

Safe Surfing: Kids and the Internet

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Summary The Web is full of exciting ways for children to communicate and learn. Protect your kids from the Internet's dangers by using security tools and parental controls.

Introduction

Today's kids don't hesitate to take full advantage of the internet. However, they're still kids, and they need protection against the Internet's dangers.

Risk by the numbers

The [International Crime Analysis Association](#) (ICAA), in conjunction with Symantec, recently conducted a survey of 5,000 Italian school children between the ages of eight and thirteen. The researchers examined the children's online behavior, as well as their perceptions of the Internet. The ICAA surveyed parents and teachers to elicit further insights into online risks to kids. The study, entitled the Child Internet Risk Perception Survey, yielded these findings:

- Most children regularly use chat rooms, newsgroups, and other interactive services, enabling them to communicate online with strangers
- Forty-seven percent of adults rarely supervise minors on the Internet
- Twenty-seven percent of children are left completely unsupervised
- Thirty-four percent of children never receive advice from parents on the do's and don'ts of Internet navigation
- A majority of teachers are unsure how to approach the subject of the Internet and believe the teaching of IT skills needs improvement

The survey confirmed what many already suspected. Many kids are surfing the Internet unsupervised and with little or no safety training. We must work together to make the Internet a positive environment for fostering intellectual and social development, an environment where children can express their personalities in a safe way.

Top tips

Use these tips to help keep your kids safe online.

- Communicate with your children. Speak truthfully about inappropriate Web content, such as pornographic spam emails. Encourage your kids to confide in you when they see inappropriate text or graphics.
- Get to know your children's online habits. Keep an eye on their instant messaging, music downloads, and online games.
- Teach your children to never give out personal information. Malicious marketers target kids for private information, like names, addresses, phone numbers, and shopping preferences.
- Put the computer in a central location and surf the Internet with your children. Install [parental control software](#) to provide extra protection and monitoring capability.
- Once you've set some ground rules, give your children your trust. Make sure they understand your concerns and your reasons for watching over them. If they feel like they're part of the process, they're more likely to continue discussing Internet issues openly with you. Overprotecting your kids may give them cause to shut you out.
- Get to know your children's friends. Even if you restrict Internet access at home, kids can still log on from places where you can't keep tabs on them. Talk to their friend's parents and work with them to provide a safe surfing environment.
- Protect your children's passwords. Make sure your kids don't have screen names or aliases that reveal personal information, like their full names, ages, gender, etc.
- Instruct your children to never share pictures of themselves or your family with people they meet online.
- Teach your children to never talk to strangers online. If a stranger is asking them uncomfortable questions, they should log off and notify you immediately.

Security tools and parental controls

Education and communication can go a long way toward protecting your kids, but they're not enough. [Norton Internet Security](#) offers a wide array of tools for protecting both you and your children. It blocks unsolicited advertisements and spam, denies unwanted cookies, and protects against intrusion attempts, including virus attacks.

Conclusion

The Internet presents us with a particular challenge—to give our kids license to explore while making sure they stay out of danger. Fortunately, with greater adult involvement and the right tools, it's a challenge we can meet.