

Week 1: Understanding Online Privacy

Teaching children about online privacy is essential. Encourage them to think carefully about what information they share and with whom. Personal information like their full name, address, school, or phone number should never be shared with people they don't know, even if it seems harmless. Explain that some people online may not be who they say they are, and it's not always easy to tell.

You can practice this by role-playing scenarios where they are asked for information. Discuss what kinds of information are appropriate to share, and when they should ask for your guidance. Always encourage them to come to you if they are unsure. Keeping personal details private helps protect them from identity theft, scams, and unwanted contact.

Week 2: Creating Strong Passwords

One of the best ways to stay safe online is by using strong, secure passwords. Teach your child how to create passwords that are hard to guess. A good password includes a mix of uppercase and lowercase letters, numbers, and symbols. Avoid simple things like "password123" or anything that includes personal information, like a pet's name.

You can help your child practice by creating passwords together for their devices or online accounts. Remind them to never share their passwords, even with close friends, and to update them regularly. Talk about why it's important to use different passwords for different accounts. Finally, explain what phishing is and why they should be cautious about clicking on links in unexpected emails or messages.

Week 3: Stranger Danger in the Digital World

Children are often taught not to talk to strangers in real life, but it's just as important to teach them about stranger danger online. The internet allows people to pretend to be someone they're not, making it difficult to know who's safe to trust.

Remind your child to never give out personal information or agree to meet anyone they've only met online. Make sure they understand that people can easily lie about their age, interests, or identity. If someone makes them feel uncomfortable or asks to meet in person, they should tell you immediately. Setting parental controls on games and social platforms can also help limit who your child interacts with. Always encourage open conversations so they feel comfortable coming to you if they encounter anything unusual.

Week 4: Reporting Harmful Content

Children may sometimes come across harmful or inappropriate content online. It's important that they know what to do if this happens. Most platforms, such as social media sites or gaming networks, have ways to report this kind of content. Teaching your child how to use these tools is a great step towards their digital safety.

Explain that it's okay to leave a website or stop using an app if something makes them feel uncomfortable or upset. Encourage them to come to you or a trusted adult whenever they see something that doesn't seem right. By reporting harmful content, they can help protect themselves and others from seeing inappropriate material. Regularly check in with them about what they're watching, playing, or exploring online to ensure they feel safe.

Week 5: Screen Time Balance

With so many fun and educational things to do online, it can be easy for children to spend too much time on their devices. However, it's important to balance screen time with offline activities like playing outdoors, reading, and spending time with family. Discuss with your child the importance of a healthy balance. Set daily limits for screen time and make sure they have plenty of time for other activities. Encourage them to take breaks from screens to rest their eyes and avoid spending long periods sitting in one position. Too much screen time can lead to problems like disrupted sleep or reduced physical activity. Creating a balanced routine helps ensure that technology is just one part of their day, not the whole focus.

Week 6: Being Kind Online

Online kindness is just as important as face-to-face kindness. Talk to your child about how their words and actions online can have a real impact on others. It's easy to forget that there's a person on the other side of the screen, so remind them to always think before they type or post.

Explain that online bullying can happen when people use mean or hurtful language in comments, messages, or posts. Make it clear that being kind online is a responsibility and that they should never join in with bullying or teasing others. If they see someone being bullied, encourage them to tell a trusted adult and offer support to the person being targeted. Being respectful and kind online makes the internet a better place for everyone.

Week 7: Age-Appropriate Content

The internet is full of great content for children, but not everything is suitable for all ages. Help your child understand that different apps, games, and websites are designed for different age groups. Many platforms have age ratings that guide what's appropriate. Before letting your child use a new game or website, check the ratings and reviews to ensure it's suitable for their age. Some platforms may contain content that's too mature or may not have the right safeguards in place for younger users. Setting parental controls can also help limit their access to age-appropriate content. Teach them that following these guidelines isn't about restricting fun, but about keeping them safe and happy online.

Week 8: Keeping Devices Secure

Keeping devices safe is an important part of staying secure online. Teach your child to take care of their devices by regularly updating software, avoiding suspicious links, and using antivirus protection. Regular updates often contain important security fixes, so they should always install them as soon as possible.

Encourage your child to be cautious about clicking on links or downloading files from unknown sources. These can sometimes contain harmful viruses or malware. Explain how using antivirus software helps keep their device safe from these threats. A secure device means their personal information is less likely to be stolen or misused. Regularly check that security settings are in place to protect your child from online threats.

Week 9: Understanding Digital Footprints

Every time your child posts something online, they leave a digital footprint. This is a record of their activity that could be seen by others, sometimes long after the post was made. Help your child understand that what they share online might be permanent, even if they delete it.

Encourage them to think carefully before posting anything and ask questions like, "Would I be okay with everyone seeing this?" Teach them that oversharing personal information or posting things in the heat of the moment can have lasting effects. Discuss how employers, schools, or friends might see their online activity in the future. Being mindful of their digital footprint can help protect their reputation and privacy.

Week 10: Safe Social Media Use

If your child uses social media, it's important to teach them how to do so safely. Start by reviewing their privacy settings to ensure that their personal information is only visible to people they know. Social media platforms often have options to make profiles private or restrict who can send friend requests.

