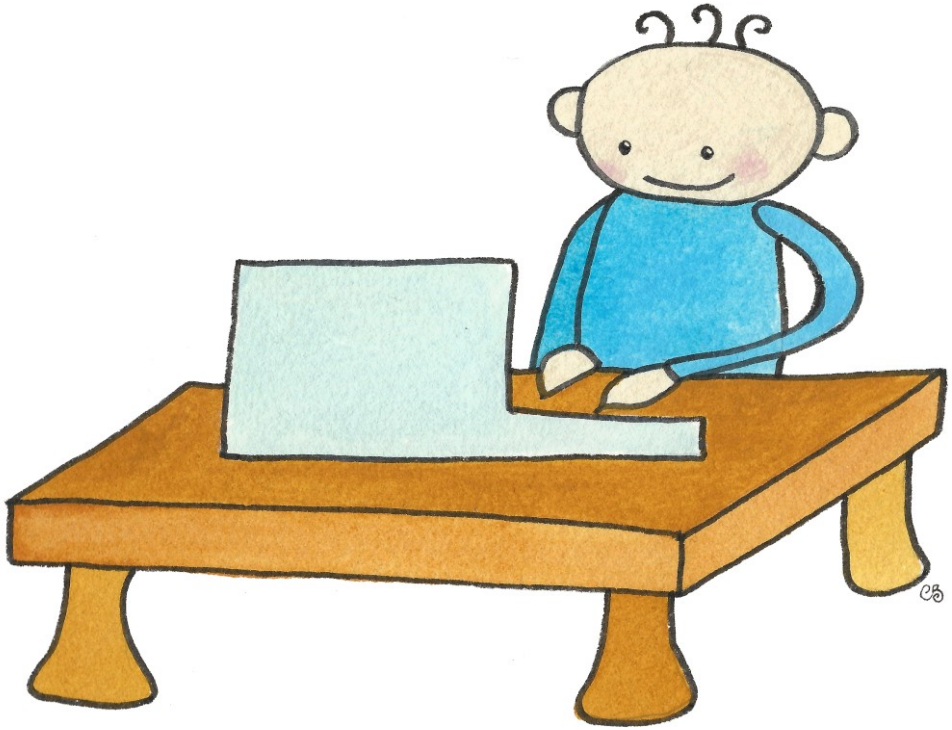
The A to Z of Safe Children Online



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With a foreword by Lord Toby Harris

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About this Guideline

The A to Z of Safe Children Online is intended to help both parents and teachers foster a safer online experience for children. You can share the guideline freely and even host it on your website, but please do not offer it for sale or use it for commercial purposes.

The writer, Mark Johnson, is a prominent thinker and speaker on emerging online and social media risks. He is the author of Demystifying Communications Risk, to be published by Gower Publishing in October 2012, as well as numerous industry training guides and papers. Mark is currently working on his second book.

Corinne Blandin, the illustrator, is a teacher, demonstrator and artist, born in France and now living in Cambridgeshire, England. She works extensively with children and has produced illustrations for teaching materials now in use by a leading private school in Cambridge.

Read, enjoy and stay safe online!

Cambridge, 2012

About this work

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Foreword

Part of growing up is learning how to do things AND learning how to do them safely. It would be unthinkable not to teach children about road safety. And as younger and younger children have access to computers and mobile devices at home and in school, they now need to be taught how to be safe online. This A to Z guide sets out some simple rules - following them will help keep all of us and our children safe online.

The UK police through the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (www.ceop.police.org.uk) are working hard to safeguard children online, as are internet service providers and groups like the Internet Watch Foundation (www.iwf.org.uk). However, we all have a responsibility to keep ourselves and our families safe online.

Lord Toby Harris

A is for…

Adult involvement

You can't influence what your children are doing if you don't get involved.

- **G**lance at the screen from time-to-time
- **A**sk them how it's going
- **P**articipate and play along occasionally
- **E**ncourage them

But don't over do it – it's their learning space.

