

# A Parent's Guide to Keeping Children Safe & Smart Online



# 01. Preparing your child for the digital world



In this digital age, smart phones, tablets and laptops are essential for your child's learning journey.

Rather than having them explore the digital world behind your back, it may be wiser to provide them with proper guidance.



From the simple steps of setting up social media accounts to internet surfing, you may want to think about:



How do you ensure their online safety?

How do you cultivate in them proper online behaviours and values?

It all starts with having a simple chat.

Ask your child questions about what they do online and what internet sites they visit often. This will give you an indication of his or her areas of interest and prepare you for further interaction.



Through your conversation, you can gradually talk about setting a time-table for the proper usage of these digital devices. You can draw up a Family Contract to guide your child. (Refer to Section 12. )

Encourage your child to give his or her views as this will give them a sense that they had a say in it.



# 03. How much screen time is okay?

Digital learning can enable your children to take full advantage of the rich resources on the internet. However, excessive exposure will disrupt daily living and family relationships.

Recommendations for screen time:



### Child under 18 months:

No digital exposure except for live video-chats when necessary, and in the presence of at least a parent or caregiver.



### Child 18 to 24 months:

Introduce your child to high-quality internet websites and apps and set a time limit for such exposure, with a parent or caregiver present.



### Child two to five years old:

It is preferable for the child to co-view the digital world with a parent or caregiver. You can limit screen time to one hour daily and only access to high-quality websites and apps.



### Child five years and above:

It may be difficult to impose a time limit due to increasing demands such as the need to surf the internet for homework. Set a schedule in consultation with your child on specific time periods that he or she can use the devices and for specific purposes.

Source: American Academy of Pediatrics



Make a firm decision on the off-limit hours such as bed time and meal times. You should set an example. If your child sees you using the mobile phone during dinner, he or she will feel that you have broken the family contract. This may encourage him or her to break the rules in future.



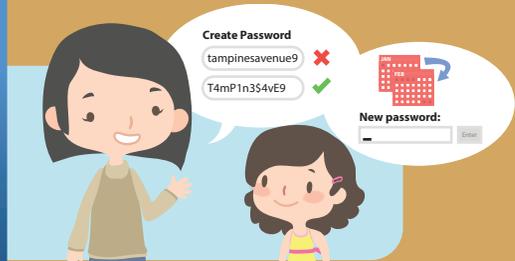
If you have more than one child and they need to share devices, consider setting a usage schedule to limit the time each child can spend on the device.



# How do I keep my child safe online? .04

## Strong Passwords

Show your child what a strong password is by using examples, such as one with combinations of upper and lowercase letters and numerals. Remind your child to change passwords regularly and to use different passwords for different accounts.



Illustrate with an example of what could happen if his or her passwords are known to others. Reach an agreement to be kept informed of your child's passwords until he or she reaches a certain age or are able to show good online behaviours.

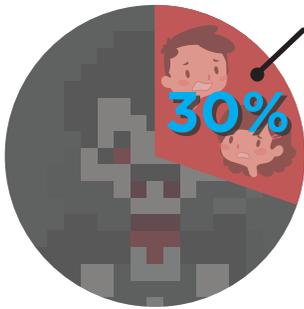
## Parental Controls

If you intend to install parental controls and privacy filters in the digital devices, explain to your child why it is necessary. Have an open discussion with your child on harmful internet content such as pornography, violence and religious radicalisation. Remind your child not to chat with strangers online. He or she should inform you if there are online messages / posts / photos that make him or her feel uncomfortable.



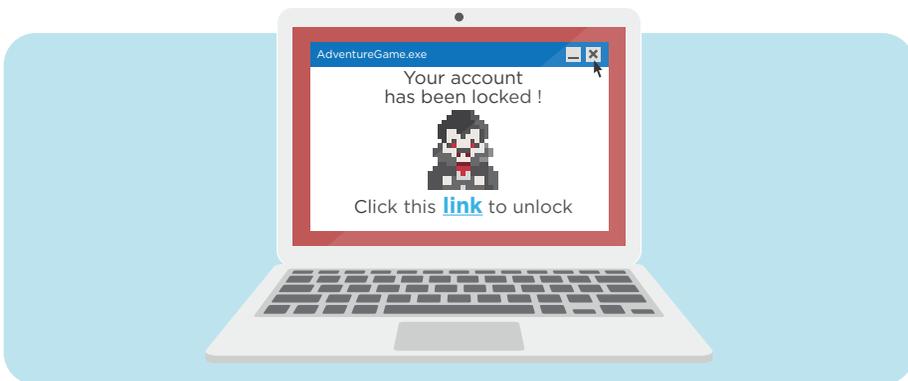
# 05. How do I keep my devices secure?

