

New Device Safety

1. Change the default password on high-tech toys and gadgets that are Bluetooth- or Wi-Fi-enabled. Most of these items come with a default or generic password that is easy to hack. Change it to something more difficult to guess.
2. Disable photo geotagging on all their devices. Savvy predators can use it to pinpoint your child's location from photos, videos or social media content they post.
3. When buying games as gifts for your kids, make sure you check the age rating and connectivity capabilities and purchase accordingly. Keep in mind that games that allow for interacting with other people online have no restrictions on the age of the other person. Just because a game is rated for younger children doesn't mean an older predator can't play it online, too.
4. Load your child's new device with educational apps and games before you give it to them. There are plenty that offer learning AND entertainment opportunities. Help pick them out.
5. Set up a central charging station in your home so kids don't have their devices in their room late into the night. Nine out of 10 children have their phone, tablet or computer in their room (Children's Internet Usage Study, 2016).
6. Remember to change the password on your Wi-Fi routers and to use built-in settings that establish the level of control your household needs for the kids, such as access times and website category blocking.
7. Before you hand over new devices to your kids, set up non-administrative accounts. This way, they can't change settings or download or install apps without your consent.
8. Remind your kids not to share any personal information, such as their address, phone number or email address. Predators scan for that information and use it to track kids' moves and try to connect with them.
9. Remind your children to report any cyberbullying incidents and to treat others the way they would like to be treated. The holidays can be a difficult time for some families, and children may turn to social media to express their feelings. Be on the lookout for signs that your child is being bullied.
10. Make sure your children know only to connect to trusted Wi-Fi networks and to avoid logging into sensitive accounts like e-mail or social media when they're away from a safe network.
11. With so many precious pictures of family and friends being taken during the season, remind kids not to post pictures of friends without their permission. Everyone deserves the right to make their own decisions about their privacy.
12. Include online safety materials with your gift, such as activity and comic books featuring Garfield and friends from the Center for Cyber Safety and Education and review them as a family before they start using their new device.