



Internet use and teenagers

Teens everywhere are using the computer to connect to family, friends and even strangers. Instagram and Snapchat are two very popular avenues they use to communicate with one another. Teens love the convenience of being able to go online and talk with people from all around the world. Unfortunately, parents are less than enthusiastic about such sites. If you are the parent of a teenager, it is important that you familiarize yourself with the Internet.

At June 2011, smartphones were used by less than a quarter of teens. Four years later, at June 2015, 80 per cent of all Australian teens used a smartphone.

The risk to teens:

Like a lot of things teenagers try out, there are risks to using the Internet. Predators fill the Internet just looking for vulnerable people to prey on. Often times, they will pretend they are teenagers in order to gain trust. Once a bond is formed, they may ask to meet with your teenager. Ensure your children never give out their personal information, name, age, location, school, sporting team etc.

Interruption to study or homework:

Czerwinski, a leading expert in interruption science, says, "The danger of interruptions is not really the interruption - it's the havoc they wreak with memory; what on earth was I just doing?" Although we believe teenagers are far better than any generation at multitasking their flow of work will suffer when Instagram or Snapchat pop up to alert them that someone is wanting to chat. It can take anywhere between 5 and 25 minutes to return, with the same kind of attention, to the task they were working on

When completing work that requires flow, such as writing an essay, it is best to turn off all programs that pop up at you. If working on an assignment that requires you to multitask then the distractions are not so bad. Managing the distractions is the most important thing, and some teens are not great at controlling this. Software programs such as Qustodio are a great way to monitor and control your teen's use of the Internet.

That said, parental control software is no substitute for good communication. If you don't want your kids to visit unsafe, unsavoury, or inappropriate sites, talk to them about your concerns. We recommend that you also take the time to convince your older kids that you'll respect their privacy while still monitoring their online actions, a promise you should strive to uphold. We prefer software that embraces this kind of collaborative approach, rather than apps that covertly spy on kids. If your kids see you as big brother, it's a safe bet that they'll find ways to outsmart you and



evade even the most sophisticated systems. As tech addiction increasingly becomes a problem, it's important to instill the value of good device habits on to your children as well.

As kids get older, content filtering may start to seem pointless. Hey, you let them watch Game of Thrones, right? At some point, you start to worry more about their interaction with the wider world. Sure, if their friends come over in person, you can at least meet them, but what about friends on social media and other contacts your child never mentions? Who are they, really, and what are your kids discussing with them? Although some supervision is acceptable, you still need to respect your child's basic right to privacy and encourage open discussion, rather than using parental control software as spyware.

Most kids are on mobile devices at least some of the time, and many are almost exclusively accessing the internet on their phones. Fortunately, many parental control services offer a companion app that lets you view your child's activity, set basic rules, and view notifications as they arrive—NetNanny is a particularly noteworthy example. This kind of companion app is particularly useful for responding to access or time-extension requests on the go.

When you get beyond the basics, parental control systems start to diverge, with many advanced features to help them stand out from the crowd. Among these standout features are the ability to track your child's YouTube and Hulu viewing history, check your child's location, or even remotely lock down a device to force them to divert their attention.

The Internet can be a fascinating place when used properly. Begin by educating your pre-teen or teen on how to safely use the Internet. Become an involved parent with your child's Internet usage. With some proper guidance, the Internet can be a fun and safe place. So the next time your teen wants to log on, be sure they are equipped with proper Internet safety.

[SOURCE: ACMA; Aussie teens and kids online](#)

"The most important thing that parents can teach their children is how to get along without them."

Frank A. Clark