



TALK LISTEN LEARN



Online Safety Talking
Points for Parents

Developed by Irish Teens



ADVICE

Be curious, not critical... how you approach the conversation is important!

BEFORE YOU BEGIN THE CONVERSATION...

The online world is an important part of life for children and young people. Having regular and open conversations with them about their lives online is vital to ensuring that they have a safe and positive experience. For many parents it can be difficult to know how to begin the conversation.

Nobody understands the online world of children and teenagers better than their fellow young people! Based on their own online experiences, these Talking Points have been co-created by Irish teenagers to help parents approach the conversation in a way that will encourage your child or teen to open up about their life online!

The conversation starters will help you to get a better understanding of what your child is doing online, why, and how you can support them. Talking to them about their life online, just as you would about their offline life, will make it more likely that they will feel comfortable coming to you if they encounter anything that bothers them online.

Before you start the chat – here are some tips from Irish teens about how to approach the conversation:

1. **Be curious, not critical** - how you approach the conversation is important! Keep an open-mind, remember children and teenagers use the internet differently to adults and being judgemental of what they are doing may put your child off talking to you.
2. **Remember the benefits!** Show that you also see the positives of being online. For example, sharing a funny video, or asking them to share something interesting that they have found online shows that you value your child's interests.
3. **Don't overreact or scaremonger.** It's important to be calm, and listen to what your child has to say. This can help them to feel comfortable to share their thoughts with you now, and in the future.
4. **Share your stories!** If parents talk to their children/teens about what they do themselves online it makes it an open space for teens to share what activities they do.
5. **Discover the internet together!** The internet plays an important role in children's lives, and showing that you are interested in the online world can be a good way of breaking down barriers to conversations. For example, asking them to show you or teach you how to do something online such as on a social media app or finding information that you are interested in.
6. **Keep it relevant.** It's important to keep in mind that as your child gets older how they use the internet, what they use it for, and the challenges they face will change and evolve.

TALKING POINTS FOR PARENTS



The following talking points have been drafted by the Webwise Youth Advisory Panel in consultation with over 100 Irish teens. These are helpful conversation starters for parents to support their teen online. Talking Points may be adapted for parents of younger children.

1. WHO IS YOUR FAVOURITE INFLUENCER ON SOCIAL MEDIA OR WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE ONLINE GAME?

Starting off with an easier question about what we like online will make your child or teenager feel comfortable and can be used as a springboard to a deeper conversation.

3. CAN YOU SHOW ME HOW YOUR FAVOURITE APP/GAME WORKS?

Showing an interest in what your child or teenager likes to do online will encourage them to be more open with you, and will help you learn and have a better understanding of what they like to do online.

5. HOW DO YOU STAY CONNECTED WITH YOUR FRIENDS ONLINE?

The social aspect of being online is very important to young people. It allows us to stay connected with our friends, and also to connect with communities with shared interests right around the world. This will help you to understand the social element for your child, and to be able to support them to have a safe and positive experience.

2. WHAT DID YOU THINK OF THE RECENT STORY ABOUT [SPORTS TEAM/CELEBRITY/INFLUENCER THAT YOUR TEENAGER IS INTERESTED IN]

Talking about recent news events or trending topics online can be a natural way of easing into a conversation with your teenager and finding common ground.

4. WHAT DO YOU THINK MY FAVOURITE APPS OR WEBSITES ARE?

Looking for common ground is a great way to begin a conversation with your teen. Finding similarities in how you both use the internet allows us to bridge any understanding gaps and it also allows you to highlight the benefits and opportunities of using digital technologies.

6. WHAT APP DO YOU USE THE MOST, AND IF YOU DIDN'T USE THE APP HOW WOULD IT AFFECT YOU?

Open up a conversation with your child about the apps/games/site they like to use, and encourage them to consider what the positive and negative impacts would be if they didn't use it. Not only will this encourage your child to weigh up the pros and cons, it will also help you to understand the benefit it may provide your child and whether they might need support.

TALKING POINTS FOR PARENTS

...continued



7. EXPECTATION VERSUS THE REALITY

THIS IS HOW I THINK YOU SPEND YOUR TIME ONLINE...

What parents think their teenager is doing on the internet often differs to what their teenager is actually doing on the internet. Many of us can become frustrated when our parents make assumptions about our online experience. So, it is really valuable to have an open conversation and listen to what your child has to say. This can be a useful stepping stone to talking about being safe online and to help them to feel comfortable coming to you if they encounter any issues.

8. OK, LETS SWITCH ROLES...

WHAT ADVICE COULD YOU GIVE ME ABOUT BEING BETTER ONLINE?

This can be a helpful bridge to beginning a discussion an about online safety, responsible use of technology, and using the internet in a positive way. Don't forget to lead by example, and follow the rules too!

9. WHAT RULES DO YOU THINK

WE SHOULD HAVE IN PLACE ABOUT USING THE INTERNET?

It is helpful for families to have rules around internet use and guidelines around expected behaviour online. By allowing your teen to have a say in developing rules this can lead to a better understanding and acceptance of guidelines. It's always helpful to revisit rules.

ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS FOR PARENTS

For expert advice, explainer guides, practical tips and resources including the #TalkListenLearn Topic Generator visit the Webwise Parents Hub.

PARENTS' GUIDE TO A BETTER INTERNET

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