

Social networking safety

Social networking allows many of us to keep in contact with people and to share details and photos of what is happening in our lives. Young people will have grown up surrounded by sites such as Facebook, Bebo and Myspace. Social networking sites will undoubtedly play an important part in the lives of youngsters as they get older and we need to ensure that we give them simple guidance to ensure that they use them safely.

5 simple rules to discuss at home:

1. Adjust privacy settings - In Facebook you can select 'Settings, Privacy Settings, Profile'. This will allow you to restrict who sees information and prevents friends of friends seeing your posts and photos. In Bebo you can do a similar task by selecting 'Settings , Privacy Settings'. Remember that you can also restrict who sees each photo.
2. Think before you post - It is very easy to post a comment or photo in anger or frustration. By the time you remove it many people will have seen it and the harm has been done.
3. Only add people who you know in real life as friends. Remember that just because someone has a photo showing them as 15 year old in their profile they may be someone completely different.
4. Think carefully about how much personal information you put on your profile - you don't need to tell everyone your address, date of birth and mobile number.
5. Pay attention to age restrictions - for example Facebook and Bebo are for people aged 13 and over.

What to do if things go wrong

Children can visit the Thinkuknow website (www.thinkuknow.co.uk) and report issues by clicking on the report abuse icon:



All reports are taken seriously and will be followed up.

Many Social Networking sites and IM applications will also have the facility to report inappropriate content. For example Facebook has a 'Report' link on each page or concerns can be e-mailed to abuse@facebook.com and Bebo has a 'Report abuse' link on every profile page and below every piece of content (ie photo, video etc).

As a parent you can make reports on your child's behalf by visiting the parent's section of the CEOP website (www.ceop.gov.uk)

Useful websites

There are a range of useful websites that provide information for parents and children:

www.thinkuknow.co.uk
www.digizen.org
www.childnet.com
www.ceop.gov.uk
www.getsafeonline.org
www.dcsf.gov.uk/ukccis

But most importantly....

Remember that using technology can be a wonderfully powerful and positive experience. We should not discourage its use but support youngsters and help them to use it safely.



Welcome to a whole new world

Young people grow up in a technologically rich world. They are surrounded by ICT and use it extensively in school and out of school. ICT opens up a new world, a world that we should embrace and encourage. New technologies allow access to some of the most powerful communication, collaboration and research tools.

With the new opportunities that ICT brings there undoubtedly comes some risks. It is important that we make children aware of the risks and encourage them to adopt appropriate patterns of behaviour when using ICT.

Understanding the language

One of the effects of Instant Messaging (IM), chatrooms and texting is that it has changed the way that people communicate with each other. A traditional text message has a maximum length of 160 characters and this led to a new generation of abbreviations and acronyms. Some of these are obvious, some are not so obvious. Below are some of the most common examples:

NTHNG	Anything	GR8	Great
RUOK	Are you OK?	L8R	Later
R	Are	LOL	Laugh out loud
EZ	Easy	OMG	Oh my God!
A?	Eh? (pardon)	SPK	Speak
XLNT	Excellent	BTW	By the way
THANQ	Thank you	KTHNX	OK thanks
LMAO	Laugh my ass off		
ROFL	Rolling on the floor laughing		
ASL	Age, Sex, Location		
PMSL	Pee myself laughing		
WTF	What the flip (or variations!)		
POS	Parent over my shoulder		

10 tips for parents

1. Set up an account for each user on your pc at home and only give yourself administrator access. This will allow you to keep control of the settings and the installation of software. Each user account can be password protected.
2. Add a screensaver protected by a password to your account so that if you leave your pc for 5 minutes you will have to enter your password. You can do this in the 'Control Panel'.
3. Encourage your family to use technology in a public part of the house and not in a bedroom. This applies not just to pcs but also to laptops, game consoles, internet browsers on phones etc.
4. Remember that many consoles come with family settings. For example if you want to disable or limit 'Xbox Live' on an Xbox 360 you can do so by going to 'Settings, Parental controls'. There is also the option to add a mask to voices so that a youngster's voice sounds like that of an adult or even a robot.
5. Use a pop up blocker. Both Internet Explorer and Firefox come with their own pop-up blockers. If you are accessing a site that has a genuine pop up window that you need to access you should add it to the trusted sites rather than turn off the pop up blocker. The settings can be found in the 'Tools' menu of the browser.
6. Encourage your child not to open e-mails from unfamiliar e-mail addresses and to avoid opening suspicious attachments. As far as possible you should encourage your child to use the school's Learning Platform as this provides a safer environment.
7. Ensure that your favourite search engine to do 'safe searches'. This will make sure that a search returns content suitable for all ages. For example, to set Google to do safe searches click on search settings on the homepage and then ensure that moderate or strict filtering is enabled.
8. Adjust the security settings of your browser and pc. For example, Apple Macs allow users to change settings in the parental control preference pane. Windows Vista and Windows 7 also have parental control sections.
9. Keep virus protection software up to date.
10. Engage in their world – add them as a friend on a social networking site, text them, discover what their games consoles do etc.