

Being Screen Smart

A few tips for teenagers

1. Remember – what you post online may be available to others for a lifetime.
2. Get to know about how the internet, search engines and social networking sites work. Learn how to use and set privacy functions.
3. There are alternatives.
 - a. Some search engines are surveillance / data profiling free (eg. DuckDuckGo)
 - b. When doing Google searches use apps to protect from surveillance and data profiling (e.g., Adblock; Disconnect; HTTPS Everywhere; Do Not Track Me).
 - c. Some social network sites have good privacy protections (eg. Diaspora).
4. Remember – information on the internet – even Wikipedia – can be unreliable or simply incorrect. Use a reliable, international website to ensure information is more accurate and less biased (e.g., a news, education or university website).
5. Set all social networking sites to 'private'. Remember, the default settings for most social networking sites are quite public.
6. Create good passwords and never share them. Change them regularly. One way might be to change passwords on the first day of every school term.
7. Avoid usernames that will appeal to predators and other people you might find undesirable. Choose usernames that are not flirty.
8. Never let another person take explicit photos of you for any reason
9. Never exchange personal information online. It cannot be removed and you have no control over where it goes once it is posted.
10. If you don't know an online 'friend' offline, then they are essentially a stranger.
11. Help your parents to understand the internet and social networking. Let them be part of your online social world.
12. For your safety, parents need to know where you travel in the virtual world as much as they need know where you are in the real world
13. If a site concerns you in any way, exit it immediately
14. If you find inappropriate posts about you online, tell your parents. You should also tell the ISP provider and/or the Police, and/or your school as appropriate. You can also have your parents do this for you.
15. If you are being bullied or victimised or harassed online, do not respond. Immediately tell an adult. Block the bully from the site if you can. Keep records of everything they have done to you, including screen shots of emails, messages etc. If the cyberbullying is at school or by school peers then tell the school counsellor or main teacher.
16. Post only to others as you would have them post about you.
17. Bullying others online is a crime. Don't do it and don't join in when others do.
18. Remember, to be healthy you need face-to-face contact with real people and to have good friendships offline. Try to balance online and offline activities. It is like healthy eating – moderation is the key.
19. Overuse of social media and screens can make people unhappy and reduce their sense of wellbeing. If your use of screen media is having a negative impact on how you feel or on important areas of your life, tell your parents or a doctor or a school counsellor or a person you think can help.
20. See <https://esafety.gov.au/> for heaps of helpful resources and advice.

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Tips for parents of teenagers

1. Ideally ALL computers (including laptops, i-pads, i-pods, tablets, netbooks etc.) should be in common areas of the house and no internet-capable devices should be in bedrooms. One way to do this is to have a device basket that all internet-connected devices go into at bedtime. Alternatively, switch off the modem at night. This can cause pushback and be hard to enforce, but is often worth the effort.
2. Learn about how the internet, search engines and social networking sites work. Learn how to use and set privacy functions. Use filtering software such as Net Nanny, Cyberpatrol, CYBERSitter (content); Gamblock, Betfilter (gambling sites). Local libraries regularly run computing/internet courses, including for non-native English speakers, and these may help. Where your children have set up social networking accounts such as Instagram, check their privacy settings and blocks. Remember, the default settings are rarely private and are often quite public.
3. There are more private alternatives to popular online sites:
 - a. Some search engines are surveillance / data profiling free (eg. DuckDuckGo)
 - b. When doing Google searches use apps to protect from surveillance and data profiling (e.g., AdBlock; Disconnect; HTPPS Everywhere; Do Not Track Me).
 - c. Some social network sites have good privacy protections (eg. Diaspora).
4. Set up clear house rules about internet use, what sites can be visited, what sites can be posted to, and what types of information can be posted online. It is recommended these rules include no exchange of personal information and no posting of nude or semi-nude or sexualised images or photos.
5. Enjoy the internet with your kids. Get them to show you the ropes. Play online games with them. Show them any pitfalls you can point out along the way.
6. Actively monitor children's screen use. For safety you may also want to check the lists of friends on your children's social networking sites.
7. Keep records of online activity, especially bullying or suspicious online communications and posts.
8. A recommended amount of recreational screen time for children and teenagers is 1-2 hours per day. This is however an ideal, and not necessarily feasible for many teenagers. It may be more realistic to aim for 3 hours a day or another figure you think is achievable. Whatever limit you decide on with your teenager, give them as much say as is reasonable on how and when they 'spend' their recreational screen time allowance.
9. Go to www.niira.org.au for help if you are worried about your kid's screen use. This site also lists professionals who specialise in screen use issues in children and teenagers.
10. Encourage your kids to have a healthy media diet. Just like food, a healthy recreational screen media diet:
 - a. Is moderate in amount (see point 8).
 - b. Has regard to the content. Some content is OK to experience regularly but other content may not be healthy in large amounts.
 - c. Is age-appropriate. For example, most social networking sites are considered inappropriate for children under 13. Many children and teens also play violent video games that are inappropriate for their age. Take time to discuss this with your children/teenagers and advise against inappropriate usage.
11. Be a good media use and social media use role model.
12. See <https://esafety.gov.au/> for heaps of helpful resources and advice.