Internet Safety Advice: Top Tips for Parents

1. Discover the Internet together

Be the one to introduce your child to the internet. For both parent and child, it is an advantage to discover the internet together. Try to find websites that are exciting and fun so that together you achieve a positive attitude to internet exploration. This could make it easier to share both positive and negative experiences in the future.

2. Agree with your child rules for Internet use in your home

Try to reach an agreement with your child on the guidelines which apply to Internet use in your household. Here are some tips to get started:

- Discuss when and for how long it is acceptable for your child to use the Internet
- Agree how to treat personal information (name, address, telephone, e-mail)
- Discuss how to behave towards others when gaming, chatting, e-mailing or messaging
- Agree what type of sites and activities are OK or not OK in our family
- Follow the rules yourself! Or at least explain why the rules are different for adults.

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

A simple rule for younger children should be that the child should not give out their name, phone number or photo without your approval. Older children using social networking sites like Facebook should be encouraged to be selective about what personal information and photos they post to online spaces. Regardless of privacy settings, once material is online you can no longer control who sees it or how it is used.

4. Talk about the risks associated with meeting online "friends" in person

Adults should understand that the internet can be a positive meeting place for children, where they can get to know other young people and make new friends. However, for safety and to avoid unpleasant experiences, it is important that children do not meet strangers they have met online without being accompanied by an adult you trust. In any case, the child should always have their parents'approval first. In addition, it is also a good idea to have a fail-safe plan in place such as calling them shortly after the meeting begins so that they can bail out if they feel uncomfortable.

5. Teach your child about evaluating information and being critically aware of information found online.

Most children use the internet to improve and develop their knowledge in relation to schoolwork and personal interests. Children should be aware that not all information
found online is correct, accurate or relevant. Show your child how to check information they find by comparing it to alternative sources on the same topic. Show them trusted sites they can use to compare information.

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

Children may come across adult material by accident on the web. Also, a child may intentionally search for such websites; remember that it is natural for children to be curious about off-limits material. Try to use this as an opening to discuss the content with them, and perhaps make rules for this kind of activity. Be realistic in your assessment of how your child uses the internet.

7. Let your children show you what they like to do online

To be able to guide your child with regard to Internet use, it is important to understand how children use the Internet and know what they like to do online. Let your child show you which websites they like visiting and what they do there.

8. Remember that the positive aspects of the Internet outweigh the negatives.

The Internet is an excellent educational and recreational resource for children. Encourage your child to make the most of it and explore the internet to its full potential.