



Keeping Children & Teens Safe From Online Predators and Trafficking: A Quick Guide for Parents

Children and teens of all ages (3–16) can be targeted online. Most people are safe, but some individuals use the internet, apps, gaming platforms, and social media to build trust with young people and gradually exploit them.

This guide provides simple, age-appropriate steps to help families stay safe.

1. Teach the “Body Safety Rules”

- “Your body belongs to you.”
- No secrets about touches, photos, or anything involving private parts.
- If someone ever makes them feel scared, confused, or uncomfortable, they should come to you immediately.
- They are never in trouble for telling.

2. Talk About “Tricky People”

Unsafe individuals rarely look scary. They often appear helpful, kind, or friendly. Teach kids that a tricky person is someone who:

- Asks a child or teen to keep a secret
- Tries to get them alone (online or in person)
- Asks for photos or personal information
- Gives gifts, money, or compliments to gain trust
- Makes them feel pressured, confused, or uncomfortable

If this happens: Stop, leave, and tell a safe adult.

3. Make Online Safety Non-Negotiable

- No sharing personal information (school, address, phone number, age, location).
- No sending photos or videos to someone they don't know in real life.
- No private messaging with strangers or new "friends" met online.
- Set screens in common areas when possible.
- Teach them to save messages or screenshots if someone acts inappropriately and tell you immediately.

4. Know the Warning Signs of Online Grooming

Groomers often:

- Give excessive compliments or attention
- Try to isolate the child ("Don't tell your parents")
- Ask for photos or suggest private chats
- Offer gifts, money, or in-game rewards
- Become angry or controlling if the child pulls away

If any of these signs appear, intervene and block the person.

5. Keep Open Communication

Kids and teens are more likely to come to parents who:

- Stay calm when they share mistakes or concerns
- Ask open-ended questions ("Did anything online make you uncomfortable this week?")
- Reassure them: "You can always come to me. You will never be in trouble for telling the truth."

6. Age-Tailored Guidance

Ages 3–6

- Supervised screen time only
- Simple rules: “No secrets. No pictures. Tell a grownup if someone scares you.”

Ages 7–10

- Teach them that people online can pretend to be kids
- Practice safe responses: “I can’t share that,” “I need to ask my grownup”

Ages 11–13

- Discuss peer pressure and flattery
- Explain why sharing any photos (even “just funny ones”) can be dangerous

Ages 14–16

- Talk honestly about manipulation, threats, and false “relationships”
- Empower them to block, report, and tell you immediately

7. What To Do If You’re Concerned

1. Stay calm
2. Save screenshots or messages
3. Block and report the person
4. Inform local authorities if you believe a child is being targeted or exploited

You are not overreacting—your child’s safety comes first.

Final Reminder

Your child is never to blame if someone tries to exploit or manipulate them.

Your consistent presence, supervision, and open communication are the strongest