

Keeping Children and Teens **SAFE ONLINE**

Computers and mobile devices can be helpful tools for children and teens to learn and grow in faith and fellowship. Unfortunately, the digital world is also full of unsafe and explicit content. You wouldn't hand a teen the car keys without first teaching them how to drive. The same should be true for using technology—teach them how to keep themselves and others safe while using it.

You can use the following tips to better protect young people from harm online:



1 Model appropriate online behavior for young people. Children look to their parents to teach and show them the ways to appropriately use technology. The biggest influence on what children see as acceptable or unacceptable is you.

2 Teach your children not to share private information or images online. Strangers posing as online friends can try to gain the trust of minors. Personal information such as name, address, and phone number should never be shared with an unknown person. Tell your children to immediately tell a trusted adult if anyone makes them feel uncomfortable.

3 Limit usage of computers and mobile devices to public spaces in the home. Not only will this help to prevent young people from accessing unsafe websites, it will also help them to develop safe browsing habits later in life.

4 Install software that can block or monitor explicit website use. Open access to harmful websites, like those that include pornography, is a constant threat to

young people. Website filters can prevent access to harmful and explicit sites and some can even alert you when such a site is accessed.

5 Review and discuss the websites your child has visited and apps they have used. Oversight of your child or teen's browsing history and app usage can help to keep them safe online. If you notice your child has browsed an unsafe website or app, discuss why that behavior is harmful. Learn about current apps that could be harmful to children and teenagers, especially those that involve image sharing, private communication, or the illusion of privacy.

6 Report online exploitation of minors to public authorities. If you become aware of explicit content involving minors, such as solicitation, explicit images or videos, you should submit a report to law enforcement or through resources like CyberTipline from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.



Copyright © 2019, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington DC. All rights reserved. Models used for illustrative purposes only.