Let your child know that he or she has a responsibility to safeguard the security of digital devices.



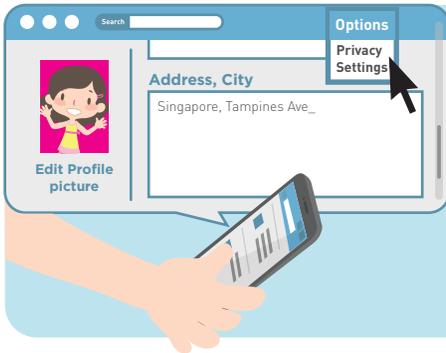
A global survey by cybersecurity firm Norton in 2016 revealed that children were the weakest link in a family's online security.

About 30 per cent of the parents surveyed had their online security compromised by their children who had unknowingly downloaded viruses or fallen prey to online scams and phishing messages.



Using real examples where possible, teach your child not to click on links or attachments sent by strangers or pop-up boxes. Teach your children that the proper way to close a pop-up box is to click the "X" at the top right corner of the window.

# What should or should not be shared online? .06



Set guidelines on what your child can post online. Children should not share information, such as home addresses or names of family members, that can allow strangers to locate him or her. Explain the need to set his or her account to 'private' and only accept requests from people that he or she knows well. Highlight to your child that there will be people who claim to know his or her friends.

**Remember - a picture paints a thousand words. There are important information that can be gleaned from just an innocent-looking photo.**

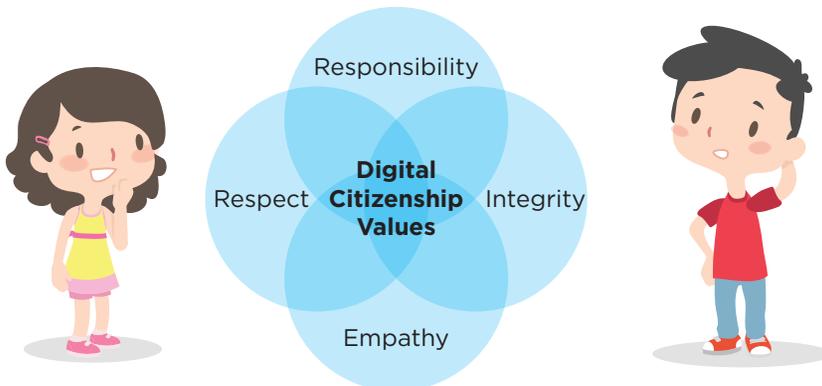


Discuss with your spouse on the need to set up guidelines for every family member on content that can be posted online.



Make it clear to your child that digital footprints cannot be erased. To reinforce this point, do a simple experiment by doing an online search on your name to suss out your digital footprints.

Your child needs to be inculcated with good digital citizenship values from young. The Media Literacy Council has put together a list of core values.



Read more about these core values here:

<http://www.medialiteracycouncil.sg/about-us/Pages/MediaLiteracyCoreValues.aspx>

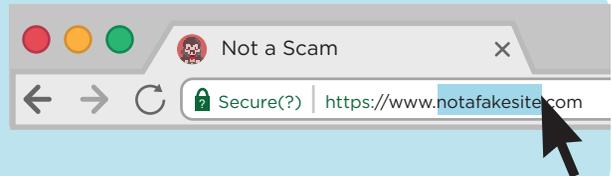
# 07. How do we tell what is real or fake in the news?

With so much online content out there, how do we know what is true or false? Teach your child not to believe everything on the internet by taking note of the following tips:



Verify the information you receive by checking with multiple credible sources. Encourage your child to always check with you if unsure.

Look out for unusual website names, poor formatting, and poor-quality writing.



