



SAFE SURFING: TEACHING YOUR KIDS ABOUT ONLINE SAFETY

As technology becomes more ingrained in our society, children are becoming exposed to the Internet at increasingly early ages. The cyber world exposes kids to a vast array of information and resources that previous generations never experienced, but it can also be a dangerous place for children to navigate. For identity thieves, children are often the easiest people to trick into handing over sensitive information. For this reason, it's important that parents monitor their children's online activities and teach them basic rules for staying safe online.

Elementary School (Ages 5–10):

Start the Conversation:

- ▶ Ask questions to establish your child's understanding of computers, the capabilities of the Internet, and what is considered personal information.
- ▶ Follow up by offering basic explanations and filling in the gaps that you see in your child's understanding.
- ▶ Tell them not to give out any information online (just as you would tell them not to talk to strangers).

Establish the Rules:

- ▶ Pick a list of appropriate websites, games, and other programs.
- ▶ Use parental controls to limit access and block inappropriate sites.

Monitor their Playtime:

- ▶ Keep a close eye on what programs your child is using to ensure they aren't unknowingly providing any personal information. Avoid sharing your passwords with your children to maintain control over what they can access and prevent accidental online purchases.

Middle School and High School (Ages 11–18):

Continue the Dialogue:

- ▶ Maintain a dialogue about how they use the Internet as they start to buy things online and use social media.
- ▶ Explain how to keep their information safe when making purchases. If they are using your credit card to purchase things online, they are putting your information at risk as well.

Keep an Eye on Social Media:

- ▶ Establish ground rules on what information is and isn't okay to share via social media, regardless of the site.
- ▶ Have them set their profiles to the "private" setting, and make sure they are only online friends with people they know.

Teach Cell Phone Safety:

- ▶ Talk to them about screening phone calls from unknown numbers, locking their phone with a password, and only downloading apps from known sources.

Visit www.va.gov/identitytheft to learn how to prevent identity theft.

More Than a Number is overseen by VA's Identity Safety Service within the Office of Information Security.



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