

Internet Safety

The Internet has many benefits. It has the capacity to present information in a number of formats such as audio, video and hypertext, all of which can be highly motivating for the learner. In addition, email, mailing lists, and communication services have the potential to promote cross-cultural exchanges, language learning opportunities or other collaborative projects. However, there are also risks associated with

Internet-based learning.

Young people are primarily going online to connect with school friends, make new friends, play games, download music, and do their homework. As parents, the most important thing you can do to reduce the online risks is to engage with their digital lifestyle.

The vast majority of teenagers have a Facebook profile. While this is a good way for people to stay in touch it is open to serious misuse. Please keep a close eye on your child's Facebook page as some young people are reluctant to tell parents or teachers if they are being bullied online. Check safety settings on your child's Facebook page, report abuse as users can have their page taken down if their behaviour is abusive, tell your child to 'unfriend' anyone who is behaving abusively toward them. We would encourage parents to ensure their son/daughter does not have access to the internet (by smartphone/ I pad/ computer) after bedtime- if a young person reads something upsetting late at night they may have no-one to confide in and can often lose sleep as a result of what they have read. Please talk to your teenager about the potential damage teasing and seemingly funny messages can cause to the recipient- the sender may not intend to cause such upset.

Webwise.ie have ten important tips for parents.

1. Discover the Internet together:

Be the one to introduce your child to the Internet. This could make it easier to share both positive and negative experiences in the future.

2. Agree with your child on rules for Internet use

Try to reach an agreement with your child on how long they should spend online and what types of sites and activities are ok.

3. Encourage your child to be careful when disclosing personal information

They should be selective about what personal information and photos they post to online spaces. Once material is online it is subject to all kinds of unauthorised use.

4. Talk about the risks associated with meeting online friends

Young people are making friends online but they should only physically meet these strangers in the company of an adult or others they trust.

5. Teach your child about 'source criticism' on the Internet

Not all information found online is correct. Educate your children on how to verify information they find.

6. Don't be too critical towards your child's exploration of the Internet

Remember, it is not always their fault if they come across inappropriate content on the Web

7. Report online material you may consider illegal to the appropriate authorities

It is important that we all take responsibility for the Web and report matters which we believe could be illegal to www.hotline.ie

8. Encourage respect for others

As in everyday life there are informal ethical rules for how to behave when relating to other people on the Internet

9. Know your child's internet use

To be able to guide your child's Internet use, whether it's on their mobile phone or PC, it is important to understand how children use the Internet and know what they like to do online.

10. Remember that the positive aspects of the Internet outweigh the negative aspects

The Internet is an excellent educational and recreational resource for children. Encourage your child to be Webwise and explore the Internet to its full potential.

Below some of the points mentioned above will be discussed in further detail.

Source Criticism: In short, who puts information on the Internet and why they put it there. The easiest way for both you and your children to be critical of sources is to discuss it.

Here are a few starting points of discussion;

"Who can put information on the Internet"

Anyone can! This is great because now it's easy to find out about just about anything. But you have to be careful. Just like in real life, people on the Internet can make mistakes and tell lies. Sometimes on the Internet it's even harder to know if someone is telling lies because you can't see them.

How do I know if what I see on the Internet is true?

There are a few ways of checking.

- Find out who owns the web site. Do they have a good reputation? If you are not sure, ask friends, colleagues, teachers etc.
- Compare what you see on the Internet with information from other places, like books and magazines.
- Compare what you see on the Internet with what you already know.
- Look for a date on the website. If the website is very old, the information might be out of date.

Are there adverts on the Internet?

Yes! There are lots of 'ads' on the Internet and they can pop up anywhere. When you're reading something it's important to know if someone's trying to sell you something.

Is it OK to copy things from the Internet?

If you want to copy something exactly from the internet and use it in a project or on your own website you should do a couple of things:

- Ask permission from the owner of the website if it's OK to copy their work. This is fair since it's their time and work.
- When you copy something into your own project or website, always reference where you got it from. Again, this is only fair.

Why do some sites ask me for personal details?

Some websites collect information about people so they know what kind of adverts to show them. Then they sell this information to other sites. That's why sometimes you get emails from sites you have never visited or heard of. This is called spam and in Europe it's against the law.

How do I know what a web site will do with my personal details?

Good web sites will have a "Privacy Policy". This tells you exactly what they're going to do with your name, email address, or any other information you give them. But as a rule you should never give any personal details over the Internet without checking with an adult first. You will be able to find more information on www.webwise.ie.

Other sites that may be useful:

www.hotline.ie/generaladvice.php - Hotline for suspected illegal content encountered on the Internet plus general advice for parents and children.

www.saferinternet.org - European network of e-safety awareness

www.ncte.ie/InternetSafety/

Internet Safety Guidelines.

Here is a set of guidelines that you can rate in order of importance with your child.

This is a good way to facilitate a discussion between you and your child about internet safety.

Please rate the following statements in order of importance from 1-15

- I will never disclose any personal details to someone in a chat room
- I will tell an adult if I find something online which upsets me
- I will always treat others on the Internet as I would like to be treated
- I will not insult or offend someone online even as a joke - they may not take it that way
- I will always have fun in cyberspace and remember that the virtual world is not a real world
- I will share with others my online experiences
- I will always verify material I come across on the Internet
- I will ask permission from parents/guardians before I purchase anything online
- I will take regular breaks if I am on the Internet
- I will not ask others to disclose personal information
- I will not bother with adult material
- Copying from the Internet may be illegal - always ask permission from the web author to use material from the Internet

- I will never copy huge chunks of material from the Internet for study - that's cheating
- I always bookmark my favourite sites - that way I can find them again really quickly
- If someone sent me something by email that I don't like, I never forward it on - If I did that would be spamming