



PROJECT SAFE CHILDHOOD: Keeping Kids Safe and Secure Online

Social Media 101

Social media platforms are sites that allow kids to create and share content as well as communicate and engage with each other on the internet. While social media can be a great way for kids to keep in contact with each other, for parents it can be overwhelming to try and learn about all the social media platforms your children are using. The best way to educate yourself is to start a conversation with them and keep it going!

- Sit down with your kids and review the apps they have downloaded onto their devices
- If you aren't already, consider making a rule that your child cannot download a new app without first getting your permission
- Find out what online profiles they maintain
- Know their usernames and passwords
- Look at what they are posting
- Know who they are sharing information with
- Check social media ratings – even though something says age appropriate – it may not be for your child – so use their apps to make sure it passes your personal parental rating!

If you know of a child in immediate risk or danger, **notify law enforcement right away.** Online child exploitation can be reported to your **local police department** or to the **National Center for Missing and Exploited Children's** CyberTipline: www.CyberTipline.com or by calling 1-800-843-5678

Resources:

www.justice.gov/usao-ma/outreach/project-safe-childhood
www.common sense media.org/social-media
www.consumer.ftc.gov/topics/protecting-kids-online
www.healthychildren.org/English/media/Pages/default.aspx
www.fosi.org/topics/what-parents-need-to-know-about-screen-time





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It's time for a digital safety checkup!

A quick review of your children's online social media or gaming profiles might show:

- exactly what they look like
- where they go to school
- where they live
- the names of their parents, siblings, and friends
- where they have been and where they will be

Sometimes kids overshare information, which gives predators more opportunity to piece together information about a child they are targeting. How to avoid this? One way you can help your child be safer online is to sit down together on a regular basis and perform a digital safety checkup:

- Make all social media and gaming profiles private
- Have your child use a cartoon/avatar for their profile picture rather than a real image
- Have your child use a nickname as their username, rather than their real name
- Remove all identifying information from their online profile including age or birthday
- Do not use suggestive or identifying e-mail addresses
- Review app settings to keep information – like their location – private
- Don't forget that apps can be downloaded onto devices such as iPads and smartwatches so those devices will need a digital privacy checkup, too!

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Resources:

www.justice.gov/usao-ma/outreach/project-safe-childhood
<https://sos.fbi.gov/en/>
<https://staysafe.org/teens/>





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Who are your kids talking to online?

Now, especially, children are socializing with their friends – and friends of friends, and strangers – on social media and through online gaming platforms more than ever before. Do you know who your kids are talking to? Teaching kids how to appropriately interact with strangers is just as important online as it is in the “real” world.

Whether your child is six and just starting to use a tablet for remote learning or 17 and surfing social media while they fill out college applications online, there are ways to keep them safe from people who might try and do them harm.

Your best bet? Talk to your kids about what they are doing online and why they need to be careful about who they are talking to! Here are a few tips to get the conversation started:

- Sit down with your children and review their friends and followers lists
- Have them tell you about the people they are following or gaming with – do they know these people in real life? Do other players say or do things that make your kids uncomfortable?
- Remind them about the dangers of communicating with “strangers” – should they believe everything they read? Could a man pose as a younger boy? Or as a girl?
- Encourage your kids to think about their personal safety. How easy is it to find a person based on a picture? Or a name? Or a school?
- Tell them it’s okay to say no to a friend request – try practicing ways to say “no”
- Set boundaries. Make sure your children know they should NEVER agree to meet someone they met online without talking to you first
- Establish yourself as an ally: remind your children that they can come to you if someone online makes them feel uncomfortable

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Resources:

www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/0006-talk-your-kids

www.justice.gov/opa/video/parents-stay-safe-home-stay-safe-online

www.justice.gov/usao-ma/outreach/project-safe-childhood





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Gaming

Kids of all ages are gaming on mobile devices on online gaming consoles. Your children can interact online in multiplayer games with friends who live across town or cousins who live in another state, which has enabled them to be connected to their peers during quarantine. Online games can also be violent and sexual, and can expose your children to bullying, offensive language, inappropriate content, and child predators.

How to keep your children safe while gaming? Here's a start:

- Review descriptions and ratings before buying apps or games online
- Play their games with them!
- Supervise/check in – just as you would if your kids were playing with friends in person
- Remind kids not to disclose personal information to anyone
- Check out the safety features and parental controls of each game/device, and make sure privacy settings are set to the strictest level possible. (Did you know you can sometimes limit multiplayer access?)
- Enforce time limits
- Keep gaming consoles in an open, common room of the house – somewhere you can see what is happening when the games are in use
- Don't allow your children to wear headphones so you can monitor language of other gamers (Don't want to listen to it? Disable voice chat!)

Remember: technology like parental controls is no substitute for being involved and establishing a healthy dialog with your kids!

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Sexting

Sexting is the sending or receiving of sexually suggestive or explicit images, messages or videos. It can be uncomfortable talking to your kids about sexting and its consequences but establishing a trusting, open dialog early on can go a long way in preventing your child from sexting in the first place. So, talk to your kids before it happens!

