**A Parent’s Practical Guide to Raising a Digital Citizen**

*Just as you would get driving lessons for your children before they venture on their own in a car, the same can be said about your child navigating the digital world. Educate yourself and your children before you hand them a device.*

**Important Questions to Consider**

1. What age is appropriate for your child to have a cell phone?
2. How will you monitor your child’s cell phone use?
3. Would you consider taking the cell phone away for rule violations? How would your child earn it back?
4. Will your child be allowed to have a computer in their bedroom?
5. Will you allow your child to maintain a blog, and if so, at what age?
6. Will you monitor the blog, and if so, how?
7. What rules do you feel should be in place for your child’s online/chat use?
8. Will you monitor their online/chat use and how?
9. How much time do you feel is appropriate, on a daily basis, for your child to use a computer/device for chat/online use?
10. If you monitor your child’s cell phone and computer/device use, will you tell them you are?

**Ways to Minimize Online Risks**

**Talk openly** and frequently about online safety.

**Establish Clear Family Ground Rules and Consequences** with your child’s input. Consider a rule that your child must ask for permission before downloading any apps — even free ones — just so you're aware of them. When your child wants to join a new social media platform, go through the security settings together to choose the ones you're most comfortable with. Advise your child not to share passwords with anyone - friends, boyfriends/ girlfriends.

**Limit Screen Time** and designate specific areas for internet use.

**Be an Example** by monitoring your own use and abide by the family ground rules.

**Set Privacy Settings** on social networking sites, smartphones, apps and other devices your children use. For help… <https://www.teensafe.com/blog/how-to-manage-privacy-settings-on-social-media/>

**Check Geo-Location Settings** ontheir apps to see if it is enabled and sharing their location unintentionally.

**Check ‘Tagging’ Settings** so that when others are posting or sharing photos online, your child’s identity is not revealed.

**Use an iCloud account** –Add your child to your

iCloud account. Whenever a new app is

downloaded by the child, it will automatically

download to the parent’s phone as well.

**Keep your home computer in a central and open location** – to monitor your children while they are online.

**Keep a clean machine** – Protect all family computers with anti-virus, anti-spyware and firewall that is set to update automatically. Keep your operating system, web browsers and other software current as well, and back up computer files on a regular basis.

**Stay up to date** – on social media/online trends.

**Keep Talking and Stay Engaged**

**Critical Thinking** - Help your children identify safe, credible websites and other digital content, and be cautious about clicking on, downloading, posting and uploading content.

**Responsibility** –Make sure children understand that the internet/social media is an extension of who they are, but in a highly public nature. Emails, photos/videos they post can easily be copied/pasted elsewhere and is almost impossible to take back. They should know what is appropriate and inappropriate to post as it can damage their reputation and friendships.

**Respect** -Remind your children to be good “digital friends” by respecting personal information of friends and family and not share anything about others that is potentially embarrassing or hurtful.

**Problem-solving** - Children may deal with bullying, unwanted contact or hurtful comments online. Work with them on strategies for when problems arise like talking to a trusted adult, not retaliating, calmly talking with the person, blocking the person or filing a complaint.

**Positive Choices** - Support their positive and safe engagement in online communities. Encourage them to help others to make positive online choices especially if friends are making poor choices or being harmed.

**Talk to other parents**

**Positive Engagement** - Pay attention to the online environments your children use. Show interest in their online communities and their friends. React constructively when they encounter inappropriate material and make it a teachable moment. Expand your children’s online experience and their autonomy when developmentally appropriate, as they demonstrate competence in safe and secure online behavior and good decision making.

**Additional Parent Resources**

**Consider GPS Apps** to monitor your children’s whereabouts like **Life360 Family Locator** – which is the reigning leader in the GPS tracking arena. **My Family GPS Tracker** app is available not only on Android and iPhone, but also on Amazon devices and Windows devices. For more details on these GPS Apps and others go to <http://www.makeuseof.com/tag/what-are-the-best-child-tracking-tools/>

**Websites**

\* [Common Sense Media](https://www.commonsense.org/education/digital-citizenship)

\* [ConnectSafely.org](http://www.connectsafely.org/) - basic guidelines for teens and parents about cyberbullying, sexting, social networking, and more.

\* [iKeepSafe.org](http://www.ikeepsafe.org/) seeks to give parents, educators, and policymakers the information and tools which power them to teach children the safe and healthy use of technology and the internet.

\* [Internet Matters](https://www.internetmatters.org/advice/social-media/)

\* [Lookout Mobile Security & The Online Mom’s Generation Smartphone: A Guide for Parents of Tweens & Tweens](https://www.mylookout.com/resources/reports/smartphone-family-guide) has resources to help families talk to their kids about mobile security and safe smartphone use.

\*[National Center for Missing and Exploited Children](https://www.netsmartz.org/Parents) Provides resources and tips on online safety.

\* [NetSmartz](https://www.netsmartz.org/Parents) – from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) and Boys & Girls Clubs of America (BGCA) for children aged 5 to 17, parents, guardians, and educators that uses activities to teach internet safety.

\*[OnGuardOnline.gov](https://ftc.gov/OnGuardOnline) is the Federal Trade Commission’s main consumer-facing page to educate everyone on online safety.

\*[PA Office of Attorney General – Cybersafety](https://www.attorneygeneral.gov/uploadedFiles/MainSite/Content/Press/brochuresPublications/cyber_safety_2014.pdf)

\*[Stay Safe Online](https://staysafeonline.org/get-involved/at-home/raising-digital-citizens/) The National Cyber Security Alliance (NCSA) builds strong public/private partnerships to create and implement broad-reaching education and awareness efforts to empower users at home, work and school with the information they need to keep themselves secure online and encourage a culture of cybersecurity.

\*[TeenSafe - Monitor](https://www.teensafe.com/monitor) Helps you detect the hidden dangers lurking inside your child's smartphone. Whether your child uses an iPhone or Android device, TeenSafe can help you keep tabs on what they are doing, who they are talking to and where they are.

If you know of a child in immediate risk or danger, report instances of online child exploitation to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children’s Cyber Tipline at http://www.missingkids.org/gethelpnow/cybertipline

*Sources: Stay Safe Online (Powered by National Cyber Security Alliance); Internet Matters.org; Educational Development Services, LIC,*