

Better use of the internet: our top ten tips for parents

The new media supports social networking. Children will communicate in informal groups and vie with each other to do so. It's best not to try and turn it off. Better to be the guide by your child's side than the sage who's enraged! There are things which make sense and which can help make sure everyone benefits from what's possible.



Here are your top ten tips:

1. **Involve**

Encourage your child to share with you what they are doing on-line. Focus on positives. Ask them to teach you the tools and techniques they use. Make sure your everyday interest is normal and avoid seeing the internet as a threat.

2. **Balance**

Encourage a responsible attitude to the amount of time spent in chat rooms, searching sites and taking part in on-line gaming. Use chat rooms which are moderated.

3. **Filter**

Attach filtering software to the computer and check that it remains switched on. Go to www.getnetwise.org to get details. Keep the computer in a family room and not hidden away from your view.

4. **Talk**

Talk about your use of the internet and 'normalise' the conversation about safety rules by explaining your concerns about the safety of your own system. Talk through the guidelines we provide above and how they apply to you.

5. **Appraise**

Most of the information which comes to you through your phone or on the internet unsolicited is trying to sell you something. Most of the information already on the internet is useless to your needs. Practise making judgments about how you know the value and accuracy of what's on offer. Encourage critical thinking.

6. **Link to interests**

Use the internet to link to, and further develop, your child's interests and hobbies.

7. **History**

Let your child understand that it's easy to check the browsers, search engines and temporary internet folders to see what's been looked at recently. Have a trial run together so that you both understand that things can't be hidden

8. Favourites

Bookmark and add to Favourites those sites which are trusted, regularly visited and which your child can use safely. By doing this you avoid your child mistyping web addresses and going into disreputable if similarly named sites.

9. Bills

Check the bills! Have your child pay all or contribute to a portion of their mobile phone calls and then sit down together and look at the nature and duration of the calls. Look carefully at text messaging. Beware of paying for unwanted commercial texts which are expensive and potentially dangerous.

10. Safety

Your child's use of the new technology is not confined to your home. Safe use of the internet and mobile technology such as phones is more about a wise response than a sudden and overwhelming threat from the unknown. That is why talking together, sharing solutions, agreeing ways forward and showing interest is so important.