

Talking to Your Teens About Online Safety

"I appreciated the part on online safety, as I have personally faced many challenges in this area and have seen friends encounter similar issues. Hearing someone speak openly about it was incredibly validating and reminded me that I am not alone" - Grade 9 Student

You Make A Difference



Today's teens are constantly online, but they aren't necessarily equipped to handle everything they encounter on their own.

They are navigating pressure, relationships, identity, and risk - often in private spaces that move quickly and quietly.

Even if they don't show it, your guidance and support still matter deeply.

The most important factor in your teen's online safety isn't a setting or an app; it's whether they feel safe coming to you.

What Are Teens Actually Facing Online?

Much of teens' online lives happen in private messages, on apps like Snapchat, TikTok, Instagram, Discord, games like Roblox, and increasingly through AI tools.

These spaces are often unmonitored, which is where risky situations can begin. **Research suggests 86% of online harm involving Canadian teens happens in private messaging.**

Common Online Risks/Talking points:

- **Pressure happens quickly:** Teens may be pressured to share photos or messages, including sexting, sometimes to fit in, avoid conflict, or keep someone's attention.
- **Not everyone online is who they seem:** Some individuals pretend to be someone they're not to build trust and manipulate. This is one way online luring can begin.
- **What's shared can spread instantly:** Screenshots and sharing can happen in seconds, often without consent. Images or messages can be misused or shared in harmful ways.
- **Mistakes can be used against them:** Fear or shame may stop teens from asking for help.



How to Support Your Teen

Start the Conversation (Not a Lecture)

You don't need the perfect words - **just a starting point.**

Try asking:

- "What's something people your age deal with online that adults might not understand?"
- "Do you ever get messages or requests online that make you feel uncomfortable or unsure?"
- "If something uncomfortable happened online, what would make it easier to tell me?"

Listen more than you speak. Stay calm - even if you're surprised.



What Your Teen Needs to Hear

Make these messages clear, consistent, and out loud:

- "We'll figure this out together."
- "I am here for you."
- "You're safe, and you can tell me anything."

Teens don't always recognize when a situation is unsafe. **Clear, calm reassurance helps them feel safe coming to you - even if they've made a mistake.**

These messages build trust, and trust is what helps teens come back to you.



Online Safety Tips

- Check in regularly with short, calm conversations instead of long lectures.
- Know which apps and games your teen uses, but focus on open dialogue - not surveillance.
- Teach them about digital boundaries, including privacy, consent, and risks of sharing images.

Learn more

- [ProtectKidsOnline.ca](https://www.protectkids.ca)
- [NeedHelpNow.ca](https://www.needhelpnow.ca)
- [Parents.thorn.org](https://www.parents.thorn.org)
- [MediaSmarts.ca](https://www.media-smarts.ca)