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A guide to keeping your family safe online by Jesse Wallace

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Safety when surfing online is a big concern for parents these days, with real-world dangers existing online that could threaten your familyâ€™s privacy and security. With kids becoming so adept at the Internet and many with their own computers, understanding online safety precautions is incredibly important for any family with an Internet connection. Here are several important guidelines that will help keep your family, your information and your computer safe.

Itâ€™s important kids are aware of the online threats that exist. This includes viruses, communicating with strangers and the dangers of sharing too much personal information. Ensure you set ground rules as to where your children can and canâ€™t go on the Internet. Don't allow them to visit suspect sites, and teach them that sharing personal information online is like giving it to strangers.

Photos can also give a lot of information away about where you live, such as school uniforms having the school name on them etc, so ensure your children are also careful about sharing photos online.

If you are concerned about your children visiting sites they shouldnâ€™t, or even just stumbling across them accidentally, you can invest in parental control software. These can be set to automatically block websites that arenâ€™t age-appropriate and allows you to select unwanted websites and monitor online activities. Some also allow you to set time limits on when the Internet can be used.

Monitoring your childrenâ€™s social media behaviour and privacy settings is also incredibly important. Teach yourself how the settings on these social networking sites work, so that you can help educate your child about safe social networking practices. Make your children aware that any information posted on the Internet cannot be completely removed or deleted.

Avoid using open Wi-Fi networks and secure your own, password-protected wireless network. Ensure the password, as well as any other passwords for accounts, such as online banking and email, are proper passwords. Use something more secure than your address or petâ€™s name, and try to include several random numbers as well as letters.

Ensure your computer is always protected by a complete anti-virus solution, and set reminders for when it is due for renewal. With over 1 million different viruses worldwide, this is incredibly important. Researching computer security software is just as important as finding the best broadband deals, so don't leave this step out.

Many scams and viruses can enter your computer via an email, so learn how to identify scams and affectively manage your email activity, using spam filters and email protection. Scams can be very clever, directing you to fake websites that look like the real thing, but are used to find out your personal information. Make sure everyone in your family knows how to recognise and report email scams.

Make it a habit to backup your computer files regularly, on an external hard drive, to avoid losing important information.

While online privacy policies are long-winded, itâ€™s always important to read them thoroughly before ticking the â€˜acceptâ€™ box. They outline how your information will be used and whom your information will be shared with.

Understanding about online safety and educating yourself and your family about safe practices while surfing the web is of growing importance to protect your familyâ€™s privacy and security.

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