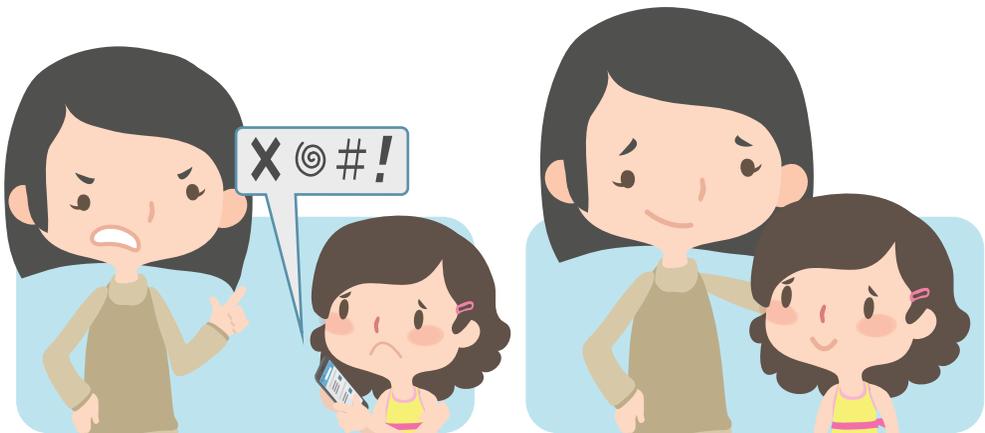
Beware of catchy headlines and doctored or photo-shopped photos which can be used to evoke fear, anger and hatred.

Make use of good fact-checking websites such as [www.snopes.com](http://www.snopes.com) before trusting or sharing information, even if they are from your friends.

# What is Cyber-Bullying and what to do about it? ■ 08



According to recent statistics, cyber-bullying is on the rise. As parents, we should look out for the warning signs that our children might be bullied online such as falling grades, making excuses to avoid going to school, fear or worry about school, and stress-related health problems. You should regularly check with your children about the types of conversations that go on in their chat groups or on social media to assess if they are being bullied online.



To create a Better Internet, we should also play our part to ensure that our children do not inadvertently post comments that might hurt another child. Share with your children that saying mean things to someone online has the same effect as saying it face to face. You can also encourage your children to stand up for what's right by sounding the alert to teachers if they encounter a friend or classmate getting bullied online.

# 09 ■ How do I know if my child is addicted to the internet?



*“Addiction cannot be measured in hours, it’s more about the type of usage. As long as it causes damage to a child’s social or academic functioning, it can be considered addiction”*

– Dr Jiow Hee Jhee, Media Literacy Council member,  
The Straits Times, 20 June 2017



## **Look out for these signs of addiction:**

- Lack of self-control and throwing of tantrums when it comes to the switching off of digital devices.
- Irritability when not on the device.
- Loss of sleep due to time spent on the device.
- Health issues such as eye problems and back aches.
- Drop in grades.

# How to help my child overcome digital addiction .10



Engage in outdoor activities or alternative hobbies instead of using digital devices.



Show yourself as a role model and be mindful of your own device usage around your child.



Set house rules on where and when these devices can be used in.



Use Wi-Fi routers with parental controls or install only apps with parental control to better manage screen time and content exposure.



Have device-free time as a family during car rides and meal times.

