



CANADA'S CENTRE
FOR DIGITAL AND
MEDIA LITERACY

Internet Safety Tips by Age: 11-13

- From pre-teen to teen is a time of rapid change in kids' lives. Intellectually, they are now able to categorize and summarize information, use conceptual information and early abstract reasoning.
- Kids this age are also continuing to define their moral standards. They are becoming increasingly aware of how society's rules influence what we do and say. It is at this phase that parents – kids' traditional role models – are finding increasing competition with the values and attitudes of their children's peers.
- During this phase, young people make the journey from dependence on family towards the independence of late adolescence. They are continuing to develop their self- and gender-identity and are beginning to establish long-term interests and patterns of behaviour. Peers are increasingly important to them, and kids may conform in order to be accepted. At the same time, they are exploring subcultures beyond the world of their parents. It is during this period that pre-teens may develop a fear or dislike of "the other", which might be defined in terms of ethnicity, sexual orientation, physical appearance or poverty, to name just a few examples.

Attitudes Towards Media

- Like younger kids, 11- 13-year-olds still balance media with many other activities. Eager to "grow up", they actively seek out more teen-oriented movies and shows, magazines, games and music.
- They are better able to judge what is real in media, but they still accept media content, entertainment and games uncritically. Like younger kids, they may be influenced by desirable media images and personalities – especially those who appear to reflect "real" people, such as VJs on MTV or MuchMusic.
- Despite their growing awareness that media is constructed, they may still be frightened by realistic portrayals of violence, threats or danger – whether on the news or in television dramas.
- Kids this age feel confident about technology. The Internet, school work, games and instant messaging are their main pastimes – with over half downloading music. Boys in particular use the Internet to access free games, music and software, while girls prefer socializing through instant messaging.
- Although they are actively using the Internet for homework, there is still much they need to learn about doing online research and authenticating the information they find.

Safety Tips

- Create a list of Internet house rules with input from your kids.
- Keep Internet-connected computers in an open area.
- Talk with your kids about their online friends and activities just as you would about their other activities.



- Insist that your kids tell you first if they want to meet an “online friend.”
- Teach your kids to never give out personal information without your permission when using email, chat rooms or instant messaging, filling out registration forms and personal profiles, and entering online contests.
- Encourage them to come to you if they encounter material or messages that make them feel uncomfortable or threatened. (Stay calm. If you “freak out” your kids won’t turn to you for help when they need it.)
- Talk to your kids about online pornography and direct them to good sites about health and sexuality.
- Make sure that they’re not talking to strangers through instant messaging.
- Teach your kids responsible online behaviour. File-sharing and taking text, images or artwork from the Internet may infringe on copyright laws.
- Talk to them about ethical behaviour. They should not be using the Internet to spread gossip, bully or make threats against others.
- Only allow your kids to use monitored chat rooms on reputable kids’ sites.
- If they play multiplayer online games, check if the chat mode is monitored too.

