

# KEEPING OUR KIDS SAFE ONLINE

## 5 RULES FOR PARENTS & 5 RULES FOR KIDS

If you would like to share this checklist with those you love, please share this post on your social media and then pass the checklist on to anyone (and everyone) you love:

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- 1. Rule #1 for Parents – Open the Gates.** Let your kids online younger than you think they should be. Why? Because they will start their online experience with YOUR rules in place. If you don't let them go online and establish the boundaries and the "no fly zones" it is very likely they will end up using friends' accounts and going rogue, with no input from you. That also begins the experience of sneaking around and establishing "friendships" you don't know exist.
- 2. Rule #2 for Parents – Forget Friendship.** It is NOT enough to friend your kid. You have to have their login information and go in AS them to check their inboxes, outboxes, sent folders, deletes.... Everything. It is vital that you have the logins and passwords to everything your kid does. This isn't about snooping or privacy. Nothing online is private, and that is the reality. You are protecting them. This goes for every computer, iPad, smartphone, tablet, and every network they're on, including: social media, gaming networks, blogging, groups, communities, etc. This is where they have to understand the consequences and LET you protect them. This isn't where you critique their language or behavior, btw. If you do that, they're likely to need a more private (and dangerous) place to hide and express themselves. This is just about safety.
- 3. Rule #3 for Parents – Build a Fence.** Everyone thinks about restrictions – but so many families don't do it. Get your kids to only use ONE browser – we use Chrome – and set up the restrictions on Google. That will protect them from explicit and unwanted popups, etc.
- 4. Rule #4 for Parents – Sorry, Be a Spy.** This is one of 2 recommendations if you think something feels wonky. [www.webwatcher.com](http://www.webwatcher.com) and <https://www.mspy.com> are serious tools if you need that. They record absolutely all activity on the child's computer – and any other online tool, iPhone, tablet, etc. This is full stealth installation – they will not know. All reports come to you via an online portal, so it's seamless and invisible to everyone else but you. You will also get real-time email notification when "alert words" appear.
- 5. Rule #5 for Parents – Go to Any Length.** I am ALL about privacy – my own kid is a writer, and I would never read her journal. But this is a new world, and it's not easy to protect them. One of the most extreme solutions, if you think your kid is at risk is <http://www.veriato.com>. Officially Veriato is employee-monitoring software. What it basically does is take a snapshot of the user's screen every ten seconds. Under \$300 – a great investment if you think something isn't quite jiving with the kid's behavior online or off.
- 6. Rule #1 for Kids – Who's In Your Room.** Here's the thing. Think of social media like your room. You'd never let someone into your house and into your room without your parent AOK'ing that situation and the friend in question. So, you don't accept ANY friend requests without letting the primary parent check it out first. The consequence for breaking this rule is you're not allowed online. Set that rule up IMMEDIATELY, no matter where they are in their online experience.
- 7. Rule #2 for Kids – Put on Your Armor.** NOTHING is private, but protect your identity with a vengeance. It's unlikely that a kid can fully understand the consequences of giving away too much personal information online, but try. This is not where you sugar coat and skip the fear. This is where you tell the truth and let them be appropriately afraid. It's like crossing the street – we teach them to be afraid of the car. Period. Here's the list: Never give out their name, phone number, e-mail address, passwords, postal address, zip code, home town, school, age, date of birth, or pictures without your permission. Also, remember to be careful about posting that you're headed away on vacation. Right?
- 8. Rule #3 for Kids – If you wouldn't do it face to face - Don't do it online.** It's really easy to feel anonymous online, and it's very dangerous. We end up telling people how angry we are much more easily than we would over a cup of coffee, right? It's just as easy to go into a zone and hurt someone – or put ourselves at risk. This is an easy boundary to explain to our kids and set up online brand / behavior hygiene. Nothing done online or on a Smartphone ever goes away. Never. Their reputation is at risk every day, so this rule; it's got to be taught from day one to day 999. Everything we do over the web, on the phone and on social media is captured for eternity. And now, almost all employers and colleges take a close look at social media profiles when researching candidates.
- 9. Rule #4 for Kids – The UNfriend Zone.** Remember that friendship is really not a click and an online acceptance. Friendship is hard one and long-standing. So, let your kids know that they should not open e-mail from people they don't know, never accept friend requests without your approval, and NEVER ever agree to meet someone they do not know that they met online. They should also share anything disturbing or bullying that happens immediately, but if you are following Rule #2 for parents, you will already know.
- 10. Last Rule for EVERYONE – Lock Up at Night.** You wouldn't go to sleep with your doors and windows left open, right? Log OUT of everything and shut down your computer AND your wifi at night. Okay – this is just good computer hygiene, but it covers a myriad of safety issues, including wellness and health. Wifi runs on a frequency wave – no need in the world to have that running through your home – and your bodies – 24/7. Shutting it down not only protects you from being hacked (from anywhere in the world), but also lowers anxiety. A win win.