

Sister Source, Inc. Safety Guidelines for Black Guurls Space!
(Content directed at girls, ages 5-12, on sistersource.org)
(Compiled by Qiyamah A. Rahman from various Internet Sources)

Parents, Caretakers and Adults: To institute some safety guidelines to keep our young girls safe we have researched and reviewed some of the recommended guidelines from various online sources:

- Never post or trade personal pictures, other than those approved by Sister Source, Inc.
- Never reveal personal information, such as address, phone number, or school name or location.
- Use only a screen name and don't share passwords (other than with parents).
- Never agree to get together in person with anyone met online without parental approval and/or supervision.
- Never respond to a threatening email, message, post, or text.
- Always tell a parent or other trusted adult about any communication or conversation that was scary or hurtful.

Basic guidelines for parental supervision:

- Spend time online together to teach your kids appropriate online behavior.
- Keep the computer in a common area where you can watch and monitor its use, not in individual bedrooms. Monitor any time spent on smartphones or tablets.
- Bookmark kids' favorite sites for easy access.
- Check your credit card and phone bills for unfamiliar account charges.
- Find out what, if any, online protection is offered by your child's school, after-school center, friends' homes, or any place where kids could use a computer without your supervision.
- Take your child seriously if he or she reports an uncomfortable online exchange.

Talk to your kids! Keep an open line of communication and make sure they feel comfortable turning to you when they have problems online.

Why internet safety matters

School-age children like going online to look at videos, play games and connect with friends and family. They might also be using the internet for schoolwork and homework. They can do this using computers, mobile phones, tablets, TVs and other internet-connected devices, including toys.

Because school-age children are starting to be independent online and might go online unsupervised, there are **more internet safety risks** for them than there are for younger children. There are particular risks if your child uses the internet to communicate with others – for example, on social media or within games.

When you take some practical internet safety precautions, you protect your child from potentially harmful or inappropriate content and activities. And **your child gets to make the most of their online experience**, with its potential for learning, exploring, being creative and connecting with others.

Internet safety risks for school-age children

There are four main kinds of internet risks for children.

Content risks

For school-age children these risks include things that they might find upsetting, disgusting or otherwise uncomfortable, if they come across them accidentally. This might include sexual content in games, pornography, images of cruelty to animals, and real or simulated violence.

The following is a link to a parenting website, and a segment they have that provides valuable tips and information to help you talk to children about the subject of pornography.

<https://raisingchildren.net.au/school-age/play-media-technology/online-safety/pornography-talking-with-children-5-8>

Contact risks

These risks include children coming into contact with people they don't know or with adults posing as children online. For example, a child might be persuaded to share personal information with strangers, provide contact details after clicking on pop-up messages, or meet in person with someone they've met online.

Conduct risks

These risks include children acting in ways that might hurt others, or being the victim of this kind of behavior. For example, a child might destroy a game that a friend or sibling has created. Another conduct risk is accidentally making in-app purchases.

Contract risks

These risks include children signing up to unfair contracts, terms or conditions that they aren't aware of or don't understand. For example, children might click a button that allows a business to send them inappropriate marketing messages or collect their personal or family data. Or children might use a toy, app or device with weak internet security, which leaves them open to identity theft or fraud.

Protecting children from internet safety risks: tips

You can use a range of different strategies to help your school-age child stay safe online.

Here are some ideas:

- Create a family media plan. It's best to create your plan with your child and ask them for suggestions. Your plan could cover things like screen-free areas in your house, internet

safety rules like not giving out personal information, and programs and apps that are OK for your child to use.

The following is a link to a page on a website, [healthychildren.org](https://www.healthychildren.org), by the American Academy of Pediatrics. <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/media/Pages/default.aspx>

- Use child-friendly search engines like Kiddle or Kidtopia, or content providers like ABC Kids, CBeebies, YouTube Kids and KIDOZ, or messaging apps like Messenger Kids.
- Check that games, websites and TV programs are appropriate for your child. You can do this by looking at reviews on Common Sense Media.

The following is a link to a website that provides ratings of various media such as movies, TV shows, apps and games). <https://www.common sense media.org/reviews>

- Use the internet with your child or make sure you're close by and aware of what your child is doing online. This way you can act quickly and reassure your child if they're concerned or upset by something they've seen online.
- Check privacy settings and location services, use parental controls, and use safe search settings on browsers, apps, search engines and YouTube. Limit camera and video functions so your child doesn't accidentally take photos of themselves or others.
- If you use TV streaming services, set up profiles for different household members so your child is less likely to come across inappropriate programs.
- Find out how to make complaints about offensive online content.

The following is a link to a page provided by the Department of Justice of the United States government where people can report offensive content online. <https://www.justice.gov/criminal-ceos/report-violations>

- Block in-app purchases and disable one-click payment options on your devices.
- Encourage all your children, including older siblings, to help each other use the internet safely and responsibly – for example, by watching only age-appropriate programs.

Trust between you and your child helps keep your child safe online. Calm, open conversations about internet use can help your child feel that you trust them to be responsible online. And if your child feels trusted, they're more likely to talk with you about what they do online and tell you about online content and contacts that worry them.

It's best to **avoid using surveillance apps** that let you secretly monitor your child's online activity. Using these apps sends the message that you don't trust your child. It's better to talk openly about your own internet use and encourage your child to do the same.

If you do choose to monitor your child's internet use while they're online or by reviewing their browser history, it's good to talk about this with your child.

As your child gets older and more confident and starts using the internet independently, you'll need to review your strategies. An article on internet safety for children aged 9-11 years has ideas.

The following is a link to a page on raisingchildren.net. <https://raisingchildren.net.au/pre-teens/entertainment-technology/cyberbullying-online-safety/internet-safety-9-11-years>

Call the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children at (800) 843-5678 if you're aware of the sending, use, or viewing of child pornography online. Contact your local law enforcement agency or the FBI if your child has received child pornography via the Internet.

Watch for warning signs of a child being targeted by an online predator. These can include:

- spending long hours online, especially at night
- phone calls from people you don't know
- unsolicited gifts arriving in the mail
- your child suddenly turning off the computer when you walk into the room
- withdrawal from family life and reluctance to discuss online activities

Sources:

- Nemours Children's Health – Dr. Elana Pearl Ben-Joseph
- USA.Kaspersky.com – Top 1- Internet Safety Rules