



Protecting Kids' Privacy

Whether to study or socialize, play games or learn something new, it's likely your kids are spending time online. And as a parent, chances are that you're spending time thinking about ways to make sure they make smart and safe choices when they do. Among the many choices they're faced with online is how to deal with their personal information.

The Children's Online Privacy Protection Act – COPPA – gives parents control over what information websites can collect from their kids. Any website for kids under 13, or any general site that collects personal information from kids it knows are under 13, is required to comply with COPPA. The Federal Trade Commission, the nation's consumer protection agency, enforces this law.

Thanks to COPPA, sites have to get a parent's permission if they want to collect or share your kids' personal information, with only a few exceptions. That goes for information sites ask for up-front, and information your kids choose to post about themselves. Personal information includes your child's full name, address, email address, or cell phone number.

Facts for Consumers

Under COPPA, sites also have to post privacy policies that give details about what kind of information they collect from kids — and what they might do with it (say, to send a weekly newsletter, direct advertising to them, or give the information to other companies). If a site plans to share the child's information with another company, the privacy policy must say what that company will do with it. Links to the policies should be in places where they're easy to spot.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Your kids' personal information and privacy are valuable — to you, to them, and to marketers. Here's how to help protect your kids' personal information when they're online.

Check out sites your kids visit. If a site requires users to register, see what kind of information it asks for and whether you're comfortable with what they tell you. If the site allows kids to post information about themselves, talk to your child about the risks and benefits of disclosing certain information in a public forum. You also can see whether the site appears to be following the most basic COPPA requirements, like clearly posting its privacy policy for parents and asking for parental consent before kids can participate.

Take a look at the privacy policy. Just because a site has a privacy policy doesn't mean it keeps personal information

private. The policy should tell you what the site does with the information it collects; then, you can decide how you feel about it. Remember, if the policy says there are no limits to what it collects or who gets to see it, there are no limits.

Ask questions. If you're not clear on a site's practices or policies, ask about them. If the site falls under COPPA, the privacy policy has to include contact information for the site manager.

Be selective with your permission. In many cases, websites need your okay before they're allowed to collect personal information from your kids. They may ask for your permission in a number of ways, including by email or postal mail. Or, you may give your consent by allowing them to charge your credit card. In addition to considering when to give your permission, consider how much consent you want to give — in many cases, it's not all or none. You might be able to give the company permission to collect some personal information from your child, but say no to having that information passed along to another marketer.

Know your rights. As a parent, you have the right to have a site delete any personal information it has about your child. Some sites will let you see the information they've collected. But first, they'll need to make sure you really are the parent, either by requiring a signed form or an email with a digital signature, for example, or by verifying a charge made to your credit

card. You also have a right to take back your consent and have any information collected from your child deleted.

Report a website. If you think a site has collected or disclosed information from your kids or marketed to them in a way that violates the law, report it to the FTC at [ftc.gov/complaint](https://www.ftc.gov/complaint) or 1-877-FTC-HELP (382-4357).

MORE TIPS FOR PARENTS

Talk, and talk often. Make sure your kids know what information should be private, and what information might be appropriate for sharing. When they give out their personal information, they give up control of who can reach them, whether it's with a marketing message or something more personal. On the other hand, sharing some personal information may allow them to participate in certain activities or to get emails about promotions and events they're interested in.

Depending on what they do online, also remind your kids that once they post information online, they can't take it back. Even if they delete the information from a site, older versions may exist on other people's computers and be circulated online.

Know what sites your kids go to. Talk with your kids about the sites they like to visit. Do some exploring on your own to get to know how the sites work and what privacy settings and controls they offer.

Make agreements. Be sure your kids know what your family has decided is okay — and not okay — to divulge online. Consider writing down a list of the rules your family has agreed on, and posting them where everyone can see them.

Let your kids know you'll keep an eye on the sites they visit. One option is to check your browser history and temporary files, though keep in mind that older kids may know how to delete these files or keep them from getting recorded. If you'd like more controls, check to see what privacy settings your browser offers or consider software that offers a range of controls. Visit the **GetNetWise** website to learn more.

Know how your kids get online. Kids may get online using your family computer or someone else's, as well as through cell phones and game consoles. Know what limits you can place on your child's cell phone — some companies have plans that limit downloads, Internet access, and texting on cell phones; other plans allow kids to use those features at certain times of day. Check out what parental controls are available on the gaming consoles your kids use, as well.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

The FTC works for the consumer to prevent fraudulent, deceptive, and unfair business practices in the marketplace and to provide information to help consumers

Facts for Consumers

spot, stop, and avoid them. To file a complaint or to get free information on consumer issues, visit **ftc.gov** or call toll-free, 1-877-FTC-HELP (1-877-382-4357); TTY: 1-866-653-4261. The FTC enters consumer complaints into the Consumer Sentinel Network, a secure online database and investigative tool used by hundreds of civil and criminal law enforcement agencies in the U.S. and abroad.

Visit **OnGuardOnline.gov** for more tips on securing your computer, protecting personal information whether you're using a wireless connection or a traditional one, and guarding against Internet fraud. **OnGuardOnline.gov** is maintained by the Federal Trade Commission, the nation's consumer protection agency.

FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION	ftc.gov
1-877-FTC-HELP	FOR THE CONSUMER

Federal Trade Commission
Bureau of Consumer Protection
Division of Consumer and Business Education

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