



# Online safety for children across their ages

For parents, getting used to online security isn't easy. One of the trickiest aspects is figuring out what to do with online safety as the years go by – what's appropriate for toddlers, for example, isn't exactly relevant for six-year-olds.

So here is ESET Ireland's advice on tackling cybersecurity for different ages.

## Age group: Under 5s

This is one of the most important age groups. What happens during these formative years can have a huge impact on your kids for the rest of their lives. Moreover, with technology being introduced from such an early age – as young as three – it's essential you are on top of your game to keep your children safe and secure.

### Top tips

You need to ensure that your own devices are password protected, so that your youngsters can't accidentally go online when you're out of sight.

This is as good a time as any to invest in parental-control software – this powerful technology is a real asset when it comes to safety (suitable up to the age of 14).

Start talking about online safety and set boundaries. For example, set limits to device usage and stress the importance of not talking to strangers online, the same as in real life.

## Age group: 5-9

Between the ages of five and nine, there is a decided shift in the way parents and children view technology. As an ESET study from earlier this year revealed, there

are subtle differences in attitudes across the world.

### Top tips

Continue with the previous tips, adjusting, for example, some of the settings on your parental control app.

Ensure that your children are accessing age-appropriate content (films, video games and apps).

If your children have their own devices, ensure that there are limits to what can be done/accessed.

## Age group: 10-12

This age group is where children begin to develop their tech skills, as well as gain a better understanding of technology and the internet – they know shortcuts, have favourite websites and are even active on social network accounts.

It's also the age group where children will start to really question and query things, where there is a desire to take ownership and responsibility over their devices and what they view online.

### Top tips

Reinforce why you limit usage and why you have restrictions in place – it's not about control, but about safety and what you deem appropriate for their age.

Shift the focus of your conversation with your children to topics such as privacy and cybercrime. Your children are among the most vulnerable groups online.

Reiterate the importance of security – from passphrases to two-factor authentication and encryption, there are

plenty of ways of staying protected.

## Age group: 13-16

The teenage years are about give and take – as hard as it is to accept, your baby boy or girl is now a mature youngster, capable of looking after themselves and keen to be more independent.

Equally, on the flip side, they're still young, dependent on you for many things and in need of constant guidance, as well as age-appropriate boundaries. What's essential is that there is trust – on both sides. This way, you as a parent, can feel confident about letting your children get on with their lives, while not having to look over their shoulders constantly.

### Top tips

Again, your ongoing conversation with your kids will need to change and take on more adult topics – things to bring up at this age are cyberbullying, sexting and the threat of online predators.

As you may have done with other things – like buying clothes and spending money on leisurely activities – let them take control of things like app, music or film purchases (setting limits of course).

Point out that certain online activities, which they may consider harmless, are in fact illegal – something that parents themselves need a better understanding of.

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