

5 TIPS TO BETTER PROTECT YOUR CHILD ONLINE

We teach our children not to speak to strangers, to wait for the green light, and to look both ways before crossing the street. But in today's digital world, there are a few other equally important lessons, especially when it comes to your child's online safety and privacy. Review these simple rules to safeguard your child online.

1. Know about COPPA

As a parent, did you know you have control over the personal information companies collect online from your kids under 13? The Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA), enforced by the US Federal Trade Commission (FTC) gives parents the tools to do just that. Sites, apps, games and other online services that are directed to children under 13 need your consent before collecting personal information from your child and they have to honor your choices about how that information is used once it is collected. The COPPA rule also applies to general audience sites, social networks and apps that know they are collecting personal information from kids.



Companies that your child wants to interact with may send you an email with a link asking for your approval. In order to verify you are an adult and the parent of the child giving approval, these companies may ask you to provide sufficient verifiable personal information (i.e. full name, address, partial social security number, driver's license number, process a credit card transaction, written permission slip or verify your identity by phone). This is a normal part of the consent and verification process - don't be alarmed and make sure to read the email carefully.

There are other laws and regulations in the United States and globally that protect children and adults online. Learn more here: PRIVOPROTECT.com/laws-rules-protecting-minors

2. Make Sure Your Child Knows Your Email Address

Make sure your child knows your primary email address or have them use a PRIVO iD! When a website, app or other online service needs your permission when complying with COPPA, your child is asked to provide your email address so companies can notify you about what information your child has already provided and can request your consent. Remember, if you ignore your child's requests, he/she may find ways to go around you. Start a conversation with your child early and understand what sites, apps and games they want to interact with so you can be an active participant in the way they engage.

3. Make the Internet a Family Matter

If your kids are going out to play, you would probably want to know who they are playing with and where they are playing. Online should be no different. Make it a dinnertime routine to ask where they have been playing online, what they love to do and what they have shared online.

Talk to your kids about what it means to give out personal information online and what the consequences may be. In the world of COPPA, personal information includes a child's name, address, phone number or email address; their physical whereabouts (i.e. GPS locator tools); photos, videos and audio recordings of the child, and persistent identifiers, like IP addresses and device IDs, that can be used to track a child's activities over time and across different websites, apps and online services.

4. Encourage your child to play on COPPA compliant sites, apps and games and be truthful about their age.

In the real offline world, you wouldn't want your kids trying to enter a bar with a fake ID. The Internet is no different. We shouldn't ask our children to age-up in order to sign up for accounts online. According to parents in a Mott Poll from the University of Michigan, half of children 10-12 years and one-third of children 7-9 years are using their devices to engage with social media apps, even though the minimum age to join many social media apps is 13. Instead, encourage your child to play in sites, apps and games that are meant for their age group. There are alternatives to Instagram, SnapChat, TikTok and Facebook for children. Look for COPPA compliant social networks that allow children under the age of 13 that feature chat moderation and limit the amount of personal information being shared and collected. Social networking is a way of life today, but it is important for kids to be networking with kids, not strange or unknown adults! Find safe and privacy certified sites, apps, games and gadgets for kids by exploring the PRIVO PROTECT tech safety directory. PRIVOPROTECT.com/techsafety



5. Take Control of Your Account Settings

Teach your child they are in control of their privacy online. Show them where and how to change their account settings and help them to understand who they are sharing information with, who can see what they post, and what the company is doing with their information. Every privacy policy should have a section stating what they collect and do with that information, including the third parties they interact and share data with. It is always a good idea for adults and children to check their account settings to make sure personal information is being handled the way you expect.

Children may be digital natives, but that does not mean they are digital experts. It is our job as parents and caregivers to do everything possible to protect and guide them. For more tips and resources to better protect your children online, visit PRIVOPROTECT.com.