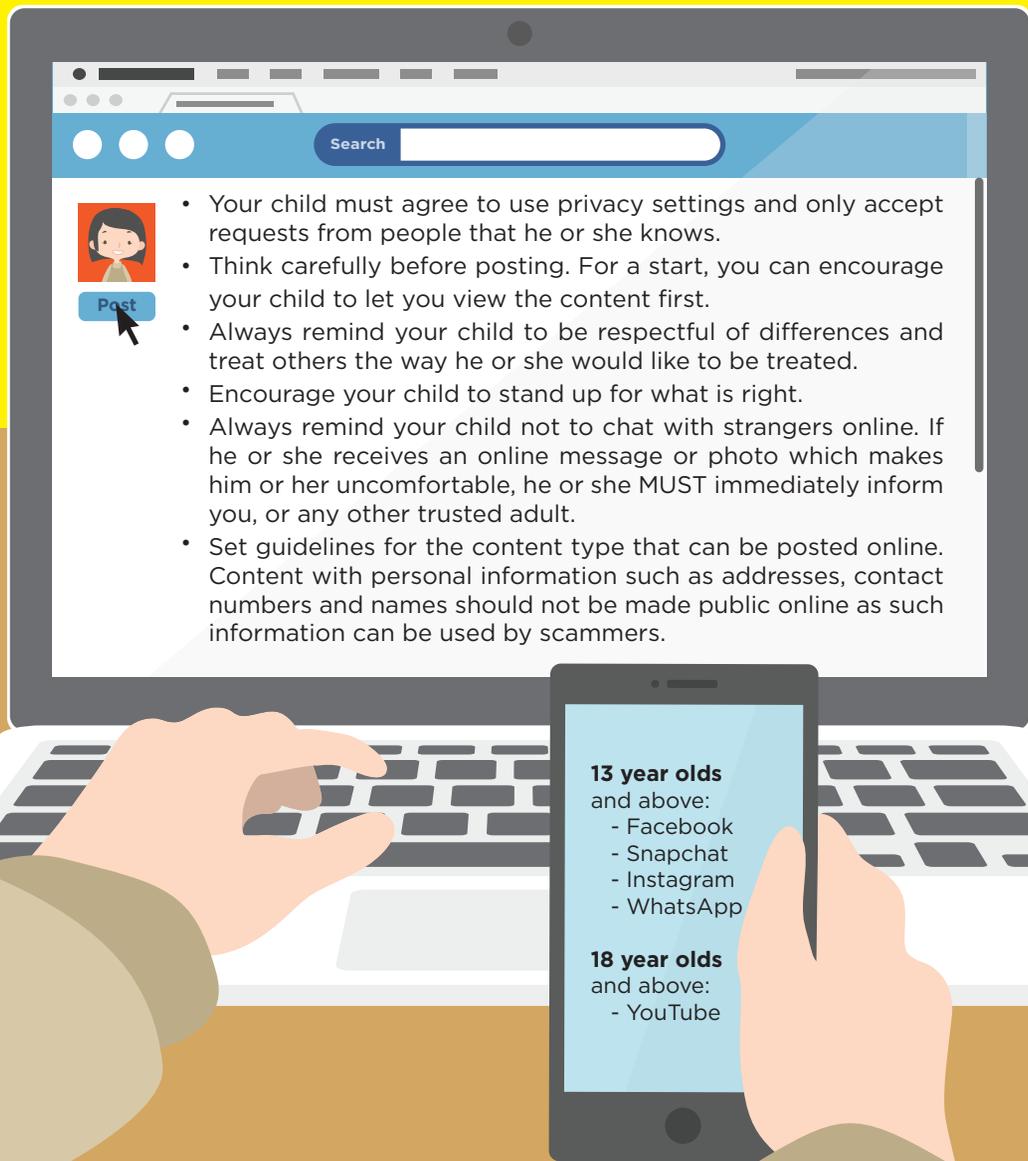


Engage in more real-life interaction and less digital screen time.

# 11. When should my child start using social media

Most social media services and apps require users to be at least 13 years old. If your child is below 13, you should assess if he or she is prepared to deal with inappropriate content, contact with strangers or cyber-bullying.

If your child wants to use social media, discuss with him or her the pros and cons of doing so. You can consider setting the following ground rules:



You can download the Family Digital Contract and adapt it to your family's needs.

<http://www.medialiteracycouncil.sg/Resources/Pages/parents.aspx>



While using the devices, we will remember the family rules:

- Post responsibly and with empathy.
- Respect others.
- Stand up for what is right.

It is a privilege to be able to use the digital devices. They belong to my parents and if they are allowing me to use them, I must follow the house rules. I understand if I do not follow the rules, my privilege can be taken away from me.

## **DIGITAL USAGE**

1. I will use the device ONLY after I have done my homework.
2. I will use the device ONLY after I have asked my parents or caregiver for permission.
3. I will use the device for \_\_\_ minutes a day and set the timer to remind me to stop when the time is up.
4. I will charge my device in the \_\_\_\_\_ (location for common charging) by \_\_\_ pm on school nights and \_\_\_ pm during weekends.
5. I will not use any digital devices, including smart phones, at meal times and at least one hour before my bedtime.
6. I will obey my school rules on the use of mobile phones in school. The rules are as follows:
  - a. *Example: I will not use my mobile phone in class.* \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_
7. I will not look at my device while I am on the move (such as crossing the road or cycling) to avoid accidents.
8. I will respond immediately to my parents when they try to contact me.
9. I will be responsible for any damages or any extra monetary charges that I incur.

