

# Boarding the e-safety train

## Ideas for parents & carers.

The only thing you will ever hear about e-safety is the bad news. Tales of identity theft, grooming and fraud litter the media – and as we all know, good news doesn't sell papers.

It is no wonder, then, that parents and carers approach new technology with some caution – even suspicion.

Young people, on the other hand, launch themselves happily upon the seas of new technology with supreme confidence (sometimes misplaced) and a feeling that "it won't happen to them".

The purpose of this series of guides is to help you board a train that is already moving at some speed.

### It can be done!

	<p>This is the first step. Don't say anything yet, just observe.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ What equipment do you and your family use?</li> <li>➤ Where is it?</li> <li>➤ What is it used for? (Likely to be a long list!)</li> <li>➤ How long do people use it for? (Online gaming for 5 hours at a time?)</li> </ul> <p>It may be that you do not know, or cannot easily see the answers to these questions. That's perfectly fine – you are at the beginning of the road. Take some time to find out. Make a list, but don't let others dissuade you. You have a right to know.</p>
	<p>Young people talk a lot – to each other, on the phone and in groups. You will learn a lot about what is the latest "must have" piece of technology, or what the most popular game is just by listening. It all adds to your knowledge of what they do online. Have you noticed a change in their language? Is it linked to the games they play – perhaps text speak? Do <b>YOU</b> speak the language? Abbreviations are common – you need to understand them.</p> <p>LOL = Lots of Love          ROFL = rolls on the floor laughing          MMT = meet me tonight.</p> <p>There are MANY more, some of which are unpleasant. There are even online "urban dictionaries" available free of charge. Here's one. It pays to speak their language.  <a href="http://www.talktalk.co.uk/comunity/textspeak-p1.html">http://www.talktalk.co.uk/comunity/textspeak-p1.html</a></p>

	<p>Finally, you need to join the party. You need to talk to your youngsters (despite them not wanting you to!) The biggest problem by far is where parents and carers paint themselves into their own “no-go” areas of conversation. Among these, the areas where you really must go, but probably don’t want to are:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Grooming and paedophiles</li> <li>➤ Identity theft</li> <li>➤ Fraud</li> <li>➤ Being scammed.</li> </ul> <p>None of the above are things people like to talk about – and the people who practice them rely on this.</p> <p><b>They work in shadows – talking about it brings their activities into the light of day. Use the News!</b></p>
	<p><b>Make A Plan.</b> As you and your family discuss e-safety, you will find things you are doing well, things you need to change, and things you didn’t even know existed! That’s fine! Make an e-safety action plan. Decide what you want to do, who will do it, and by when. Review it regularly.</p> <p><b>E-safety is not something you can do once and forget – as the technology changes, so must our plan for remaining safe and reaping the many benefits of living, working and playing in an online world.</b></p>
	<p>Here are the main areas of e-safety in the home – <b>NOT THE ONLY ONES</b> - just the main ones.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Passwords</b> – do you have the same password (or none) for many different online accounts – do others know your passwords – do others use them – how often do you change them?</li> <li>➤ <b>Downloads</b> – do you know what your family downloads? Is it from legal sources – do they copy music, films, games or programmes?</li> <li>➤ <b>Mobile phones</b> – do they lock after a period of not being used? Could anyone acquiring the phone get into it – if it has BluTooth, is the network secure – are you safe from scams around ringtones, applications and games?</li> <li>➤ <b>Wireless networks</b> – once the province of suppliers and companies only, it is now easy to set up your own wi-fi network at home. If you have one, is it secured to WPA2 standards? If not anyone could use it – AND possibly read your PC hard drive.</li> <li>➤ <b>Web Cams</b> – Where are they located – what images have been broadcast – did you know webcam streams can now be copied and uploaded to the internet – information in the background of the shot can give away a lot of information.</li> <li>➤ <b>Social networking</b> – Which sites do your family use – when did they last check their privacy settings – are there words or images that could harm them in any way – has anyone been bullied online – when did they last change their social networking password?</li> </ul>

This is just the tip of the iceberg – each of the areas above could be expanded on. Future publications in this series will do exactly that. There will never be one single definitive e-safety guide – the field is far too dynamic for that ever to happen, however, most of the problems that occur in the online world do so because users are either not bothering to protect themselves or have allowed themselves to believe convenient “cyber-myths” – and there is an inexhaustible supply of those out there!

- Schools can ask for an e-safety day
- Schools can ask for an e-safety half-day
- Schools can help you with dealing with cyber-bullying.

**The home, the individuals in it, and the school makes powerful combination.**