

ONLINE SAFETY RULES EVERY PARENT SHOULD FOLLOW

DO YOU WORRY THAT YOU'RE NOT DOING ENOUGH TO KEEP YOUR CHILD SAFE ONLINE?

ALICIA COAD, FOUNDER OF FAMILY MESSAGING APP CHATFOSS, OFFERS HER TOP ONLINE SAFETY TIPS FOR BUSY PARENTS.

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Our concerns about online safety continue to grow and grow. Every day there is a new report suggesting that social media causes mental health issues, we read that children as young as five are addicted to games or another case of cyber bullying ends in tragedy. The list goes on and on. As busy parents in a busy world, keeping on top of our online lives – and our children's online lives – is yet another task to add to the list.

This is why I've got five online safety tips for you – ten is just too much! Keeping up to speed on online safety can be a fulltime job (trust me – as Founder of ChatFOSS, I've tried it!) so here are five action points which are realistic and achievable but will make a big difference.

1. Set parental settings on your wifi

Many parents will say that they haven't got round to doing this or they trust their child so don't need them. This is not about trusting your child, this is about protection. An innocent search can quite easily go wrong – and a less innocent search can also bring up far more than your inquisitive child bargained for. Setting parental controls up won't stop everything but they are a jolly good start!

Internet Matters provides a fantastic step-by-step guides to managing parental controls on different devices, apps and networks; follow their instructions and you will have it done in five minutes.

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2. Talk to your children about their online activity

A lot of online safety is about “don’ts” but I strongly believe we need the message to be more positive.

A recent ChatFOSS survey revealed that 74% of children who had seen a frightening or upsetting image on the internet had not told their parents because they were worried they would get into trouble.

Talk to your children about the fact they may find things they don’t like or understand on the internet. If you can, drop it into everyday conversation about what you have been looking at online and ask them what they were looking at – it can take the drama out of a situation and normalise the conversation.

3. Find out about the apps your child is using

This might sound very unrealistic! Don’t worry. I’m not suggesting that you become an expert on Minecraft or Fortnite, but there are two websites out there which can save you a lot of time and effort.

Net Aware, funded by the NSPCC, gives you a brief overview of the key apps and what the risks are with them.

The second is a site from the US, Common Sense Media, which reviews all kinds of apps, games and even films. It offers a detailed breakdown of the content (including any violence or bad language) and gives a parent-suggested age rating (and a child-suggested one too – it’s very interesting to see how they differ!).

4. Understand internet stranger danger

Remember, if a game or app is on the internet there will be the opportunity to view content from strangers. Many parents think that by making sure their children set their accounts to private (for example on Instagram, Musical.ly and Live.ly), they are safe. While this might stop strangers from being able to contact your children easily it does not stop your children from seeing what the other people are posting.

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5. Don't panic about your child's online life

In the same way we can't protect our children in the offline world from all that is bad, we will struggle to do so in the online world. If dialogue between children and parents remains open and children know they can speak to you about what they have seen then the chances are it will all be ok.

The online world is part of modern day life and as parents we have the responsibility to teach our children how to navigate through it, the same way we do with everyday living. We won't always get it right but we can't ignore it, and ultimately this is about parenting, not being a technology expert.

Words: Alicia Coad is Founder of **ChatFOSS** and Head of PR at **StayPrivate**.

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ABOUT US

StayPrivate ensures safe and secure 2-way communication between businesses and external contacts. Our plug-and-play solution is compatible with all email accounts, making it incredibly easy to encrypt emails and share files securely.

With click-and-PIN access, TLS connections, AES-256 encryption and multi-factor authentication, StayPrivate enables companies of any size to send and receive personal data in a GDPR-compliant manner.

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