B is for…

Bedroom Ban

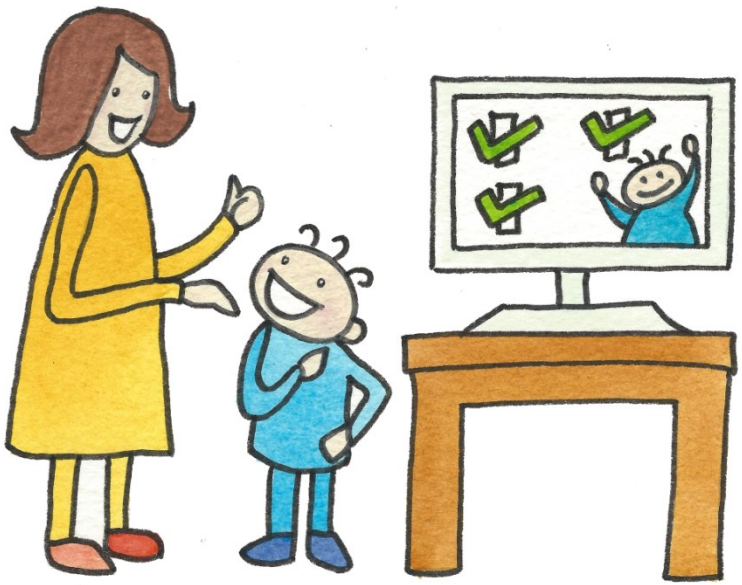
It's not easy to supervise online behaviour if you let your child use a computer in their bedroom:

- Keep computers out of the bedroom
- Make sure all screens face the room
- Dedicated work areas are always best

As your child grows up you may have to bow to the inevitable. Teach them safe online habits before that change happens.

C is for…

Controls



Have you set the parental or content controls for your child's PC and web browser? If you have, when did you last review them to make sure they haven't been changed?

- Apply the highest practical settings
- Service providers can often help
- **CEOP** (the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre) provides child safe versions of browsers

But always bear in mind that inappropriate content might still get through.

D is for…

Delay

It's tempting for us to want to get our children online at an early age. We often see this as a sign of sophistication or intelligence. But you shouldn't rush things.

- **P**lay and exercise are more important
- **L**et your child enjoy childhood first
- **O**nline activities can be isolating
- **D**on't let a computer become a baby sitter

E is for…

Environment

If your child is ready to go online, where should you position the computer?

You want him or her to be comfortable and focused, while you also need to maintain control.

- Allocate space in a family area
- Make sure they are comfortably seated
- Fresh air and light are also good ideas
- Keep the screen facing the room!

F is for…

Friending

In the virtual world it can be hard to be sure who you are connecting with. Teach your children from the start to:

- **N**ever make 'friends' with strangers
- **O**nly connect to people they actually know
- **N**ever take an online photo at face value
- **E**nquire amongst their real friends if in doubt

Some parents have successfully joined their children's social media contact list, but not every child will accept this.

G is for…

Guidance

Be your child's guide to the online world. Mentoring is one of the best forms of instruction.

