

Tips and Conversation Starters for Families

CONNECTING SAFELY

Discussions with young people about securing their data and personal information should start before they go online. They should know how they are connecting to the internet: Are they using Wi-Fi or a cellular network (e.g. 4G). They should also be aware of potential vulnerabilities. For example, if your child uses Wi-Fi, they should understand the difference between secured and unsecured networks. Secured Wi-Fi connections require a password to use and are generally safer than unsecured networks. However, sometimes using a public, unsecured network is the only way to get online. Help your child learn what steps they can take to protect their information when connecting to the internet this way, such as using an encrypted VPN connection.



START A CONVERSATION ABOUT CONNECTING SAFELY:

- What method(s) do you use to connect to the internet? Let's learn more about how that method works (e.g., watch a video online).
- Why do you think sharing personal information, like credit card numbers, over an unsecured network is risky?

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GET THE MOST OUT OF PASSWORDS

A strong password is one of the simplest ways to protect the information we share online. Young people should know how to create one and keep it secure. Help your child create a password that is at least seven characters long; uses a random mix of letters, numbers, and symbols; and, contains no personal information. The longer and more complicated the password, the harder it will be to crack — but it may also be hard to remember. One method for creating passwords that are easier to remember is replacing some of the letters of a phrase. For example, “I love yams!” could become the password “1L0v3Y*M\$!” Remind your child to avoid sharing passwords or writing them down.

START A CONVERSATION ABOUT PASSWORDS:



- Have you ever felt pressured to share your password with someone? What did you do?
- Why is it important to have a different password for every account?
- Let's discuss situations in which I may ask for your passwords. How can we make sure your privacy is respected? How can we make sure I have the tools I need to keep you safe?

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TAKING ADVANTAGE OF PRIVACY SETTINGS

Privacy settings can help young people take some control over who sees their information and where it is shared. For example, some platforms allow images to be shared with specific people. To take advantage of privacy settings, young people need to know exactly what information they are sharing while online — it may be more than they think. For example, some digital platforms use technologies, like cookies and GPS, to track users' web activity and physical locations. Fortunately, many of these platforms offer an option to turn these features (or some portion of them) off. Consider helping your child become familiar with and apply the privacy settings on every digital platform they use. But remind them that privacy settings can't protect their information completely. If they're worried about something they share online getting out of their control, it may be better not to share it at all.

START A CONVERSATION ABOUT USING PRIVACY SETTINGS:



- How are you using privacy settings to protect your information?
- Did you know that images may contain metadata telling when and where they were taken? Let's see if your digital device/platform has a way to turn that off.
- Do you ever use location services to check in to places? What steps are you taking to protect your location when you don't want to share it?

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THE RULES FOR SHARING

To help your child master the digital basics of sharing personal information, teach them that context matters. In some cases, they may have to share information to gain access to some apps and websites, such as their names, email addresses, and birth dates. In other cases, they may want to share information about their lives, such as photos. Your child should know how to tell if a request for information is from a trustworthy platform or individual. For example, reputable platforms take steps to secure users' information and have privacy policies stating what they do with users' information. Individuals show that they are trustworthy by respecting the personal information shared with them. This includes not bullying, not sharing without permission, and not otherwise taking advantage of the user. Teach your child that people who don't respect their personal information should not have access to it.



START A CONVERSATION ABOUT SHARING PERSONAL INFORMATION:

- What personal information are you cautious about sharing online?
- What clues do you look for to tell if a website/app/platform is trustworthy?
- What can you do if someone you've shared personal information with breaks your trust?

Activities for Families

PRIVACY SETTINGS

Knowing how to use privacy settings is an essential digital basics skill for every young person. This activity will help your child think about the different types of information they share online and how they can use privacy settings to protect it.

1. Ask your child: **How much control do you have over the information you share online?**
2. Help your child think about what information they might want to keep private online, such as their phone number, where they live, and location. Ask them if there is any information they would like to share with some people, like friends, but not with other people.
3. Tell your child: **We can't completely control what happens to the information we share online, but we can use privacy settings to help protect it. For example, some privacy settings can help you control who sees the information you post. Let's look at the privacy settings on your favorite websites.**
4. Privacy settings are different on every platform and can be difficult to understand. Help your child think about them in relation to the information they want to control. For example, if your child wants to keep their email address private, they should look for settings that let them control who sees their contact information. Help your child ask questions about what their privacy settings can do, such as:
 - Will these privacy settings let me choose which audiences can see what I share?
 - What personal information (e.g., contact information) will these settings help me keep private?
 - Can I control who contacts me — including people I don't know?
 - Can I remove my profile from searches made in a browser?
 - Can I use these settings to keep the platform from tracking my physical location or online actions?

NOTE: If you have a younger child, you may want to help them read through and choose their privacy settings. If you have an older child, they may want to choose their own privacy settings — including some settings which prevent you from having full access to their content. Every family will have different rules about what information children are allowed to keep private from their guardians. Speak to your child in advance about your family's rules, including the consequences for breaking them.

Activities for Families

STRONG PASSWORDS

A strong password helps protect our personal information online. This activity will help your child learn how to create a strong, memorable password.

1. Ask your child: **How do you choose passwords for your online accounts?**
2. Tell your child: **Strong passwords help you protect your online accounts. What traits do you think a strong password has?**

If your child does not mention the following traits, introduce them into your conversation. Strong passwords:

- Are easy to remember.
 - Are kept private. Young people shouldn't share passwords with anyone except their guardians unless legally required.
 - Are hard to guess. They should not contain personal or well-known information.
 - Are at least seven characters long. The longer the password, the better.
 - Use a mix of upper and lowercase letters, numbers, and symbols.
3. Using the information above, you and your child should each create one strong password and one weak password. Explain to each other what makes your passwords strong or weak.

CHALLENGE



While practicing creating strong passwords, you can also take the opportunity to talk to your child about algorithms, a computational thinking concept. Algorithms are a set of step-by-step instructions used to complete a task. In this case, the task is creating a password. Developing an algorithm can make it easier to remember passwords because each password follows the same set of rules.

PASSWORD ALGORITHM EXAMPLE:

1. Take every other letter in the URL of a website and combine them.
2. Make the first and last letters uppercase.
3. Count the letters and add that number in the middle of the combined letters.
4. Count the letters and add the corresponding symbol to the end. For example, if there are seven letters, use the "&" symbol. If there are more than nine letters, add two symbols, for example "12" would become "!@".
5. Create one last rule to use if the password is shorter than seven characters. For example, add your favorite number plus three to the end of the password.