

# TAGS: Parenting; Internet and Adopted Kids

## Common Sense Internet Rules for Kids (Adopted or Otherwise)

The Internet is an amazing tool for research, entertainment, and connection. But it is a double-edged tool that must be used wisely and carefully to avoid inflicting real damage or pain on our kids' minds and hearts. It's everywhere, as close as our hip pockets now. Parents need to prepare before their kids begin using it regularly for how to safeguard them.

We offer these 12 Common Sense Internet Rules for Kids to help you do just that.

1. When you decide to have a designated computer for your child's use, be very careful to classify that computer as the "family computer," not your child's computer. If your teen wants to be a password protected user to keep siblings from changing her settings, require that she share that password with you. You should make a point to use this computer a couple of times a week as a matter of course. You need to make certain that upgrades are being installed and the spyware is working, and you need to have a feel for what your kids are doing online. Just knowing that you will be on the same computer may act as a brake before she clicks on "that" link.
2. The family computer should be in a place where you walk by or see frequently. In other words, keep it out in the open. The attitude for this rule is as important as the rule—the internet is a tool and we keep our tools out in the open. If the family computer is a lap top, establish a designated place or room for use.
3. Consider very carefully before you allow your child or teen to have a laptop, tablet, iPad or other computer in their room. (Yes, you will be told that he is the ONLY kid in school that doesn't have one in his room. No, that is not correct and besides, you don't care.) Some families handle this by making a tradition of purchasing a laptop when their child graduates from high school. Some allow no computer in his room until then unless he buys his own. You and your spouse/partner need to decide together at what age purchasing his own laptop is appropriate.
4. Be educated about mobile devices like iPads, tablets, or smart phones which allow internet connection. Once your child has one of these devices, you have no control over what he or she does online. The devices are inevitable, but don't buy the hype that 13 and 14-year olds "MUST" have them. Here's a great resource to educate yourself about current apps to be particularly alert to: [TeenSafe Smartphone App Blacklist 2018](#).
5. Don't hover over your child; but be aware of what she is up to on the internet. Walk by periodically. Bring her a glass of juice or offer a bite of what you're cooking to see if she thinks it needs more salt.
6. Talk with your children about internet safety, privacy, and online reputation. If your child is computer savvy, have him do the research on suggested privacy settings, common mistakes that reveal identifying information, etc. and ask him to teach you. Stress that he should not share passwords with anyone but you. [SafeKids has this Family Contract for Online Safety](#), in kid and teen versions, along with other good tools for your family to learn safe practice.
7. Explain to your children that all information online can ultimately be seen by anyone - including teachers and parents. If they don't want information to be seen by a Sunday school teacher, volleyball coach, or future college admissions office, then they shouldn't post it.

8. Set limits on the amount of time per day your child can be on the computer. Many homes have a limit on “screen time” in general, which includes sitting in front of any screen (TV, computer, etc.). Work with your child on deciding what time limit is reasonable, and model the ability to compromise a bit to help get his buy-in for the rule.
9. Set limits on what times of day your child can be online. Be aware that late night social media, texting, and browsing is often very problematic. There are apps available to monitor this, and your phone service carrier likely also has tools for parental control.
10. Abide by the minimum age limits required by social networks. For example, Facebook and SnapChat both abide by the minimum age of 13, as required by the [Children's Online Privacy Protection Rule \("COPPA"\)](#). (If you know of a child younger than 13 who has a Facebook account, you can [report them anonymously](#) and have the account shut down. Most social media platforms have some similar reporting mechanism.)
11. If your teen joins Facebook, Twitter, or other social networks, have him friend (follow, etc.) you. Be sure to follow him back. It helps if you approach this request in a matter of fact manner: “that’s how things are done in our family.” Tell him it is necessary from a safety standpoint. Periodically check their wall or their posts, but don’t make comments. Try to be unobtrusive. Keep in mind that over-sharing goes both ways. You will need to be aware that your kids will likely see any posts you or your friends make on your accounts as well.
12. For children, tweens, and younger teens, install some form of parental control software on the home devices and the mobile ones too. There are many options available in your app store that will suit your needs (and your child’s tech ability) well. Be aware that quite often, this software is worthless with older teens who have become very tech savvy. It is better to talk with your teens frankly about why you don’t want them on certain sites, rather than trying to prevent them.

Adopted children have additional layers of conversations that should be had regarding safe internet use and interaction with birth family. C.A.S.E. have helpful resources, including [Dear Ellen: Navigating Teens’ Online Search and Reunion Process](#).

[NACAC gives great advice on safe contact and facilitating interaction](#) with birth family in this resource, including some tips on social media contact.