

Online Safety & the Autism Spectrum: A Guide for Families

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Superheroes social skills training, Rethink Autism internet interventions, parent training, EBP classroom training, functional behavior assessment: An autism spectrum disorder, evidence based (EBP) training track for school psychologists

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References

- Archer (2012)
Autism Speaks Inc. (2011)
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Finkenauer et al. (2012)
Harris Interactive (2007)
Internet Matters (2015)
Lenhart (2015)
Livingstone et al. (2005)
Madden et al. (2012)
Mazurek et al. (2012)
Moore et al. (2000)
National Center for Missing
and Exploited Children
(2015)
Putnam et al. (2008)
**see accompanying
document for full reference
list.



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Background Information

Tips

Teen Internet Usage (Lenhart, 2015)

- 92% of teens go online daily.
- 24% of teens say they are online “almost constantly”.
- 91% of teens access the internet from mobile devices (cell phones, smartphones, tablets) at least occasionally.
- 71% of teens use more than one social media site, the most popular platform is Facebook, followed by Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, Google+, and others.
- 23% of youth report that they feel addicted to video games (Harris Interactive, 2007).



- 70% of teens have access to at least 4 of the 5 internet-capable devices (mobile phone, smartphone, tablet, computer, gaming console) included in the data collection.

The Internet and ASD

- Individuals on the Autism Spectrum are just as interested, if not more interested, in the Internet than their peers due to the access to information and as a means for social communication (Autism Speaks, 2011).
- Individuals who have difficulty learning or have a disability are 16% more likely to be *persistently* cyberbullied over a long period of time (Department of Children, Schools and Families, 2008).

Keeping Your Child Safe Online

(National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, 2015)

Communication

- Continually talk to your child about online safety.
- Ask who your child is communicating with online.

Rules

- Create less than 5, clear rules for safe Internet use.
- Teach your child the rules and what the consequences are for keeping or breaking the rules.
- Post the rules next to the computer.

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What does the research say?

- People with ASDs like computer-based instruction and find it motivating (Moore & Calvert, 2001).
- Parents of children with ASDs say their children are particularly skilled at using computers (Putnam & Chong, 2008).
- Computers reduce the discomfort and anxiety that people with ASDs feel in face-to-face interaction because they can interact in a familiar place (Bagatell, 2010).
- People with ASDs report that communication on the computer helps them interact with others (Benford & Standen, 2009).
- While computers may help to facilitate social communication for individuals with ASDs, more time may be spent in non-social online activities (Mazurek, Shattuck, Wagner, & Cooper, 2012).
- Individuals with ASDs are more likely to develop compulsive Internet usage than individuals without ASDs (Finkenaue et al., 2012).



Tips Cont.

Monitoring

- Ask your child to show you what they like to do online.
- Look through the Internet browser history regularly.
- The computer should be in a high-traffic area in the home. Do not give your child a computer that is kept in their bedroom.
- Monitor other internet-capable devices (cell phones, gaming systems, etc.) as you would a computer.



Internet Safety

Cyberbullying (Dehue et al., 2008)

- 17% of children reported that they had bullied a peer online or through text messaging.
- 23% of children reported being a victim of cyberbullying.
- Parents consistently underestimated both their child's online bullying behavior and cyberbullying victimization.

Inappropriate content (Livingstone & Bober, 2005)

- One third of 9-19 year olds who go online once a week report having received unwanted sexual or nasty comments online.
- Only 7% of parents think that their children receive inappropriate comments.

Parent Concerns

- You are not alone! 72% of parents are concerned about how their child interacts with people they don't know online (Madden et al., 2012).
- 62% of parents are most concerned about their child viewing age- inappropriate content online (Internet Matters, 2015).
- Some ways to protect your child online include becoming more technologically savvy and regularly monitoring your child's activity online.

Knowledge is Power!

- Learn how to manage privacy setting and block inappropriate material on your Internet browsers and the individual websites your child uses.
- "Friend" your child on social media sites so that you can monitor their activity.
- Look through the Internet browser history regularly to see what your child is doing online.
- Help your child set up their accounts online and control access to them by keeping the passwords from your child.
- Look up terms and acronyms that your child uses in communications online to know what they mean.
<http://www.netlingo.com>

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Madden, M., Cortesi, S., Gasser, U., Lenhart, A., & Duggan, M. (2012). *Parents, teens, and online privacy*. Pew Research Center. Retrieved from

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Moore, M. & Calvert, S. (2000). Brief report: Vocabulary acquisition for children with autism: Teacher or computer instruction. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorder*, 30, 359-362.

