

Privacy Starts at Home

Teaching Your Kids About Online Safety



Technology is ingrained in our society. Children are exposed to the Internet at increasingly early ages. Cyber space exposes kids to a vast array of information and resources that previous generations never experienced, but can also be a dangerous place for children to navigate. For identity thieves, children are often an easy target to trick into handing over sensitive information. For this reason, it's important that parents monitor their children's online activities and teach them basic rules for staying safe online.

Elementary School (Ages 5–10)

Start the Conversation

- » Ask questions to establish your child's understanding of computers, the capabilities of the Internet including social media and what is considered personal information.
- » Follow up by offering basic explanations and filling in the gaps in your child's understanding.
- » Tell them not to give out any information online (just as you would tell them not to talk to strangers).

Establish the Rules

- » Pick a list of appropriate websites, games and other programs.
- » Use parental controls to limit access and block inappropriate sites.

Monitor their Playtime

- » Keep a close eye on what programs your child is using to ensure they aren't unknowingly providing any personal information.
- » Avoid sharing your passwords with your children to maintain control over what they can access and prevent accidental online purchases.

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Middle School and High School (Ages 11–18):

Continue the Dialogue

- » Maintain a dialogue about how they access and use the Internet as they start to buy things online and use social media.
- » Explain how to keep their information safe when making purchases. If they are using your credit card to purchase things online, they are putting your information at risk as well.

Keep an Eye on Social Media:

- » Establish ground rules on what information is and isn't okay to share via social media, regardless of the site.
- » Set profiles to the "private" setting, and make sure they are online friends with only the people they know.

Teach Cell Phone Safety

- » Talk to them about screening phone calls from unknown numbers, locking their phone with a password and only downloading apps from known sources.

More Information

For more information, visit www.oprm.va.gov/privacy or email us at privacy@va.gov.

About VA Privacy Service

Launched In 2002 by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), VA Privacy Service is responsible for overseeing and directing the development of VA's privacy program strategic plan and for establishes short- and long-range plans for the privacy program. Its mission is to preserve and protect the personally identifiable information of Veterans and their beneficiaries and VA employees by promoting a culture of privacy awareness and maintaining the trust of those VA serves.

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