Internet Safety Tips by Age: 8-10

Eight- to ten-year-old kids have a strong sense of family. They are interested in the activities of older kids in their lives; they are starting to develop a sense of their own moral and gender identity; and they tend to be trusting and not question authority.

Watching online videos, visiting virtual worlds and playing online games are favourite online pastimes at this stage. Children these ages are also starting to use social networking platforms – one-third of students in grades 4-6 have Facebook accounts, despite terms of use agreements that restrict children under the age of 13 from using these sites – making this a good age to establish basic ground rules for socializing online.

It is at this stage that parents start thinking about cell phones for their kids (half of children in grades 4-6 have access to their own or someone else's phone on a regular basis).

8- to 10-year olds:

- are curious and interested in discovering new information
- lack the critical thinking skills to be online alone
- are vulnerable to online marketers who encourage them to give out personal information through surveys, contests and registration forms
- may be frightened by realistic portrayals of violence, threats or dangers
- begin to communicate with online acquaintances they may have not met in real life
- may be influenced by media images and personalities, especially those that appear "cool" or desirable
- may use virtual worlds to explore different identities and behaviours
- may be exposed to search results with links to inappropriate websites

Safety Tips

General Supervision

- Keep online activities – whether on laptops, tablets or family computers – in common family areas where you can easily monitor what your kids are doing.
- Investigate Internet-filtering tools as a complement — not a replacement — for parental supervision.
- Protect your children from offensive "pop-ups" by setting your browser to block popups, disabling Java on your computer and/or using blocking software. Ad blockers such as AdBlock can also keep kids from seeing banner ads with inappropriate content.

Managing Online Spaces

- If your child wants an email account, create a shared family email account as opposed to letting them have accounts of their own.

- Preview any websites, games or apps that your child wants to use.

- Use kid-friendly search engines or search engines with parental controls, such as KidRex, Fact Monster and Kids Click.

- Familiarize yourself with parental control features on any video game systems, smartphones, tablets and computers used by your kids.

- Only allow your kids to use reputable kids' websites with monitored chat areas.

- If your child wants to participate in social networking, have him or her manage a family social networking page. This provides an opportunity for them to develop and practice privacy and safety skills with guidance from parents and siblings.

- If the primary reason for giving your child a cell phone is to stay in touch, choose a simple model geared for kids that does not provide Internet access.

Building Safety Skills

- Create a list of cell phone and online rules with input from your kids.

- Talk about the importance of safe and ethical social networking, that includes:

    - Only adding people you know as friends

    - Treating people online with kindness and respect

    - Not using a real photo as your main profile picture

    - Using a nickname or first name

    - Not adding apps without permission

    - Not uploading photos of people without asking first

    - Not sharing passwords with friends

    (For ideas on rules for social networking, see the tip sheet Social Media Rules)

- Teach your kids to always ask you first before sharing personal information online.

- Talk to your kids about their online friends and activities just as you would about their other activities.

- Talk about healthy sexuality because kids can easily come across online pornography.

- Encourage your kids to come to you if they encounter anything online that makes them feel uncomfortable or threatened. (Stay calm. If you "freak out" they won't turn to you for help when they need it.)

- Protect your children from offensive "pop-ups" by setting your browser to block popups, disabling Java on your computer and/or using blocking software. Ad blockers such as AdBlock can also keep kids from seeing banner ads with inappropriate content.