

Report to PARENTS

10 Best Practices to Protect Kids Online

In the last decade, child sexual exploitation and abuse (CSEA) has increased exponentially. In 2023, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children received 36 million reports of child sexual abuse material online—up from 1 million in 2014.

Armed with a greater understanding of the problem and strategies to take action, families can teach their children best practices in navigating the internet to keep them safe.

Know the Threats

Online CSEA can take many forms—from family friends to complete strangers. They work to earn a child's trust until the child feels comfortable doing things they wouldn't normally do, like sharing explicit images or videos of themselves.

The good news is there are strategies families can use to fight online CSEA. The know2protect campaign from the Department of Health and Human Services offers these 10 tips:

1. Start an open, two-way talk with your child.
2. Password-protect or control access to your child's app store and gaming downloads.
3. Set time and area limits for use of devices.
4. Set all apps, games, and devices to private.
5. Turn off location data services on social media and nonessential apps.
6. Talk about data permanency.
7. Create a contract with your child regarding online behavior.
8. Know your child's friend lists. Remove strangers.
9. Warn against leaving a game to chat with someone they don't know on another platform.
10. Do not delete messages, images, or videos from predators. Save usernames, screenshots, and images or videos as evidence for law enforcement to collect directly from the device.



Take Action

Continuous talks and reminders are key to safe online habits. Here are ways to keep the conversation active for younger kids through their teenage years.

For younger children:

- Teach them not to click on pop-ups.
- Caution against sharing passwords and personal information with strangers online.
- Help them identify a trusted adult.
- Identify steps to follow if they see inappropriate content, such as looking away and telling a parent.
- Tell them to tell a trusted adult if someone makes them feel scared or uncomfortable.

For tweens and teens:

- Talk about how they should never post personal information or inappropriate content.
- Discuss the permanency of online data.
- Teach them how to set up privacy controls on devices.
- Explain the characteristics of online predators.
- Tell them that safe adults won't ask them to keep secrets or disrespect their boundaries.

Learn how to report CSEA and find support for survivors at [know2protect](https://www.know2protect.org). Follow [#DigitalBoundaries](https://twitter.com/DigitalBoundaries) on social.