

Youngsters and what they get up to on the Internet – eight tips on how to become more involved

The text below focuses on how you, as a parent/adult can become involved in a positive way in what your children do on the Internet. You should start by visiting websites that will give you advice and tips if you need information about for example, virus protection and different types of filter programs. Links to organisations and websites that deal with these issues can be found at www.surfalugnt.se.

1. Put time aside every day to talk to your children about the Internet

Talk about it in the same way as you would when talking about what happened at school, at football/hockey training or when your children were out playing in the school playground. Many young people today do not see any difference between meeting someone via a computer and meeting them in person.

2. Be bold enough to set limits

It is never good for children to use a computer too long or visit websites that have offensive content. Especially if it has an effect on schoolwork or your child's physical health. Set clear limits if you feel that your child is spending too much time on the Internet. Let your child know if you think that he/she is visiting websites with unsuitable content.

3. Be curious!

Ask how things work. Children are experts and they are only too willing to show you how much they know. Allow them to show you which websites they like to visit and what their favourite clips are.

4. Teach yourself

Spend a few minutes now and then surfing around on the various websites for young people to see what they look like. This will give you a better understanding of what being on the Internet is like for your child. Read the information that tells you who owns the websites, and what you should do if you need to report them. This will make you better prepared should something go wrong.

5. Establish common rules

Talk to your child about how long he or she should surf the Internet. Your child may already perhaps have an idea as to how long he/she thinks is okay. You should also talk about what type of information is okay to release to others about yourself. It is not dangerous to upload images of yourself on the Internet, but you need to think carefully about who has access to the image.

6. Help by registering a complaint if something happens

If something happens to your child on the Internet, don't get cross. Listen to what your child has to say and allow the child to explain to you what happened, so that you will gain an understanding of the incident. Always report what has happened! On most websites there is somewhere where you can report a site. It is usually at the bottom of the web page, either under "report" or "abuse". If the perpetrator is close to the child, for example he/she attends the same school, it is a good idea to inform the school about what has happened. Bullying and victimisation on the Internet is nearly always associated with the situation in school or in the classroom.

7. Set a good example

Try to practice what you preach when it comes to the Internet. If you want your child to act in a certain way on the Internet, it may be an idea that you follow the rules you have set.

8. Be there

You don't need to visit all of the websites that children visit in order to "be there". It is enough sometimes to understand what they are talking about. Then it is easier for you to be available to them when they want to speak to you about what they have experienced, be it positive or negative. You can be there when something has gone wrong and they need help. Or you can provide online support? Be there as an adult, available to them on the Internet.