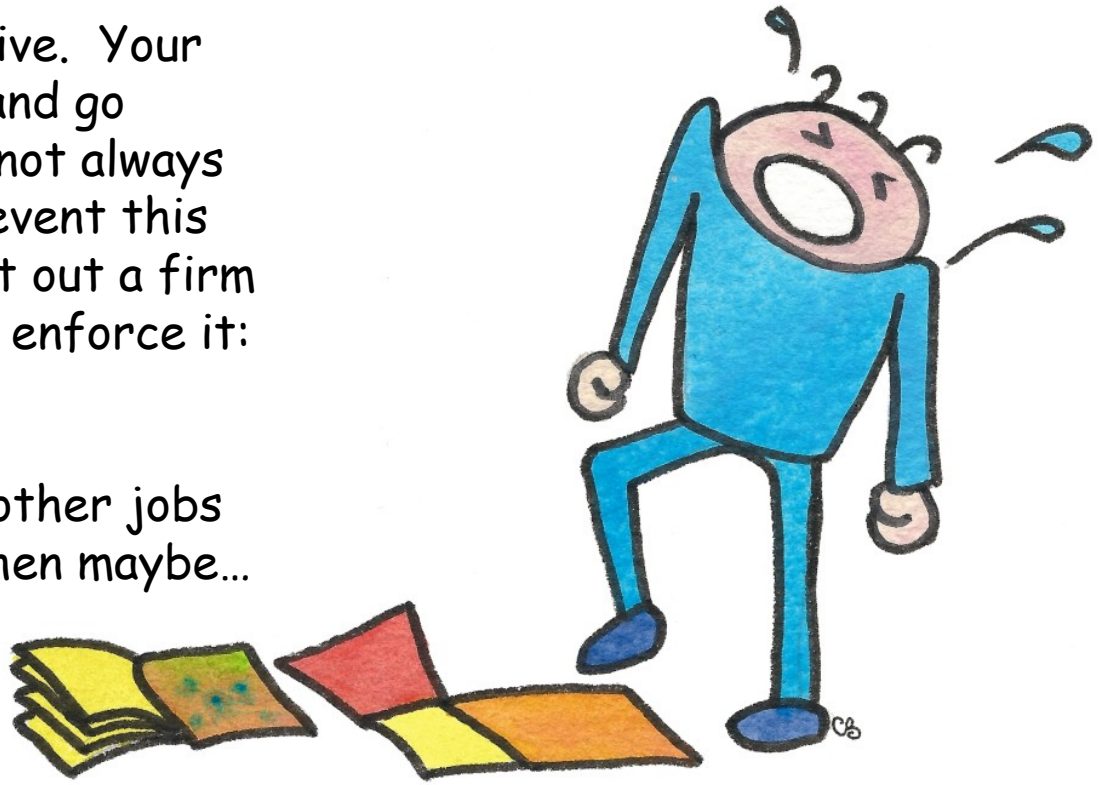
If you need guidance yourself, there is lots of good advice available online. Again, one of the best things you can do is to visit **CEOP** at http://ceop.police.uk/

H is for…

Homework

The online world can be addictive. Your child may rush in from school and go straight to the computer, but not always with homework in mind. To prevent this from happening you need to set out a firm framework from the start and enforce it:

- **H**omework comes first!
- **O**nce it's done there may be other jobs
- **W**hen those jobs are done, then maybe…
- **L**imits apply to online time



I is for…

Information

Even if you believe that all of your child's online friends are genuine, the information your child posts might still be visible to others in the wider network. A chain of online friends is only as strong as its weakest link.

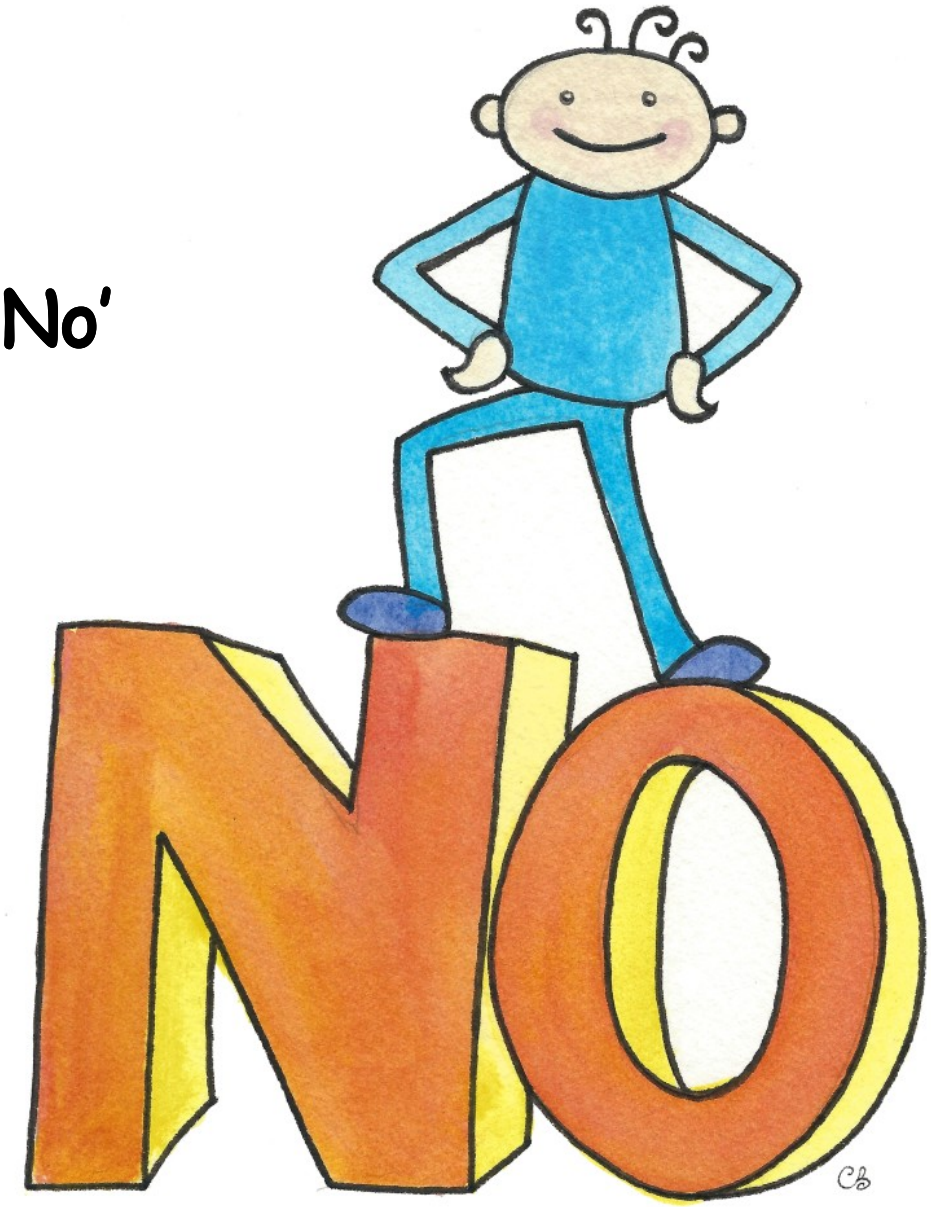
- **L**imit the information posted
- **I**nform your child about the risks so they;
  - **N**ever give out address or school details
  - **K**now what to do if concerned

