

TIPS FROM MS. K AND OFFICER KIM TO HELP PARENTS KEEP KIDS SAFE ONLINE

1. Communication

The best tool for keeping kids safe online is a healthy relationship with their parents, including open lines of communication, a delicate balance of security vs. freedom, and a great deal of patience and understanding. All kids, parents, and families are unique and have their own set of values. It is important to know yourself and know your kids.

2. Location

Kid use of any and all technology that connects to the outside world should be observed and monitored by parents. Computers should be located in a central place in the house like the family room, kitchen, or living room – not a child’s bedroom. Use of handheld devices like cell phones, music players, and gaming devices should also be monitored by parents.

3. Balance

Computers and handhelds are addictive for kids (and adults too!) Be sure to promote alternative activities in your family. Some kids thrive in an online environment and virtual socializing can be a positive experience for many. However, making and maintaining friendships in the real world is a vital part of children’s lives.

4. Learning

Learn about new technologies, how your kids are using them, and what you can do to make them safer. This is no easy task in today’s fast changing world of websites and devices. New social networks, online capabilities, and gadgets are appearing all the time. It may seem overwhelming. However, new parental controls and safety measures are also becoming more available and easier to adopt. Although it may seem impossible, we all have to try to keep up. When all else fails, it is Tip #1 that we must rely on.

5. Guidelines

Develop guidelines and rules for technology use as a family. Review online safety tips for kids with your children. Consider using these guidelines to create a contract or agreement that you and your kids sign and post near the family computer.

6. Awareness



Ask your kids where they go and what they do online. Be aware of their activities and who they are communicating with. Know what sites they have accounts and profiles with and keep a record of their usernames and passwords. Read their blogs and view their posted pictures. Use tools such as Google and Google Alert to know what information about your child (and you!) is available online. Search and learn “chat slang” used in emails, chats, and text messages.

7. Reporting

Be sure to view, save, and print any emails, messages, or postings that threaten or upset your child or your family. If they are extreme or continue over time, contact school officials or police to address the malicious behavior. If there is an investigation, the printed evidence may help to resolve the conflict or assist authorities as they pursue the perpetrator.

8. Resources

There are online and offline resources available to parents to help with the incredibly daunting task of keeping kids safe online. Visit websites such as those linked on our school website. Follow the latest issues and tips that are reported in radio, TV, and newspapers. Communicate with other parents to learn how other families are meeting these challenges. A great place to start is:

www.montaukschool.org . . . click on the kangaroo  and then the lifesaver buoy  to find online safety resources for kids and parents.