# 12. Family Contract for Device Usage (continued)

## Digital Security and Safety

1. I will let my parents have access to all my accounts and my passwords. I will inform my parents if I reset a new password.
2. I will not let anyone other than my parents have knowledge of my passwords.
3. I understand that my parents have the right to look at my devices when there is a need for them to do so, even without my permission.
4. I understand that my parents are concerned with what i'm exposed to in the online world. I allow them to install monitors and filters on the devices. If they have any issues with what I am surfing or how much time I am spending on the devices, they can talk to me. I understand that the monitors and filters may change with time if my behaviour instils trust in them.
5. I will tell my parents if I face or receive anything that I am uncomfortable with on the devices.
6. I will not buy or download anything without my parents' permission.

## Social Networking

1. I will create privacy settings on my social networking sites.
2. I will let my parents know how many social networking sites I have.
3. I will not post any personal information or photos of my family or loved ones that will put them at risk.
4. I will not take photos or videos of other people and share them without their permission.
5. I understand that what I post online can have an impact on my future reputation.
6. I will not engage in cyber bullying of any sorts.

## Parent's Role

1. We will ask for permission before posting any information or photos with our child in it.
2. We will support our child if we are alerted to an uncomfortable text or call that he or she has received.
3. We will be a good role model to our child by not using any devices during meal times or on the move.
4. We will be exemplary digital citizens and reflect the values of respect, empathy, responsibility and integrity in our posts.
5. We will expose our child to off-screen activities to help him or her develop other areas of interest.

Signed by \_\_\_\_\_  
(Name of child)

Signed by \_\_\_\_\_  
(Name of parents)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(date)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(date)



If your child needs help or counselling with online addiction or bullying issues, contact:

### **Help123**

Tel: 1800 6123 123

Email: [hello@help123.org](mailto:hello@help123.org)

### **TOUCH Cyber Wellness**

Blk 162 Bukit Merah Central

#05-3555, Singapore 150162

Tel: 6273 5568 | Fax: 6271 5449

Email: [cyberwellness@touch.org.sg](mailto:cyberwellness@touch.org.sg)

### **National Addiction Management Service**

Buangkok Green Medical Park

Block 9, Basement,

10 Buangkok View

Singapore 539747

For enquiries: 6389 2000

All Addictions Helpline:

6-RECOVER (6-7326837)

Email: [nams@imh.com.sg](mailto:nams@imh.com.sg)

### **Marine Parade Family Service Centre (Cyber Counselling Programme)**

53 Marine Terrace

#01-227, Singapore 440053

Tel: 6445 0100 | Fax: 6446 0100

Email: [metoyou@mpfsc.org.sg](mailto:metoyou@mpfsc.org.sg)

### **Project 180 (Youth Services)**

Blk 145 Simei St 2,

#01-06, Singapore 520145

Tel: 6787 1125 | Fax: 6787 9943

Email: [project180@fyics.org](mailto:project180@fyics.org)

## **About Media Literacy Council**

The Media Literacy Council works in partnership with industry, community and government to champion and develop public education and awareness programmes relating to media literacy and cyber wellness. In an increasingly interactive and participatory media landscape, the Media Literacy Council seeks to cultivate and encourage the public to become discerning media consumers with the ability to evaluate media content effectively, and use, create and share content safely and responsibly. It also advises the government on how to respond to emerging issues relating to internet and media content.

## **About Singtel**

Singtel aims to nurture empowered and responsible digital citizens who thrive in the digital world we live in today. We are committed to protecting their well-being by arming them with the right knowledge and etiquette to stay safe online, manage their digital footprint, and protect their privacy for a positive online experience. We encourage responsible internet use and help to create safer online communities, especially for vulnerable segments. For more information about Singtel's cyber wellness programmes and additional resources, visit <https://www.singtel.com/about-us/sustainability/cyberwellness>