J is for…

J ust say 'No'

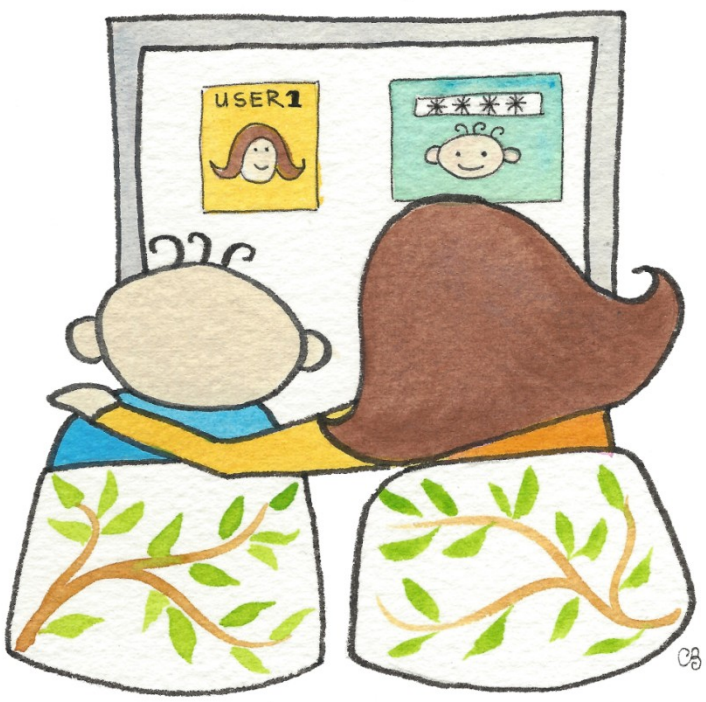
We tend to feel that when we are online the same manners and protocols apply as in the physical world.

Being polite is always important, but if your child is asked something inappropriate online, they must have the confidence just to say **'No'**.



K is for…

Keeping control



Every computer has an 'Administrator'. Normally, the person who first sets the machine up with a user name and password becomes the Administrator by default.

If you share your logon with your child, the child will have the same Admin rights as you. They can even change the security settings and lock **you** out of the machine by re-setting the password.

Always setup a separate user account for each child and keep the admin account for yourself.

L is for…

Listening

With services like Skype and MSN the online experience isn't only visual, it can also involve conversations.

