

Ten Tips to Protect Your Child Online

By Eric Wichhart, MBA, CEO ConnectU

1. **Develop a good relationship.** Developing a good relationship with your child is the key to keeping them out of trouble and safe online. Kids who have a strong relationship with his or her parents are less likely to get in trouble online.
2. **Be Involved.** Knowing what your children are doing online will help you keep them safe. They are less likely to do things that are risky if you know what is going on.
3. Learn about the Internet. You cannot protect your child from what you do not know about. If you are unsure about the Internet or do not understand what your children are doing, take a class or read a book about the Internet and get to know more so you can help keep them safe.
4. **Teach your child.** Teach your children about the dangers of the Internet. Teach them about the hidden dangers of talking to strangers online. The more they know, the safer they will be. Kids do not realize how giving small bits of information to strangers can lead to bigger troubles.
5. **Install Internet Monitoring software.** Internet monitoring software is a good line of defense to knowing what is going on while your child is online. It automatically sends you a report on a regular basis of your child's activities online. Suggested software can be found at www.connectutech.com.
6. **Install Content Filtering software.** Content Filtering software keeps your children off sites that they should not be having access. Most content filtering software has the ability to filter via keyword, content type such as adult, weapons and drugs. It will also send you a report with a list of sites the user tried to access and was denied.
7. **Move your child's computer to a common area.** When children have their computer in their room, they have an easier time of hiding what they are doing. Moving their computer to a common area makes it easier for you to monitor their activities.
8. **Only allow online access when you are home.** Most Internet monitoring software has the ability to block out access during certain times of the day. Also you can password protect the computer. Keep the password to yourself and only allow your child access when you put in the password.
9. **Know the passwords.** Don't allow your child to have email, computer or social networking sites that you do not have access. Make sure your child keeps a list of password available to you so that you can view their activity.
10. **Monitor My Space, Facebook and other online profiles.** On a regular basis take a look at your child's MySpace and other profile pages. See what pictures they have posted and read through some of the posts to see what others are saying. Also, read through their email on a regular basis.

You are the parent and it is your responsibility to make sure they are staying safe. I recommend that you do not try to implement all of these tips at once or you may alienate your child. The extent to which you implement these tips depends on if you suspect activity and the level of relationship you have with your child. Keep in mind however that good kids get in trouble too. You may not want to violate their privacy or trust however sometimes their naïve, innocent comments can put them in danger. Don't feel like you are spying on your child but rather helping to keep them safe from unknown, unseen dangers.



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