Helping your child to
'Stay Safe Online'

SEASCAPE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Parents often ask us for advice about helping to keep their child safe online. To help, we have written this guide for you and your child.

The internet is a fantastic resource for information, games and activities and children love using it. However, we all need to make sure that they are doing so safely and are aware of the potential risks.

Please read this leaflet through with your child and talk about the issues it raises. Let us know if you have any questions or concerns and we will help.

Playing age-appropriate games on the internet

Playing games on the internet and games consoles is a fun and sociable way to spend time, encouraging teamwork and developing skills. This is great, but games involving violence can be very disturbing for children and can cause anxiety. So it is important to adhere to age restrictions on games. Make sure you and your family agree what games can be played and that children understand why some games are allowed and others aren't.

Abbie is having fun playing a game online which she really enjoys. Her dad is watching the game and knows it has no upsetting content and is an appropriate game for Abbie to play.

Protecting your child's device

Protect all of your devices with anti-virus software and keep it up to date. Talk to your child about the risks of picking up viruses so that they take care with sites that they may visit. Also talk to them about the danger of opening links or attachments to emails, as they may carry viruses too. Where they have passwords, talk to them about keeping them secure (but sharing them with you) and choosing passwords that are difficult for anyone else to guess.

Ben's mum has made sure that all the devices in their house have anti-virus software and it is up to date. Ben has set up a password to access a website so it is secure, but he has also shared it with his mum.

Strangers on the internet

Talk to your child about people that they meet on the internet. Tell your child to treat people on the internet the same way that they would treat strangers in real life. They may not be who they say they are. Even if your child regularly plays online games with them, they are not a real friend. So your child should not give out any personal information such as their address and phone numbers and they should not meet them unless it is under your supervision.

Harry is playing an online game with some school friends. They have a friend who also plays online but they know that he is not the same as a real-life friend and do not chat to him.

Find out what your child is doing on the internet

Parents need to keep an eye on what their child is doing online. You can make this easier by having their devices in a busy part of the house so you can see what they are looking at. Make sure that devices have parental controls on them so you give access to age-appropriate content only. It is also a good idea to check the 'search history' on their devices so you can see what pages they have visited.

Ben is looking at the Education City website to play educational games that help him with his maths and English skills. His dad is checking what he is looking at, and is enjoying finding out what Ben has been reading about.

Dealing with upsetting content

Despite all the safeguards you put in place, your child may come across something which is frightening or upsetting online. If this happens, tell them to shut the device down or walk away, and speak to you or another grown-up straightaway. Reassure them that they will not be told off if this happens to them.

Abbie has clicked on a link that has led her to something upsetting. As they use devices in a busy area in her house, she can tell her mum straightaway. She tells Abbie to close the screen and has a chat to her about what she has seen and makes her feel less worried about it.

The dangers of too much screen time for children

It is important to regulate the amount of time children spend online each day. You need to make sure your child has time for other valuable activities, such as eating healthily and physical activities, etc. If not, these are just some of the negative effects too much screen time can have on your child:

- Not wanting to go to bed and problems with falling asleep.
- Increased possibility of developing anxiety and attention problems.
- Getting irritable when access to the internet is denied or interrupted.

Harry's dad has agreed set times for Harry to be on the internet and is now having a cushion play fight with him. They are having fun and getting exercise. And, most importantly, Harry is no longer anxious about being away from his device.

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