Talk to your child about accepting requests only from people they know in real life. Explain that not everyone online has good intentions, and even people they've spoken to online may not be who they claim. Encourage them to think carefully about what they post and remind them to avoid sharing too much personal information. Safe social media use helps protect them from unwanted contact and cyberbullying.

Week 11: Recognizing Fake News

In today's digital world, children can easily come across fake news or misleading information. Teaching them how to recognize fake news is a valuable skill. Start by explaining that not everything they see online is true, and sometimes information is shared to confuse or mislead people.

Show them how to verify facts by checking reliable sources. Encourage them to ask questions like, "Where did this information come from?" and "Is this source trustworthy?" This will help them develop critical thinking skills and avoid spreading misinformation. Teach them that it's okay to be sceptical and to always double-check before sharing or believing something online.

Week 12: Online Gaming Safety

Online gaming can be a lot of fun, but it's important to stay safe while playing. Many games have chat features that allow players to communicate, but not all interactions are positive. Explain to your child that they should never share personal information while gaming and that it's okay to block or mute players who make them uncomfortable. Set up parental controls on gaming platforms to restrict in-game purchases and monitor who your child is talking to. Encourage them to play age-appropriate games and remind them that they should always come to you if something happens in a game that makes them feel uneasy.

Week 13: Cyberbullying Prevention

Cyberbullying can be just as harmful as bullying in person, sometimes even more so because it can happen 24/7. Help your child recognize cyberbullying and understand what to do if they encounter it. Cyberbullying might look like mean comments, spreading rumours, or sending hurtful messages.

Teach your child not to respond to or engage with bullies online. Instead, they should report the behaviour and tell a trusted adult. Encourage them to stand up for others who are being bullied and always be kind online. Let them know that they are not alone and that there is support available if they experience cyberbullying.

Week 14: Managing Online Friendships

Online friendships can be fun and exciting, but it's important to manage them safely. Help your child understand that just because someone seems nice online doesn't mean they can be fully trusted. Explain that it's best to only connect with people they know in real life.

Encourage open conversations about their online friends. Ask who they're talking to and what they're discussing. Make sure your child knows to tell you if an online friend starts asking for personal information or making them feel uncomfortable. Keeping communication open helps them stay safe while enjoying their online interactions.

Week 15: Protecting Personal Data

Help your child understand the importance of keeping their personal data—like their name, address, and photos—private online. Explain that scammers and hackers can misuse this information to commit identity theft or cause harm. Teach them to avoid sharing details with people they don't know and to be cautious when using public Wi-Fi. Encourage the use of strong passwords and privacy settings on social media and gaming platforms. Remind them to always check with you before sharing personal information in online forms or contests to develop safe online habits.

Week 16: Location Settings

Location settings on devices can reveal where your child is, even when they're using apps or playing games. It's important to make sure these settings are turned off to prevent others from tracking their location. Some apps may ask for location access, but not all of them need it to function.

Go through your child's apps and turn off location tracking unless absolutely necessary. Teach your child why this is important and help them understand the risks of sharing

their location with strangers. Regularly check settings to ensure your child's privacy and safety remain intact.

Week 17: Avoiding In-App Purchases

Many games and apps offer in-app purchases, tempting children with extra features, virtual goods, or upgrades. These purchases can quickly add up, leading to unexpected costs. Discuss with your child the importance of avoiding in-app purchases and how they should always check with you before buying anything online.

You can set up parental controls to prevent accidental purchases and remove payment options from your child's device. Help them understand that while these offers might seem fun, they need to be cautious and thoughtful about how they use money online.

Week 18: Encouraging Open Conversations

Creating an open, supportive environment is key to keeping your child safe online. Let your child know they can talk to you about their digital experiences, both good and bad. By having regular, non-judgmental conversations, you build trust and make it easier for them to come to you if something goes wrong.

Ask questions about the websites they visit, the games they play, and who they talk to online. Encourage them to tell you if anything makes them uncomfortable. Open dialogue helps you stay informed and reassures your child that they have someone to turn to.

Week 19: Supporting Safe Searches

Safe searching is vital for protecting your child from inappropriate content online. Use child-friendly search engines, like Kiddle or KidRex, which filter out harmful material. Alternatively, set up safe search filters on general search engines like Google.

Teach your child about using keywords wisely and explain why they should avoid clicking on suspicious links or ads. Regularly monitor their search activity to ensure they are browsing safely and encourage them to ask for help if they're unsure about anything they find online. These simple steps can greatly reduce exposure to inappropriate content.

Week 20: Supporting Neurodivergent Children Online

Children who are neurodivergent, such as those with autism, ADHD, or other conditions, may have unique needs when it comes to navigating the digital world. It's important to provide them with extra support to ensure their online experiences are positive and safe.

Start by creating clear, structured rules about online safety that are easy to follow. Break down concepts like privacy, cyberbullying, and stranger danger into simple steps. Use visual aids or social stories to help explain online scenarios. Consider using tools like screen time limits and parental controls to manage content and prevent overstimulation.

Additionally, encourage regular communication, and be patient with their questions or

concerns about online interactions. Providing consistency and reassurance can help them build confidence in navigating digital spaces safely, with your support.