

Online Safety for Parents and Guardians

Online young people can learn, get help with homework, connect with friends and family, and express themselves creatively. However there are also risks associated with being online, but by understanding and talking about the dangers you can help keep your child safe online.

Beginners Guide to being online

This list provides a basic overview of some of the online technologies that your child/children may use today when they are online. It is not an exhausted list but will give you a brief insight into how your kids time could be spent online.

Surfing the Net

Most people who surf the net will do so by means of a browser, which allows you to look at internet sites. The most common browser used on PCs is [Microsoft Internet Explorer](#). Other browsers include [Apple Safari](#) and [Mozilla Firefox](#).

Instant Messaging

Instant Messaging is a form of live and instantaneous communication, a mixture of chat-rooms, email and phone calls, facilitated by the internet connecting PCs. It can take the form of private communication between known friends where users build up a list of their own contacts and are alerted when they are online, or it can also be a public open environment. Instant Messaging allows people to communicate via the web instantaneously over the using a variety of options including text, voice, video and pictures.

E-mail

E-mail stands for Electronic Mail and is a way of sending messages from one computer to another over the Internet. Messages are composed in special e-mail programmes.

Social Networking Sites (SNS)

Social Networking areas are websites with applications which help connect friends using a number of tools like blogs, profiles, internal email systems and photos. Well known

sites include Bebo (www.bebo.com), Myspace (www.myspace.com), Facebook (www.facebook.com) and Twitter (www.twitter.com).

There are also a number of Social Networks targeting very young children, for example [Club Penguin](#), [Stardoll](#), etc.

Many young people use these sites to create their own profiles, which they then link to those of their friends and so on. Once set up they can use these profiles to share photographs, create blogs and post comments on other peoples profiles and blogs.

Chatrooms

Because the Internet connects PCs, it allows people to “chat”. There are certain websites which have chatroom forums - which allow people to “post up” messages and converse with each other. Conversations are called “threads”.

Online Games

Online Gaming relates to the process whereby users can, through the internet interact with other online users in playing games. This allows users to play games against other individuals without the need for players to be in the same location. www.pegionline.eu is an excellent site which provides information on protecting children when they are participating in online gaming.

File Sharing

File Sharing programmes allow users to swap or share files from their PCs with others over the Internet. There are also some commercial peer-to-peer applications which allow users to buy music and video content over the Internet.

Weblogs (Blogs)

Weblogs, more commonly referred to as ‘blogs’ are usually intended for a public audience. A blog also allows for interaction with its readers through comments which can be made on the posting or other comments. Blogs differ from personal websites in that they are made up of a series of individual postings, usually published in chronological order. Generally only the manager(s) of the blog are authorised to post messages. Anyone with an internet connection can upload a comment to a posting. Access to blogs can be restricted if necessary, and comments can either be disabled or moderated by the manager of the blog. They are particularly popular with young people. Bloggers often address a narrow topic and a small, specialised audience.

Online Safety for Mentors

As a Dojo mentor it is important to ensure that all ninjas are staying safe online. While the internet and other online technologies can open a vast amount of opportunities for young people, there are also risks associated with being online. As Mentors you must be aware of the risks online and proactive in looking out for your ninjas online safety.

The Risks and Dangers Online

Cyberbullying

[Cyberbullying](#) is bullying that takes place online either on social networking sites or through online gaming. [Read the NSPCC advice for parents about cyberbullying.](#)

Exposure to inappropriate content, including pornography

Children and young people may see illegal or inappropriate content online, such as:

- pornography
- child abuse images
- dangerous advice encouraging eating disorders, self harm or suicide
- excessive violence or race hate materials.

Some websites can contain illegal materials, others may be legal, but could be meant for adults only. Children may access this inappropriate content accidentally, or intentionally through curiosity. They may also be enticed by promises of special offers or prizes, so it is important to be aware of this when giving them access to the internet.

Ignoring age restrictions

Some websites and games use age restrictions and checks to ensure that children don't see unsuitable content. did you know that children must be at least 13 years or older to register on most social networking websites. The age limit is an important safety measure there for a reason and you should not be pressured into letting your child join these websites.

Young people 'friending' or communicating with people they don't know

Young people may chat or become 'friends' with people they don't know or have never met via social networks or online games.

The percentage of online friends that children did not know outside of being online was:

- [12% for 8 - 11 years olds in 2012](#)
- [25% for 12 - 15 year olds in 2013](#)

Making online friends

This [video by the Child Exploitation and Online Protection \(CEOP\) Centre](#) describes what an online 'friend' is and how children are using social networking to communicate.

[Privacy controls](#) can limit who can see your details, although making 'friends' will give someone access to your information which is problematic when anyone friends someone they only know from their online profile.

What can parents do?

Maintaining open communication between you and your child/children is the most important thing when it comes to online safety. Here are a few simple tips to keep your child/children safe online;

- Talk to your children about potential dangers on the internet and your concerns.
- Make surfing the internet a family activity especially with younger children.
- Set family rules for using the internet such as when it can be used and for how long.
- Ensure that your children never give personal information or meet with an on-line 'friend' without permission.
- Keep the computer in a busy room in the house where you can see it.
- Encourage your children to talk to you about anything uncomfortable they may find on the internet.

Online Safety Checklists

These checklists provide a quick reference guide to help you talk to your child about keeping safe online.



[Download tips to help keep your child safe online](#)



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[Download checklist for teenagers](#)

Intended for RP Pilot Participants

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