



How to deal with inappropriate content on social media: A guide for parents/caregivers

If your child/youth has access to the internet and even more so if the child/youth has access to social media platforms, the chances of being exposed to disturbing or inappropriate content is high. Here are some tips and guidelines about how to handle situations where a young person has seen something online that was not meant for them to see.

What are the types of inappropriate content?

- Direct violence/harm or suggestions to cause harm to animals or other persons (including self-harm)
- Explicit/sexualized/disturbing/strange/frightening photos or videos
- Profanity/racism and discrimination/bullying/negative influences
- Language and dialogue that encourages crime/vandalism, terrorism
- Gambling



Where is a child/youth likely to be exposed to these types of inappropriate content?

- Social Networking Sites or any “user-generated” programs (Instagram, Twitter, Tik Tok, Snap Chat, Facebook, etc.); most social networking platforms have minimum age recommendations because of the possibility of coming across inappropriate content. Some social media sites have algorithms where the content is auto-generated based on a person’s previous “likes”, shares and search history. There have been instances when a disturbing or inappropriate image or video has been hidden within these algorithms.
- Video Games/Apps with explicit pop-up advertisements
- Unsupervised/Unmoderated chat rooms or direct messages with friends and acquaintances
- Watching live streams in which the viewer has no control over what they are potentially viewing



What are the impacts of this?

- Child/youth will likely not be able to process what they have seen
- Child/youth may worry about getting into trouble and therefore not tell anyone; may also feel embarrassed
- The child/youth may draw their own irrational conclusions that create feelings of fear, anxiety, and a feeling that the world is now unsafe
- May seek out more information from the internet and other unreliable resources to try and understand the topic/content; this could result in further viewing of inappropriate content

How can I minimize the risk and impact for my child/youth?

- Start having conversations about internet safety now or before they are given access to a device; let them know they might come across frightening or inappropriate content and that they won't get in trouble. Encourage the child/youth to disclose these instances to you and emphasize that it doesn't automatically mean their device will be taken away (although this might also be a suitable course of action!).
- Ensure there is open communication among all adults-in-charge of a youth or child and try to remain consistent in expectations and rules surrounding devices/internet use. Also, if your child/youth reports seeing something while under the care of another adult, it's worth having a conversation with that adult about what happened.
- Talk to children/youth about how their body might send them signals if something online makes them feel uncomfortable or stressed (increased heart rate, sweaty palms, etc.)
- Remain calm. Don't suggest or assume the child/youth has been traumatized before understanding exactly how it has impacted him/her. The goal is to get the youth/child to process what was encountered, in a way that doesn't elevate their distress.



This brochure was created by the Digital Wellness Coalition, a group that consists of members from various community agencies with an aim to educate & inform community change related to safer digital use.

Every 12 hours the Canadian Centre for Child Protection (Canadian Centre) is detecting 10,824 new images of child sexual abuse online

www.cybertip.ca

For more tips about internet safety, check out this resource brought to you by National Safety Online found at

www.mediasmarts.ca

How do I know what media is appropriate for my children?

It can be overwhelming to provide the best guidance for children when it comes to the various forms of media they are exposed to. Finding media that isn't harmful to children and aligns with your family's values can be a bit of a guessing game. That's where Common Sense Media can be a great help. This website provides ratings & reviews of movies, TV show, book, apps & video games with a detailed breakdown of themes such as positive messages, sexual content, substance use, positive role models & representations, language (swearing), violence, and consumerism.

www.commonsensemedia.org



References:

<https://www.internetmatters.org/issues/inappropriate-content/learn-about-it/>

ONLINE CONTENT

10 tips to keep your children safe online

The internet has transformed the ability to access content. Many apps that children use are dependent on user-generated content which can encourage freedom of expression, imagination and creativity. However, due to the sheer volume uploaded every day, it can be difficult for platforms to regulate and moderate everything, which means that disturbing or distressing images, videos or audio clips can slip through the net. That's why we've created this guide to provide parents and carers with some useful tips on keeping children safe online.



1 MONITOR VIEWING HABITS

Whilst most apps have moderation tools, inappropriate content can still slip through the net.



2 CHECK ONLINE CONTENT

Understand what's being shared or what seems to be 'trending' at the moment.



3 CHECK AGE-RATINGS

Make sure they are old enough to use the app and meet the recommended age-limit.



4 CHANGE PRIVACY SETTINGS

Make accounts private and set content filters and parental controls where possible.



5 SPEND TIME ON THE APP

Get used to how apps work, what content is available and what your child likes to watch.



6 LET CHILDREN KNOW YOU'RE THERE

Ensure they know that there is support and advice available to them if they need it.



7 ENCOURAGE CRITICAL THINKING

Talk about what people might post online and why some posts could cause distress.



8 LEARN HOW TO REPORT & BLOCK

Always make sure that children know how to use the reporting tools on social media apps.



9 KEEP AN OPEN DIALOGUE

If a child sees distressing material online; listen to their concerns, empathise and offer reassurance.



10 SEEK FURTHER SUPPORT

If a child has been affected by something they've seen online, seek support from your school's safeguarding lead.

 **National Online Safety**
#WakeUpWednesday