- **M**onitor the tone of your child
- **I**nvestigate if you are concerned
- **N**ote the time and day
- **D**eny access if justified

M is for…

Media

Online risks are not only about strangers. New media sites such as Flikr and YouTube provide access to all manner of images. Rated content of all kinds can be found accidentally by your child and even downloaded and shared.

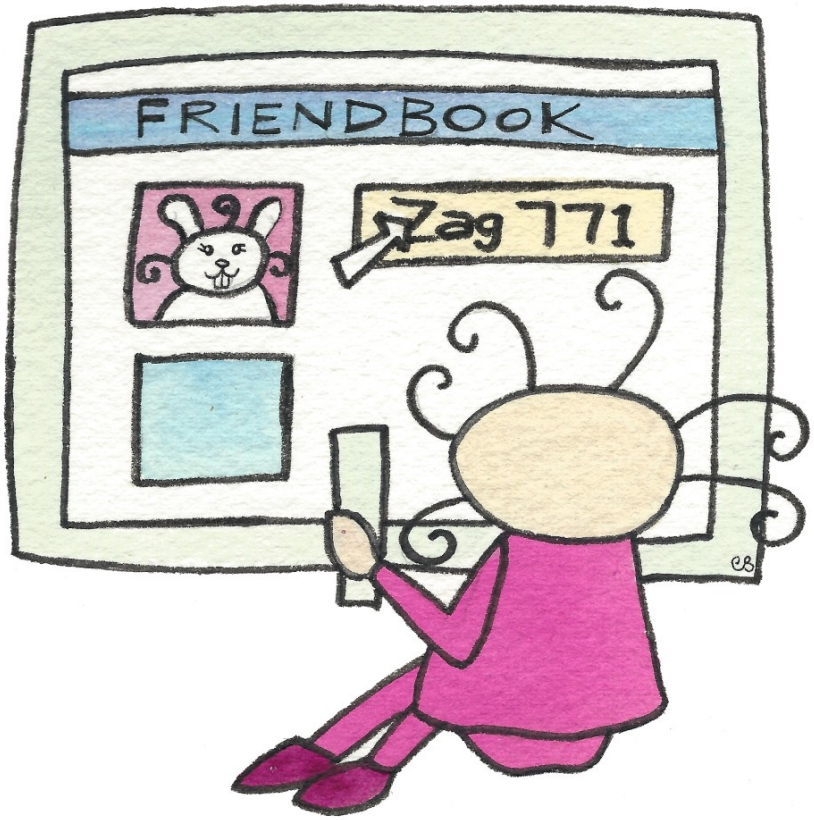
Log on regularly and look at your children's usage history. This is not spying – it's your parental right and a responsibility. If you work, your employer is probably monitoring the same things on your company machine all the time.

N is for…

Names

Why do people sign up for social media sites and then fill in lots of personal information when they can actually get away with supplying much less data? More to the point, why should a child need to do this? You could suggest these points to your child:

- **N**ever provide a genuine full name
- **A**lways conceal your surname
- **M**ade up names or nicknames work well!
- **E**nsure that you minimise profile info



O is for…

Online profiles

In addition to limiting profile information, you and your child should make sure that the profile is locked down tightly. This ensures that only the online friends selected, and not the general public, can view it.

- **N**ever include your age or address
- **O**nly put the minimum info required
- **P**hotos of children should be avoided
- **E**mail addresses are not good user names

