

10 Top Tips for Respect Online

At National Online Safety, we believe in empowering parents, carers and trusted adults with the information to hold an informed conversation about online safety with their children, should they need it. This guide focuses on one of many issues which we believe trusted adults should be aware of. Please visit www.nationalonlinesafety.com for further guides, hints and tips for adults.

10 Top Tips for Respect Online: A DIGITAL WORLD FOR EVERYONE

Even before lockdowns inflamed the situation, one in five 10- to 15-year-olds was experiencing bullying online: abusive messages, having rumours spread about them or being excluded from group chats, for example. Through

At National Online Safety, we believe in empowering parents, carers and trusted adults with the information to hold an informed conversation about online safety with their children, should they need it. This guide focuses on one of many issues which we believe trusted adults should be aware of. Please visit www.nationalonlinesafety.com for further guides, hints and tips for adults.

10 Top Tips for Respect Online: INSPIRING CHILDREN TO BUILD A BETTER DIGITAL WORLD

Our ability to communicate with anyone in the world, at any time, via the Internet has grown at breakneck speed. For teachers and parents, it can feel impossible to keep up. Worrying about our young people is understandable, and not unjustified: In 2020, for example, one in five 10- to 15-year-olds experienced bullying online. Our tips highlight ways that adults can support young people's positive online behaviours: by adopting and following 'netiquette', we can show them how to avoid getting into difficulty as they learn to negotiate the continually evolving digital landscape.

WHAT IS NETIQUETTE?

Just like etiquette is a set of rules which guides and governs our interactions with others in everyday life, netiquette – etiquette on the net – is the framework which helps inform how we communicate with people online. The rules of engagement often aren't the same as a face-to-face meeting, so it's important that we can accurately 'read' situations in the digital world and know how to act appropriately.

- ACCEPT DIFFERENT RULES**
A lot of our interaction with others is helped by non-verbal signals like body language and facial expressions. Online, of course, many of these clues are missing. Talk to your child about why this makes misunderstandings more likely to occur in the digital world and why keeping in mind that online communication is a very different process can help to prevent difficulties from arising.
- PRESS 'PAUSE'**
It's so easy to do things quickly online that most people (adults included) habitually send or respond to messages without considering the consequences. Pushing the 'pause button' buys a young person some time while they ponder the golden rule: "Would I still say this if the other person was right in front of me?" You could practise this with your child on some made-up tricky situations.
- THE INTERNET IS ADDICTIVE**
Apps and sites use sophisticated algorithms and clever marketing to keep us engaged, while notifications to our devices are designed to draw us back in. It's no wonder that people continually return to the digital world, sometimes spending long periods of time there. You and your child could trial turning off notifications on certain apps and instead agree a time to check for updates manually.
- BEWARE THE DARK SIDE**
Getting a hurtful or unhelpful comment on social media or in a group chat can make the recipient feel publicly shamed. That's painful for anyone – but especially for a young person whose status in a group is integral to their sense of identity. Encourage your child to think about the best and safest way to send a message; for example, doing it as a private message rather than a public post.
- HARMFUL INTERACTIONS**
Unfortunately, it's very easy to send a hurtful message or to spread gossip and rumours online. We all know this happens regularly. Not having to deal with actually seeing the other person's distress usually doesn't help people to make a positive decision in the moment. It's important that trusted adults help children to visualise the potential consequences and have empathy for others.
- APPRECIATE DIFFERENCES**
We're all built differently: some people are simply more emotionally sensitive than others. Young people can be particularly affected by negative online communication, such as group shaming. Even a single message (which might seem trivial at face value) can cause deep anguish. Trusted adults should be prepared to be patient and listen to any difficulties their child might have had online.
- ACCENTUATED ANXIETY**
Young people's online lives create a lot of anxiety. Messages go into a 'black hole' until someone responds. There are more reasons to compare ourselves negatively, and social media can make us feel like we're missing out. Encourage activities such as sports and hobbies to balance this out, and remember that merely blocking out thoughts (by gaming, for instance) isn't the same as relaxation.
- PRO-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR**
A huge positive for the Internet is how it helps people to feel connected and makes being kind and helpful easy to spread. When young people get involved in pro-social behaviours online, it creates a positive feedback loop which makes them feel like they've done or said something positive online, and praise and encourage them when they do the same.
- BE A GOOD ROLE MODEL**
One of the best things we can do as trusted adults is to role model positive online behaviour. Just letting your child see that you know when it's time to put your phone away and do something more productive can set a strong example. Some families set aside particular times of the week (such as mealtimes or a family walk) where digital devices aren't allowed and conversation takes precedence.
- SHOW COMPASSION**
Mistakes can feel much bigger online, because they're so public. If a young person does or says something regrettable on the Internet, it's important to support them to forgive themselves, learn any lessons and move forward positively. Even as adults, we can often stumble when learning how things work in the fast-moving digital world, so it's important to have compassion for ourselves, too.

Meet Our Expert

Dr Corale Francis-Smith is an experienced counselling psychologist who, through her research, specialises in promoting safe and ethical online communications. She consults with businesses and organisations to support positive and effective communication online, often by considering some of the more hidden aspects of the medium.

NOS National Online Safety®
#WakeUpWednesday

www.nationalonlinesafety.com @natonlinesafety /NationalOnlineSafety @nationalonlinesafety

Between chatting and gaming online, scrolling through social media, and streaming music and video, young people are almost constantly connected to the digital world in their free time. Now more so than ever: recent research identified that 77% of youngsters were spending more time online on games and apps than they did before the pandemic.

One immediately obvious issue with that is – as outlined in Ofcom's Media Use and Attitudes Report 2021 – almost half (45%) of parents have concerns about their child being bullied on the internet. In support of next week's Safer Internet Day, our two #WakeUpWednesday guides suggest ways that we can all contribute to more respectful, positive relationships with each other online.

Although there's plenty that trusted adults can do to make the internet a safer place, it's also vital that we educate and empower our children to create a more hospitable, more tolerant online environment – whether that's thinking more carefully about the content they post and share, for example, or considering how they interact with other people when they're online.

Safer Internet Day 2022 explores this theme of respect and relationships in the digital world – and we're supporting the event by releasing two #WakeUpWednesday guides on the subject. One guide is designed to help children maintain positive communication online, while the other highlights ways that parents and carers can support young people in being good digital citizens.