

CHILDREN ONLINE – A GUIDE FOR PARENTS



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THERE ARE NO DIGITAL NATIVES

Children quickly take on new technologies. Nowadays children are born surrounded by digital culture and technology and therefore are often called digital natives. However, technical dexterity is only one small part of digital skills. Everyone must learn how to interpret, produce, and critically evaluate content. These skills are not created in a vacuum. They arise in interaction with other people and media users.

A child has the right to learn digital media skills - just like any other skill that life requires. You can help the child to strengthen his/her capability. Digital media skills are key to be able to grow up as a digital citizen.

“I DO NOT KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT SOCIAL MEDIA”

It doesn't matter. Media education is about ordinary things. You don't have to be an expert in social media - it is enough if you just talk to your child. The child has the right to have your attention also on digital matters.

Talk to the child - Also about nice things online. If you talk about the online life every day the child feels safer to talk if something nasty happens online.

Ask and be curious - Sit with the child and be curious: ask the child to teach you how to use social media and play games. That's how the child understands that you are interested in his/her digital life.

Strive for a positive attitude – Online life provides great opportunities for the child. Talk to your child about the benefits and opportunities of online.

Be open - If you're worried, stay calm. Keep in mind that the child has the right to privacy and personal space online. Do not make decisions about children's media use behind his/hers back.

Pay attention to the child's point of view - Ask your child for permission if you publish his/her photos or information online. Act as a role model. If you sit at the dinner table with your smartphone in your hand, it's hard to justify why the child could not do the same.

LEARNING BY DOING

The child has the right to learn the skills that will be needed in the future. Digital media skills - such as filming, video editing, encoding - are things you learn by doing. Confirm your child's knowledge and value it.

A friend online is a real friend. A child's friends and acquaintances online are important. Encounters online are relevant. Encourage them to even meet face to face safely.

Encourage collaboration. Digital content is often consumed and produced alone. Look at what your child is doing – can you do it together with a child or help a child producing media content? Make it a common hobby. Can you take a course together?

Help figure out the skills. Ask the child what kind of media skills he/she has. What kind of skills would he/she like to learn? “I do not know” is a good starting point: get acquainted together with what kind of skills the future society needs.

Support and be present. When the parent follows the YouTube channel of their daughter and encourages the son to play in an online gaming team, the child learns that the parent appreciates his/her digital environment. It is also easier for the child to tell about problems when he/she knows about full support from the parent.

SAFETY IS A CHOICE. WHAT DO YOU CHOOSE?

The child has the right to be protected from harm in digital media. Small things are of great importance.

Smart and hidden passwords. Surprisingly many children have a password of 1234 or the first name - and so have many adults. Advise the child to create an enough complicated password and keep them secret at a good place at home.

Take care of security. A child should not act as a family security officer. Get expert help from your operator to strengthen security on your family's devices.

Eliminate the risks. If you're worried about inappropriate content on the web, you can exploit blocking and filtering technologies, offered by your operator, especially for young children. However, the filter program does not diminish the need to talk to your child about online challenges. The best filtering system is child's brain - when the child knows what to do and what not, he/she will be safe.

Can I locate my child? It is possible to locate the phone that the child is using. Discuss about the location based technology with your children before choosing to use them. What are the benefits and disadvantages of locating the phone? Never use location technology behind the child's back.

MY CHILD IS IN TROUBLE ONLINE - WHAT DO I DO?

The child does not always understand the seriousness of the online offenses or the consequences of their actions. A child may be afraid to tell about a problem because of fear of the adult reaction. No matter how awkward the situation is, the child has the right to get support.

Stay calm. Focus on listening to the child when he/she tells about the bad experience. Thank the child for the courage to tell you about it.

Do not blame the child. Mistakes happen and we should learn from them. Turning off the internet or taking the phone away from the child can seem like a good punishment, but that may mean disconnection to friends and safe communities.

Save the evidence. Take screenshots of possible evidence, such as pictures, URLs and messages before you remove them. These may be needed for later investigation. Store the evidence.

Learn about the security and privacy features of the app. How do you block people you don't want to get in contact and how do you report about inappropriate content? Can your own privacy settings be tightened?

The law is valid also on the Internet. If you think you have been a victim of a crime or you have been the witness of a crime, get in contact with the police.

Children want and need a global, open and secure internet. Our job is to enable it.



Read more at

<https://www.pelastakaalapset.fi/en/our-work-in-finland/child-protection-and-finnish-hotline/children-and-digital-media/>

<https://www.teliacompany.com/en/sustainability/children-online/>