a new game or app, ask a parent to help you check its age rating. Websites like Common Sense Media can tell you if an app or game is right for your age. Also, look for reviews and see if there are lots of ads or things you have to buy inside the app [1].
4. **Stop and Ask for Help:** If you ever see something online that makes you feel weird, scared, or uncomfortable, stop what you're doing right away. Don't click on anything else. Tell a parent, teacher, or another trusted adult immediately. It's okay to ask for help, and they will know what to do [1].
5. **Don't Fall for Pop-Ups:** Sometimes, messages pop up online saying you've won something or offering you something amazing. These are often tricks! Don't click on them or give them any personal information. If something seems too good to be true, it probably is [1].
6. **Stay Unseen (Cover Your Webcam):** When you're not using your computer or tablet for video calls, it's a good idea to cover the webcam with a sticker or a piece of tape. This stops anyone from secretly watching you [1].

7. **Shrink the Internet (Safe Search & Parental Controls):** Your parents can use special tools called parental controls to help you stay safe. These tools can block websites that aren't for kids and help manage how much time you spend online. This makes the internet a smaller, safer place for you to explore [1].
8. **Support Open Surfing (Keep Devices Central):** It's a good idea to use computers and tablets in a family room or a place where an adult can see the screen. This isn't because they don't trust you, but because they want to make sure you're safe and can help you if you need it [1].
9. **Socialize Sceptically (Online vs. Real-Life Friends):** It's fun to make friends online, but remember that online friends are different from real-life friends. Never share personal details like your full name, photo, home address, or passwords with someone you only know online. And never agree to meet someone you only know online without a parent knowing and going with you [1].
10. **Protect When Prompted (Keep Software Updated):** Sometimes your computer or tablet will ask you to update its software. These updates are important because they fix problems and make your device safer from online threats. Always ask a parent to help you keep your apps, internet browsers, and operating systems updated [1].

## What to Do When Something Feels Wrong: Getting Help

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Even if you follow all the rules, sometimes things can still feel wrong online. It's super important to know that it's okay to ask for help, and there are people who want to listen and support you.

### Steps to Take if Something Feels Wrong:

- **Tell a Trusted Adult:** This is the most important step! Talk to your parents, a teacher, a school counselor, or another adult you trust. They can help you figure out what to do [1].
- **Don't Keep Secrets:** If someone online tells you to keep a secret that makes you feel uncomfortable, don't keep it. Secrets that make you feel bad are not good secrets. Tell an adult right away [1].

- **Don't Respond:** If someone is being mean or sending you bad messages, don't write back. This can sometimes make the situation worse. Just show the messages to a trusted adult [1].
- **Block and Report:** Your parents can help you block people who are being mean or sending bad messages. You can also report inappropriate content or behavior on most apps and websites [1].
- **Remember, It's Not Your Fault:** If someone is mean to you online, it is never your fault. The person being mean is the one doing something wrong.

## Conclusion

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You are now an online safety hero! By remembering these tips and always talking to a trusted adult when something feels wrong, you can enjoy all the amazing things the internet has to offer while staying safe. Keep exploring, keep learning, and keep being smart online!

## References

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[1] Internet Safety for Kids - The Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2025, March 7). *The Annie E. Casey Foundation*. <https://www.aecf.org/blog/internet-safety-for-kids>