

Tips for Parents about Online Safety

From the National Crime Prevention Council (www.ncpc.org)

Teaching Your Child Three Simple Steps To Increase Safety

1. Don't give optional information-When creating a profile, you do not need to enter all of the information that is requested. The set-up page usually requires you to fill out basic information, such as your name and email. Everything else is optional. Do not feel obligated to put your address and telephone number.
2. Third level of privacy- There are three levels of privacy settings to choose from for your profile. There is "open to everyone," "open to friends of friends" and "friends only." The best setting to use is the "friends only" setting on all of your privacy choices. "Friends only" is the strictest level of security; it only allows people that you have accepted as a friend to view information about you.
3. Accept only people you know- Accepting only people you know and trust is a great way to ensure safety when using social networking sites. Doing this can protect you from spammers, pedophiles, and other people who use social networking sites to commit crimes.

When discussing social networking safety with your child, encourage him or her to always use discretion when posting any type of photo, location status, and message. Tell your teen to ask him or herself these four questions before posting to the world:

"Think Before I Post"

1. Should I share this? Will the information you share put yourself or someone else in danger?
2. Do people really need to know where I am and who I am with? - Is it a good idea to let everyone know my exact location?
3. Am I selecting friends online that I can trust? -Always keep in mind that it's not just about what you post, but how others may use that content.
4. Is the information I am sharing transparent? - Before sharing information to the public, does your post give out too much personal information?

Having a discussion with your teen about social networking sites can ease some anxiety about your child's safety. Social networking sites help us stay connected to family and friends. However, it's important to make sure your child knows how to be safe while online. Encourage them to enjoy the sites but to be safe at all times.

Conversation Starters for Questionable Apps on Your Child's Phone

- Conversation starter for YikYak- What kind of things would a person want to post anonymously? How would you personally use this app? What would you post anonymously? Why?
- Conversation starter for SnapChat- Why do you want to send pictures that disappear? Would you be okay with anyone seeing that pic?
- Conversation starter for Whisper - Why would you tell your secrets to strangers? If you are struggling with something, will a stranger care or be able to help you? Do you think it would be safe to accept their help/friendship?
- Conversation starter for any app - Are you being safe with that app? Are you encouraging others or tearing them down? Are you being bullied? Are you putting out too much information about yourself?