Internet Safety Tips by Age: 2-4

Many preschoolers are already active computer users. According to a 2012 Ofcom report, one-third of children ages 3-4 access the Internet using a computer, while a 2011 survey by Common Sense Media found that roughly the same number have used mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets. While children at this age have a limited attention span for online activities, Internet images and sounds can stimulate their imaginations and add to their experiences.

Parents and older siblings can take preschoolers on the Internet, visit websites and play online games. At this stage, adults have an important role to play in teaching safe Internet use and monitoring their children's reactions to online material.

2- to 4-year-olds:

- will accept media content at face value
- don't have the critical thinking skills to be online alone
- may be frightened by media images, both real and fictional
- may be frightened by realistic portrayals of violence, threats or dangers
- risk moving from appropriate to inappropriate sites and content through hyperlinks (this is a particular concern on video-sharing sites)

Safety Tips

General Supervision

- Balance your child's screen-time with other activities.
- Always sit with children at this age when they're online.
- Investigate Internet-filtering tools as a complement — not a replacement — for parental supervision.

Managing Online Spaces

- Create a personalized online environment by "bookmarking" a list of acceptable sites.
- Use kid-friendly search engines or ones with parental controls.
- Protect children from offensive "pop-ups" by disabling Java on your computer or by using blocking software.

Building Safety Skills

- Start talking to your kids about privacy. Have them use an online nickname if a site encourages them to submit their names to "personalize" the Web content.

- Have all family members act as role models for children's use of the Internet.