

Privacy & Online Safety – Understand how set privacy settings and stay safe online

To help children maximize the Internet's benefits, whilst minimising the risks, here are the latest research, tips, and tools on what really keep children safe.

First, there are two kinds of online privacy. Personal privacy refers to your child's online reputation, and consumer privacy (also known as customer privacy) refers to the data companies can collect about your child during an online interaction or transaction. Both are important, and a few simple steps can help parents and children keep their private information private.

The first step is using strict privacy settings in apps and on websites. When you or your child gets a new device or signs up for a new website or app, establish your privacy preferences. Follow the directions during initial set-up, or go to the section marked "privacy" or "settings" and opt out of things such as location sharing and the ability for the app or website to post to social media sites such as Facebook on your behalf. Encourage children to read the fine print before checking a box or entering an email address. Although it might not be practical to read through every Terms of Service contract, it's good to remind children to be aware of what information they're agreeing to share before they start using an app, a website, or a device.

Next, teach your child to always consider the information they're potentially giving away when engaging online. For younger children, define that information as address, phone number, and birth date. Make sure they understand the basics of good online behaviour, too, including thinking about the impact of posting a photo or comment. Remind them that it's not always easy to take back something once it's online and that texts and photos can be forwarded to anyone.

Finally, there are some legal restrictions in place to help protect your child's consumer privacy and ensure they're using age-appropriate websites and apps. The Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) prevents child-targeted websites and apps from collecting data from children younger than 13 without parental consent.