



— INTERNET —
Safe Education

5 PRINCIPLES TO STAY SAFE ONLINE

BY BRETT LEE

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INTRO

THE 5 PRINCIPLES TO IMPLEMENT

The following 5 principles/safeguards will assist and empower parents, carers, educators and other professionals charged with the care of children in creating a safe, fun and educational online environment for our youth, whilst reducing risk and issues.

Use these principles to teach and involve your children and young people to make choices that benefit them. They are more likely to choose to apply the rules when they understand why these principles are important and are involved in the creation of house rules.

Technology is not always accessed within your home. You want your children to make safe choices wherever they access connected devices.

Set Rules and Boundaries

These are not optional.

Parents and children have rules and boundaries in every area of their lives. Rules don't stop them having fun; rules create a shared understanding of your family's expectations (how our family behaves) and they protect them from themselves and others. Parents can be confident they are making a difference by putting rules in place. Rules can be changed if it is found they don't suit. As children grow, parents should not be afraid to modify a rule, taking care not to move outside their values, beliefs, morals and ethics. Rules and boundaries provide security, letting children know where they stand.

The rules must be enforced or there is no point having them. They will not be taken as seriously if they can be continually broken unchallenged. School, road, and sports rules have consequences when broken, as must home rules. Their choices create their consequences. On the other hand, it is not weakness to allow a couple more minutes playing a game. There is no need to get angry when a child doesn't operate within the rules. Simply apply the consequence. We all make mistakes and we learn to adjust our choices to avoid unpleasant outcomes. This is an important life lesson. Rules keep us safe and set a standard of behaviour.

General rules might include:

- Time limits and curfews
- An understanding of what language is acceptable
- Guidelines on where in the home technology can and can't be used
- What websites, games and apps can be used
- What to do if something of concern happens or a mistake is made.
- Who they can connect with online

Suggested action:

- Display your Family Rules Agreement for devices and mobile phones.

Stay Current

Parents should increase their knowledge base as needed.

This does not mean staying current with all technology, only technology relevant to the family. Parents of five-year-old children do not necessarily need to know about Facebook yet. Staying current does not require parents becoming technology experts. It involves being across what children generally do on the internet, staying current by learning:

- What devices can connect to the internet
- When those devices are connected
- Where kids are going online and what programs and games they are using
- Who they are connected to

Parents stay current by talking to their children and other adults, seeking advice or asking questions from teachers and schools, and seeking information online.

Suggested action:

- Make a list of all devices that connect to the internet in your home or on mobile devices.

SAFEGUARD THREE

Parents, Take Charge

You are the one who controls technology and makes the final decisions.

This is not about ‘mistrusting’ children; it is about acknowledging that they are children, they look at the world through different eyes and may not make the choices that are needed.

As children grow, parents can let them make choices with less guidance but ensure their choices remain consistent with family requirements. The main decisions parents need to make surround:

- When technology is used
- Where technology is used
- What programs, apps and sites are allowable
- With whom a child can connect.

Don't allow technology to take charge.

Do not believe that a program or website's popularity, user numbers or profitability gives it credibility or suitability.

Online your child's time and attention are currency. Technology business's A.I. are designed to capture your child's attention and keep it. You're working against some very advanced algorithms. Set physical world rules and monitor their use of technology to help them to make healthy safe choices and maintain balance. Start early. Follow through on consequences.

Suggested action (remembering to be age appropriate):

- Set clear standards and expectations regarding when, where, who and which devices/apps/software etc. Involve children in some of the rules but parents/adults have the final say. Use this information to create a displayed Family Rules Agreement.
- Set consequences for not working within the rules.

Use Management Controls

Parents have a right to know where their children go and whom they communicate with.

Most schools have software or programs designed to monitor online activity. They do this because they have a duty of care for students. Parents also should have systems in place. Parents whose family have been devastated by online issues would now use monitoring or filtering software if they could turn back time and detect a potential problem early. They have told me so.

There will be those who claim this is ‘spying’ on children, as though parents are doing something wrong. Am I spying on my teenage daughter because I want to know where she is going with her friends on Friday night and who will be there? Of course not. I need to know this to make sure she is safe. When children become adults, they will not harbour a grudge; they will thank their parent for caring enough to monitor their activity and most likely do the same with their children.

Parental controls work on a device or account to monitor or control information or activity. A variety of programs are available and some can be downloaded for free. More common functions include:

- Blocking concerning websites
- Setting time limits and ensuring curfews
- Recording web sites visited
- Recording conversations in certain programs
- Limiting the downloading of particular apps
- Notifying a parent of concerning activity

WARNING

Filtering or monitoring software should never be relied on as a total solution or a replacement for broader parental oversight.

If parents start using monitoring or filtering programs early, it will become a part of their child’s online world. They will be accustomed to it at home, just as they can expect to encounter it at school and then in the workplace.

Communicate

Create an environment of openness about technology and talk about it with your kids.

This is one strategy every parent can achieve and is the most important and effective safeguard against online issues. It is powerful to tell children, ‘If you have a problem on the internet, or even if you make a mistake, I want you to talk to me about it and I promise I will help you solve the problem so you can keep having a good time online.’

Healthy communication about technology occurs by seizing the opportunities:

- Take 10 minutes each day during school drop-off or pick-up.
- If you notice an unusual facial reaction after looking at a screen, ask what was that all about and is everything okay.
- Have a chat around the dinner table about what’s happening online.
- Direct children to and discuss media articles about technology.
- Take other times to chat to children about what is happening online.

Never underestimate the value of face to face communication. Research has shown that families who sit around a dinner table at least three times a week and talk are less likely to experience cyberbullying. The child ends up with a real feeling of support. If a child sex offender approaches them online and learns that their parents know about what happens on the internet, they will not hang around.

As children grow, the way parents communicate with them changes. When they are young parents “tell” them; as children move into their teens, the tone changes more to discussing, guiding and reaching agreement. Parents should never stop communicating. They should talk to their children, other parents, friends, family and school teachers.

Suggested action:

- Consider communication in three ways - tell (guidance, rules and consequences), listen (conversation starters), and watch (body language cues, eye contact, withdrawal)

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

Screen Resolution by Brett Lee



A must-read for parents and carers.

Brett Lee has spent thousands of hours as an Internet detective pretending to be a teenager online to hunt down and prosecute child sex offenders.

In Screen Resolution, Brett describes his experiences in real and powerful terms, profiling predator behaviours and exposing their sinister intentions.

Often confronting and at times disturbing, Brett's account will help you discern the truth behind the screen and what you can do to protect your families online.

Through reading this book, every family can achieve a safe and productive online environment.



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QUESTIONS?

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<https://www.internetsafeeducation.com/>



Internet Safe Education
Building 5,
Corporate House,
22 Magnolia Circuit,
Brookwater, Qld, 4300



Ph: 1300 650 491 (Cost of a local call)



Ph: +61 7 31391181



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