- Let them know they can come to you or another trusted adult if someone is pressuring them to send or share inappropriate photos
- Remind them that once they send an image to someone, where it ends up next is out of their control forever
- Discuss the consequences:
 - disciplinary action from school, work, legal
 - emotional and self-esteem issues
 - isolation from friends
 - bullying
 - harm to reputation
 - unwanted sexual solicitations from peers or predators
- The grandma test: Before your children post anything online, send a photo, video or text, have them ask themselves, "Would I be okay with my grandmother seeing this?" This is a good rule of thumb for adults too!
- Discuss the consequences and have them make the decision today that if they get asked for an inappropriate photo next week, next month, next year, they have already made the decision their answer will be NO!

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CyberTipline: www.CyberTipline.com or by calling 1-800-843-5678

Resources:

www.missingkids.org/netsmartz/topics/sexting

www.common sense media.org/blog/talking-about-sexting





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Sextortion

“Sextortion” (sex + extortion) is a crime that occurs when an adult threatens to distribute a child’s compromising pictures, videos, or other sensitive material in order to obtain something in return – more or more serious sexually explicit material, money, an in-person meeting, or access to the child’s social media accounts. Real-life experience shows us that sextortion is an equal opportunity crime; that is, both boys and girls can become victims by sharing just one compromising photo.

How it happens: <https://www.justice.gov/psc/video/sextortion-public-service-announcement-90-seconds>

How you can help your child avoid becoming a victim:

- Sit down with your child and review their friends and followers’ lists
- Cover the basics: no sharing inappropriate pictures or personal information
- Have them tell you about the people they are following or gaming with – do they know these people in real life? Do other players say or do things that make your kids uncomfortable?
- Remind them about the dangers of communicating with “strangers” – should they believe everything they read? Could a man pose as a younger boy? Or as a girl?
- Tell them it’s okay to say no to a friend request from a stranger or a request for pictures from an online or real-life friend – try practicing ways to say “no” to different types of requests
- Establish yourself as an ally: remind your children that they can come to you if someone online makes them feel uncomfortable. Establish a back-up – identify other trusted adults they can go to if they are embarrassed to talk to you

If you believe your child has been a victim of sextortion:

- Remember this is not their fault! You can discuss safety (and consequences) moving forward
- Gather as much information from your child as you can
- Do not report to the social network site or gaming platform before you call authorities
- Do not delete evidence from your child’s device; instead, put the phone in airplane mode, restrict child access to any cloud-connected devices, and *report to law enforcement immediately*

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Resources:

www.justice.gov/usao-ma/outreach/project-safe-childhood

www.missingkids.org/theissues/sextortion



**UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE | DISTRICT OF MASSACHUSETTS
PROJECT SAFE CHILDHOOD RESOURCES**

Description	Contact/Resources
<p>Project Safe Childhood (PSC) A nationwide initiative launched by the Department of Justice (DOJ) to combat the growing epidemic of child sexual exploitation and abuse</p>	<p>For information about what's going on nationwide: https://www.justice.gov/usao-ma/outreach/project-safe-childhood</p> <p>To connect with PSC staff in Massachusetts about education/outreach, please email us at: USAMA.PSCOutreach@usdoj.gov</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">If you know of a child in immediate risk or danger, notify law enforcement right away. Online child exploitation can be reported to your local police department or to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children's CyberTipline: www.CyberTipline.com or by calling 1-800-843-5678</p>	
<p>National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) Nonprofit organization whose mission is to help find missing children, reduce child sexual exploitation, and prevent child victimization</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p>CyberTipline Nation's centralized reporting system for the online exploitation of children</p> <p>Netsmartz Workshop NCMEC's online safety education program, with age-appropriate videos and activities to help teach kids strategies to stay safe online</p> </div>	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="flex: 1;"> <p>Learn more about NCMEC: www.missingkids.org</p> </div> <div style="flex: 1; text-align: center;">  <p>NATIONAL CENTER FOR MISSING & EXPLOITED CHILDREN</p> <p>CyberTipline CyberTipline.org • 1-800-THE-LOST*</p> </div> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p>Learn more about the CyberTipline at: www.cybertipline.org</p> <p>Explore free Netsmartz Workshop digital resources regarding online safety for kids and families: www.netsmartz.org/</p> </div>
<p>Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Federal law enforcement agency that operates as part of the DOJ, which investigates specific crimes, including child exploitation</p>	<p>FBI online resources to prevent child exploitation: www.fbi.gov/news/stories/stop-sextortion-youth-face-risk-online-053019</p> <p>www.fbi.gov/scams-and-safety/protecting-your-kids</p>

UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE | DISTRICT OF MASSACHUSETTS
PROJECT SAFE CHILDHOOD RESOURCES

Description	Contact/Resources
Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) Federal law enforcement agency that operates as part of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), which investigates specific crimes, including child exploitation	HSI online resources to prevent child exploitation: www.ice.gov/topics/iGuardians
Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) Non-profit, self-regulatory body for the video game industry. Helps parents make informed decisions about the video games and apps their children play.	Provides information about what's in a game or app. Ratings have 3 parts: Rating categories, content descriptions, and interactive elements. https://www.esrb.org/
Video awareness and education resources for parents and children	
Department of Justice and NCMEC sextortion PSA	www.justice.gov/psc/video/sextortion-public-service-announcement-90-seconds
The FBI defines sextortion and tips to avoid falling prey to online predators	www.fbi.gov/video-repository/newss-what-is-sextortion/view
Netzmartz age appropriate digital safety lessons for children in grades K-12	www.missingkids.org/netzmartz/videos
Sexting: Your Photo Fate	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2O2cFCXr4Ws&t=8s