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (2015). *Parents and Guardians*. Retrieved from <http://www.netismartz.org/parents>

Putnam, C. & Chong, L. (2008). *Software and technologies designed for people with autism:*

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Appendices

- A. Suggested use of material
- B. Sample House Rules for Internet Usage (to post by computer).
- C. Sample Contract for parents and children to sign to acknowledge understanding of posted House Rules for Internet Usage (complete after teaching house rules).
- D. Online resources for parents.
- E. Online resources for kids/teens.

The attached materials are intended for your use with your family. Please feel free to adjust them to your needs. Here are some general guidelines that you should consider.

House rules need to be agreed upon by all adults in the home. These rules should be simple and easy to understand and need to be explicitly taught to children. Customize the sample house rules provided for your family's needs. Post the rules by your computer.

Contract for house rules. The contract should be updated to reflect the agreed upon house rules and the consequences for breaking the rules. Parents should sign that they have taught the rules to their children and that they will follow through with the predetermined consequences should rules be broken. Children should sign that they understand the rules and the consequences for breaking the rules. A natural reward for following house rules is that children gain trust of parents and an ability to independently use the Internet.

Online resources for parents. Many resources exist to help parents in establishing monitoring practices and household rules to maintain online safety in the home.

Online resources for kids/teens. Many of the resources that provide support for parents have child components including games, comic books, and interactive video lessons to help children learn safe online practices and their importance.

Other tips

- You may find it helpful to have an established list of approved websites that your child may use, you can set up a feature in your Internet browser to limit use to sites that are not approved. Any site not on this list would need to be approved (and a password would have to be entered) before a child could visit it.
- Control your child's use of social media sites by setting up accounts for them and keeping passwords secret. Your child will have to ask your permission to visit the site and you'll have to enter the password for them to gain access.
- If your child is spending a lot of time online, establish an expectation that children must complete their homework before gaining access to the Internet. Or set a timer to limit "screen time".

House Rules for Internet Usage:

1. Ask permission.
2. Be polite, kind, and respectful.
3. Keep personal information private.
3. “Friends” are people you know in real life.
4. Tell an adult if anything happens that makes you feel sad or uncomfortable online.

What happens if I break the rules:

1. Lose independent online privileges (parent has to supervise all activity online).
2. Lose online privileges (except for school projects with parent supervision).
3. Grounded (severe clause).

House Rules for Internet Usage:

1. Ask permission.
 - a. Before going online, ask. Tell your parent what you are going to do while you are online.
2. Be polite, kind, and respectful.
 - a. Think before you post something. Before you post something, ask yourself: “How would I feel if someone said that to me?”
3. Keep personal information private.
 - a. Do not share your name, pictures of yourself, where you live or go to school, your age, important numbers (includes passwords, phone numbers, social security number, banking information, etc.) with anyone online.
3. “Friends” are people you know in real life.
 - a. Set up different privacy settings on platforms, like Facebook, so that others cannot see your information or post on your page.
4. Tell an adult if anything happens that makes you feel sad or uncomfortable online.
 - a. Think of at least 2-3 trusted adults you can talk to if you need help

What happens if I break the rules:

1. Lose independent online privileges (parent has to supervise all activity online).
2. Lose online privileges (except for school projects with parent supervision).
3. Grounded (severe clause).

I explained the rules of internet usage to my child(ren) and will follow through with the consequences if the rules are broken.

I understand the rules and accept the consequences for breaking them.

Online Resources for Parents

Common Sense Media

<https://www.commonsensemedia.org/privacy-and-internet-safety>

Family Online Safety Institute

<https://www.fosi.org/good-digital-parenting/>

The Federal Bureau of Investigation

<https://www.fbi.gov/stats-services/publications/parent-guide>

Kids Health

http://kidshealth.org/parent/positive/family/net_safety.html

McAfee

<http://www.internetsafety.com/internet-safety-tips-for-parents.php>

The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children

<http://www.netsmartz.org/Parents>

Parenting

Social Networking Sites for Kids

<http://www.parenting.com/article/social-networking-sites-for-kids>

Tips for Monitoring Kids' Social Media

<http://www.parenting.com/gallery/social-media-monitoring-kids?page=0>

Stay Safe Online

<https://www.staysafeonline.org/data-privacy-day/parent-resources/>

Programs that can help you monitor and protect your children online:

<http://www.ikeepsafe.org/parents>

Online Resources for Kids/Teens

The Federal Bureau of Investigation

<https://sos.fbi.gov>

iKeepSafe

<http://kids.ikeepsafe.org>

Kids Health (this resource is designed for teens)

http://kidshealth.org/teen/safety/safebasics/internet_safety.html#cat20019

Kids.gov

Kids

<https://kids.usa.gov/play-games/online-safety/index.shtml>

Teens

<https://kids.usa.gov/teens/play-games/online-safety/index.shtml>

The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children

Kids

<http://www.netsmartzkids.org>

Tweens

<http://www.nsteens.org>

Teens

<http://www.netsmartz.org/Teens>