



CANADA'S CENTRE
FOR DIGITAL AND
MEDIA LITERACY

Internet Safety Tips by Age: 14-17

Adolescence is a period of great change. It's an age where teenagers, once dependent on their families, are now growing more independent and taking steps towards becoming a well-adjusted adult. Because of this, teens test the waters; try to find their own identity and experiment in their relationships with others. It's during this age that many youth become sexually active, and are looking to take risks and test their limits – and those of others. Even though teens start to physically resemble adults, you should not forget that their brains will not be fully developed until they are 20 or 25 years old. The part that is not yet "ripe" is their frontal lobe, meaning the part that allows them to control their impulses.

Attitudes towards media

Teenagers download music, watch movies online, use instant messaging and social networking sites to communicate with each other and are passionate about video games. They also often use search engines to find information on the Internet and are adept at buying stuff online. It is during these ages that they are most likely to break the rules and visit sites with scenes of violence, gambling or pornography.

Online problems

Since their social lives are adolescents' number one concern, online problems are generally related to relationships. Teenagers are more susceptible to being bullied – and to bullying others – online. Their interest in sex and romantic relationships pushes them towards risky behaviour, like making romantic friends online – and accepting invitations to meet these online friends in person – or sending their girlfriend or boyfriend sexually explicit text messages or photos of themselves. At an age when many have access to a credit card, they can start visiting gambling sites or buying things online, often without checking if the site is reliable.

Safety tips

- Create a list of Internet house rules with your teens. You should include the kinds of sites that are off limits.
- Talk to them about their online friends and activities just as you would about their other activities.
- Insist that they tell you first if they want to meet an "online friend."
- Teach your teens to never give out personal information when instant messaging, filling out registration forms and personal profiles, and entering online contests.
- Encourage your teens to come to you if they come across material or messages that make them feel uncomfortable or threatened. (Stay calm. If you "freak out" they won't turn to you for help when they need it.)
- Talk to your teenagers about online pornography and direct them to good sites about health and sexuality.



- Be aware of the websites that your teens frequent, and check them for offensive content.
- Be aware of how much information they are revealing, and to whom, on their social networking page (e.g. on Facebook).
- 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 threaten others. Make sure they have received permission from the people (including friends) in any photos they plan to post and tag on their social networking page.
- Make sure your teens check with you before making financial transactions online, including ordering, buying or selling items.
- Discuss gambling and its potential risks and remind your teens that it is illegal for minors to gamble online.

