

LanguageUK Adult safety tips for keeping you safe on line.

Sometimes as adults we can be guilty of giving children lots of advice as to how to keep themselves safe when they are online but not always follow the same advice ourselves. Below are a few tips to ensure that you are as safe online as your children should be.

Privacy settings – lots of adults use social networks but many of them do not always use the privacy settings that they offer people for protection. On most social networks, the default setting is such that anyone who uses the same social network (or sometimes even those who don't) can see everything that you put online. This includes the pictures that you post, the comments that you write and the way you respond to other people's comments. Most of the times this might be absolutely fine. However, if you are tagged in something that you would rather not be tagged in or if you post something you later regret posting, then everyone is able to see this and comment on it. In extreme cases, this could affect future career prospects. Make sure you investigate how to ensure that your settings are private and that only your friends can see the things that you post. Every social network's settings are slightly different so have a look on their help pages if you are struggling to find what you need to.

Keeping personal information private – a lot of this can be managed by ensuring that your privacy settings are set to only show information to friends. However, think about what you share with people online and how much of this you need to share. Is it necessary to share your phone number, date of birth or email address on your profile? Wouldn't your close friends already have these things? By posting this information online and allowing other people to see them, you run the risk that someone could use some of this information for the purposes of obtaining credit in your name. Although this may seem extreme, every piece of information such as this can be gathered by unscrupulous individuals who wish to make some 'easy money' and leave you to foot the bill.

The Digital Footprint that you leave behind should be a positive one – if the term 'Digital Footprint' is not one you have heard before; it simply means the information you leave behind on the Internet. This might mean the pictures that you post online, the comments that you make on other people's pictures or blogs or simply be your own business' website. Most of the time, if you have set your privacy setting correctly, this should not affect you. However, if this isn't the case, anything that you put online is then out of your control. For example, if in the heat of the moment you make a comment on somebody's profile that you later regret, you can remove the comment and feel that this is the end of the issue. However, if someone decided to screen shot that comment or copy and paste it, then the comment hasn't truly been deleted.

Google your own name with some key words – if you are unsure what your Digital Footprint is like, it can be a good idea to Google your own name with a few other key words, such as the town that you live in and see what comes up. Sometimes you might find an old profile from a social network you had forgotten you were even a member of. If it a website that you no longer use, is it worth keeping your information on it? Go back to that social network and see how you can close your account and reduce your Digital Footprint.

Passwords

Passwords are perhaps the most important way that we protect our identity and private information online but how safe do you make them?

Passwords should be like your toothbrush, you never share them with anyone else and change them regularly – everyone has had the situation where they have forgotten the password that they use to access a website at some point. The danger is that we rectify this by using the same password for every different website that we use or make them really easy to remember. The first question

you should ask is do you want your password to your favourite social network site to be the same as your online banking password? What if someone knows your social network password or manages to hack your account? They could now also have your online banking password and be one step closer to accessing your financial details. It is important, therefore, to make sure you use different passwords for your online banking, email and other sites that you access online. Also, as the news frequently reminds us, banks and other websites are frequently the victims of online hacking scandals and, therefore, it is equally important to change your password frequently to guard against this your details been accessed by these people.

Anti-Virus and Security Software

If you look on online forums, Anti-Virus and Security Software can often be a hotly debated topic. Some people argue that they are too intrusive and slow their computers down too much, other people argue that they are an essential. Undertaking your own research into Anti-Virus and Security Software is something everybody should do before deciding to install it or not

We hope that you have found the information in this guide of use.

Written 5th May 2020

Review May 2021