Top Tips for Online Safety

1 Protect your devices and info

Take these steps to guard Internet-connected devices against someone who tries to break in and impersonate or spy on you, scam you, or use malicious software to destroy or steal your photos, games, contact lists, and other info.

- Keep all software (including your web browser) current with automatic updating. Install legitimate antivirus and antispyware software. Never turn off your firewall. Protect your wireless router with a password, and use flash drives cautiously. Microsoft can help you do this: microsoft.com/security/pypc.aspx.
- Think twice (even if you know the sender) before you open attachments or click links in email or IM, or on a social site.
- Use strong passwords, and DO NOT SHARE THEM—not even with your best friend. Learn how: aka.ms/passwords-create.
- Lock your phone with a PIN to keep anyone from making calls, texting, or accessing your personal info.

2 Share with care

Information you share online about yourself or comments you post can become public. Plus, they may remain in search results for years to come, potentially visible to a future employer or college admissions officer.

Follow this advice to guard against someone turning your information against you to bully or impersonate you, steal your identity, or scam you.

- Don't share suggestive photos or videos. You lose control of where they go.
- Make your social network pages private. One way is to look for Settings or Options on the social site to manage who can see your profile or photos tagged with your name, how people can search for you, who can make comments, and how to block people.
- Create profile pages and email addresses that reveal nothing personal and aren't suggestive.
- Be choosy about adding new friends on phones or social sites, or in games.

3 Be a real friend

- If you wouldn't wear it (say, on a T-shirt), don't share it.
- Stand up for your friends. Cyberbullies are less likely to target someone who has a strong group of friends, and usually stop when a victim's friends rally around him or her. (Cyberbullies may be surprised to learn that their actions may be crimes.)
- Don't share online personal details of friends and family members without their permission.

4 Connect honestly and carefully

- Don't download copyrighted music, video games, etc.—it's illegal. Plus, pirated files are often used to distribute viruses and spyware without the user's knowledge.
- Don't be a Net cheater. Don't copy text from the web or buy finished essays or reports.
- Use only social networks that are right for your age, so you'll benefit from their age-based privacy protections.
- Meeting an online "friend" in person can be risky. Protect yourself: always bring a parent, trusted adult, or friend and meet in a busy public place.

Free online safety stuff

- An online forum where you can chat with other teens (or become cyber mentors): cybermentors.org.uk.
- Direct talk about what it really takes to be savvy and safer online: tinyurl.com/iLBW-teen-safety.

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