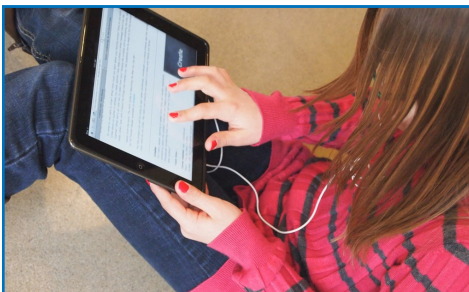




TECHNOLOGY AND KIDS: PRIVACY, SAFETY & SOCIAL NETWORKS



Kids growing up in the digital era – a.k.a. Generation Tech – are being exposed to technology and consumer electronics at earlier ages than ever before: Households with kids aged 4 to 14 possess 11 high-tech devices on average alone. Happily, technology can be a powerful and positive part of children’s lives if adults are also willing to educate themselves about it and get involved. The following guide offers hints, tips and expert advice for teaching technology to kids of all ages. Remember: Healthy and ongoing dialogue is key to teaching positive high-tech habits and keeping kids safe online – you can make a difference.

Questions to Ask About High-Tech Devices

The leap from electronic toys to connected devices is a big one. Are you ready? Before passing along new devices or gadgets, ask yourself:

- » **Can it connect online?** Chances are it can. If so, kids can often chat with others, send text messages, surf the Web, download apps and even post and share information on social networks, among other features.
- » **Have I setup parental controls?** Use devices’ built-in parental controls to restrict age inappropriate content. Some may even let you restrict kids’ ability to make purchases or downloads, set usage limits and more. If the device doesn’t offer parental controls, consider downloading apps or installing programs to regulate access and usage.
- » **Have we established ground rules?** Do kids know when it’s appropriate to use technology and when it’s not? Do they know what time limits exist? Set ground rules for your household or classroom – numerous helpful checklists and discussion guides are available free online.
- » **How will I monitor children’s activity?** Don’t ask if you’ll be monitoring kids’ activity – ask how.
- » **Am I talking to them?** Discuss with kids how and when they’re using high-tech devices – you may learn more from these conversations than by any other means.
- » **How can I use technology to engage them?** Go hands-on with high-tech devices, software and online services alongside children. All can create shared bonds and interests, let you connect with kids on their turf, and provide deeper perspective into their interests and usage habits.

Social Networks for Kids: Expert Advice

It’s fine for kids to connect to social networks, so long as proper rules of behavior, conduct and digital citizenship are observed. Here’s how to make them safer:

- » **Limit Access** – You can control who sees kids’ status updates, photos, location and other information shared online. Many social networks allow you to designate posts’ visibility, and limit access to specific individuals vs. the public at large.
- » **Manage Connections** – You can also control settings that govern whether kids can be searched for and found, and who can send them messages or friend requests – make a point of doing so.
- » **Prohibit Posting** – Several networks let you determine whether or not others can post on your profile, tag you in photos, or mention you in posts – take advantage of these features.
- » **Inhibit Apps** – Applications can often access your profile and personal information by default. Be certain to configure privacy settings for each app, which are operated by third-party creators, and may share your status updates, photos, location and more.
- » **Block Baddies** – In extreme cases, you can block and blacklist others from being able to view your children’s profiles or online activities.

Family Internet and Online Safety Tips

Looking to help kids successfully navigate the virtual world? Here are a few expert tips to consider:

- » **Setup Devices and Accounts** - Take time to pre-configure both devices' parental controls and accounts associated with high-tech services (email, social networks, etc.) to limit what information kids can both share and consume.
- » **Create secure passwords** - Devise unique passwords for every device and account. A strong password is at least 8 characters in length, and consists of letters, numbers and punctuation marks.
- » **Don't Share Sensitive Data Online** - Birthdays, addresses, social security numbers, hometowns, schools and other personal info shouldn't be shared on the Internet, publicly or otherwise. Whenever a service offers you the choice not to provide data, opt out.
- » **Disable Location Services** - Turn off geo-location features on online services and high-tech devices so as not to inadvertently share kids' location via status updates, photos or otherwise.
- » **Be Leery of Public Wi-Fi** - Logging onto public networks may seem convenient, but actions taken on them can also be highly visible: Don't share personal or sensitive info while using them.

5 Ways to Play it Safe Online

- » **Always use trusted sites** - Take time to research websites that children and students will visit online. Rules should also be set about what types of activities, play and content are appropriate.
- » **Treat others with respect** - Like The Golden Rule, good sportsmanship and positivity pay.
- » **Be careful what you click** - Don't download pictures, activate email attachments, or visit unsolicited links from unknown sources.
- » **Speak up** - Don't be afraid to come forward and discuss something that you have a question about online.
- » **Play nicely together** - The more positive and encouraging you are, the more fun kids will have - and the easier you'll find it to convince them to listen.

Great Websites for Parents

- » **Center for Safe and Responsible Internet Use**
www.csriu.org
- » **ConnectSafely.org**
www.connectsafely.org
- » **Facebook Family Safety Center**
<http://www.facebook.com/help/safety>
- » **Family Online Safety Institute**
www.fosi.org
- » **FBI Cyber Alerts Index**
<http://www.fbi.gov/news/stories/story-index/cyber-crimes>
- » **GetGameSmart**
<http://www.getgamesmart.com/>
- » **Microsoft Family Safety**
<http://www.microsoft.com/security/family-safety/default.aspx#Overview>
- » **Modern Parent's Guide Books**
<http://www.parentsguidebooks.com>
- » **NetSmartz.org**
www.netsmartz.org
- » **SafeKids.com**
www.safekids.com
- » **TechSavvy Magazine**
www.techsavvymag.com
- » **Web Wise Kids**
www.webwisekids.org



Additional Materials and Resources:

- » **Trend Micro Technology and Online Safety Guide:** <http://www.trendmicro.com/us/security/the-talk/index.html>
- » **FOSI's Tips for High-Tech and Online Usage:** <http://www.commonssensemedia.org/advice-for-parents/rules-road-parents-digital-age>
- » **ConnectSafely.org's Family Safety Center:** <http://www.connectsafely.org/safety-tips-and-advice.html>
- » **Microsoft's Security and Privacy Center:** <http://www.microsoft.com/security/resources/brochures.aspx>
- » **Google Family Safety Channel:** <http://www.youtube.com/user/googlefamilysafety>

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