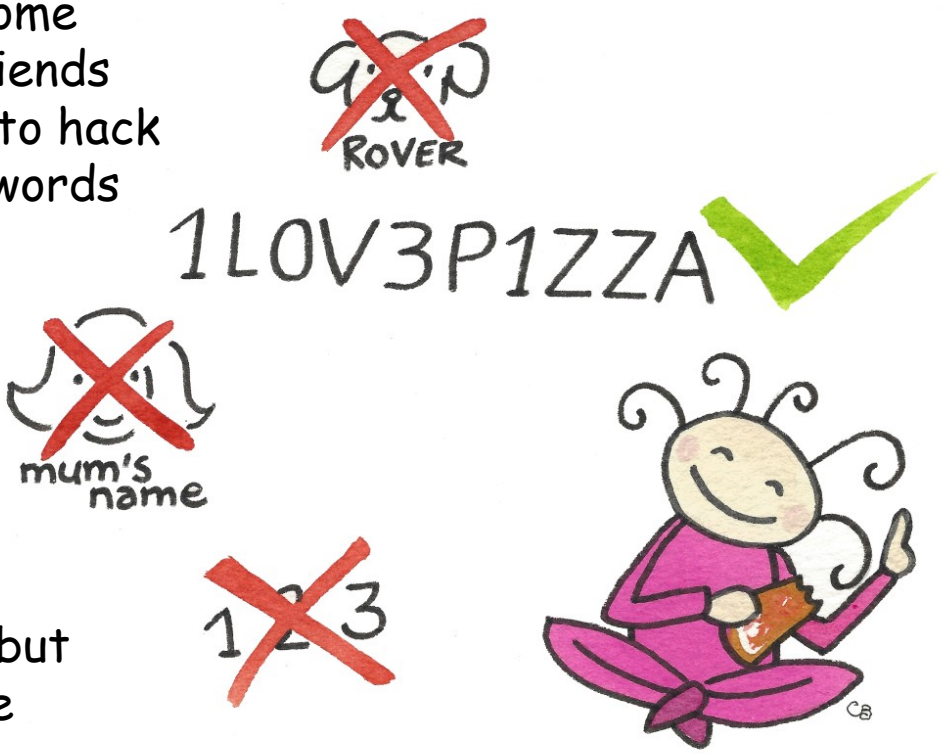
P is for…

Passwords

You might be surprised at how easily some passwords are guessed. Fake online friends will ask leading questions and then try to hack into children's accounts. Common passwords to **avoid** are:

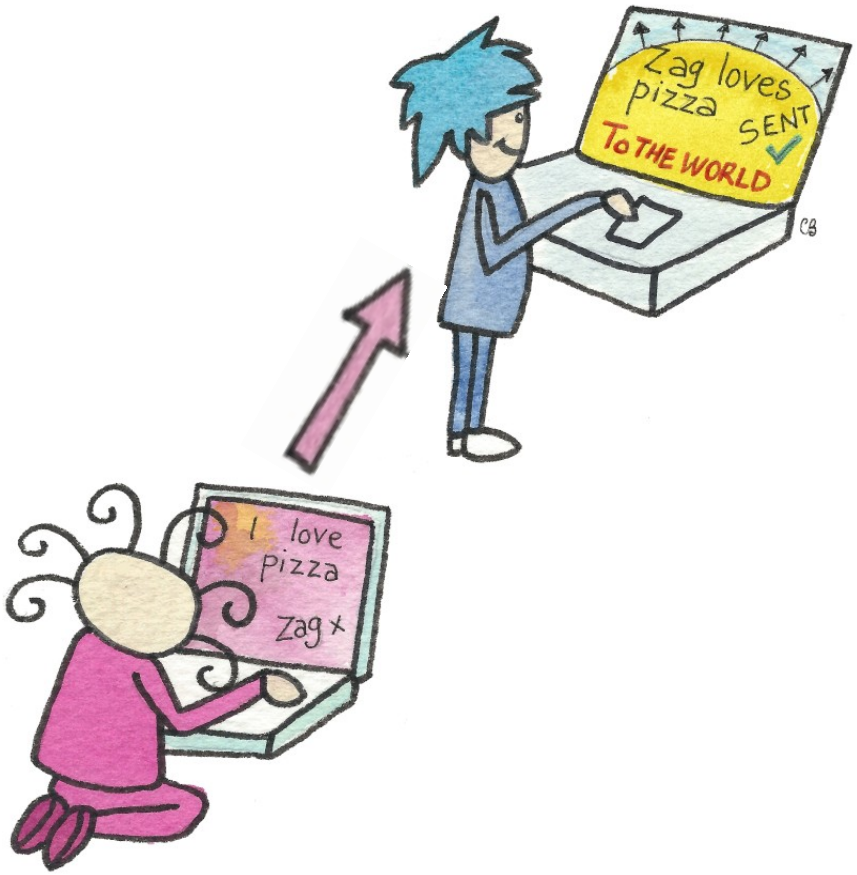
- **S**imple number strings like 1234
- **A**nimals or pets like 'cat' or 'budgie'
- **N**ames of relatives or friends
- **D**ates of birth

We all struggle with longer passwords but consider putting a short word and some numbers together to form one.



Q is for…

Quoting



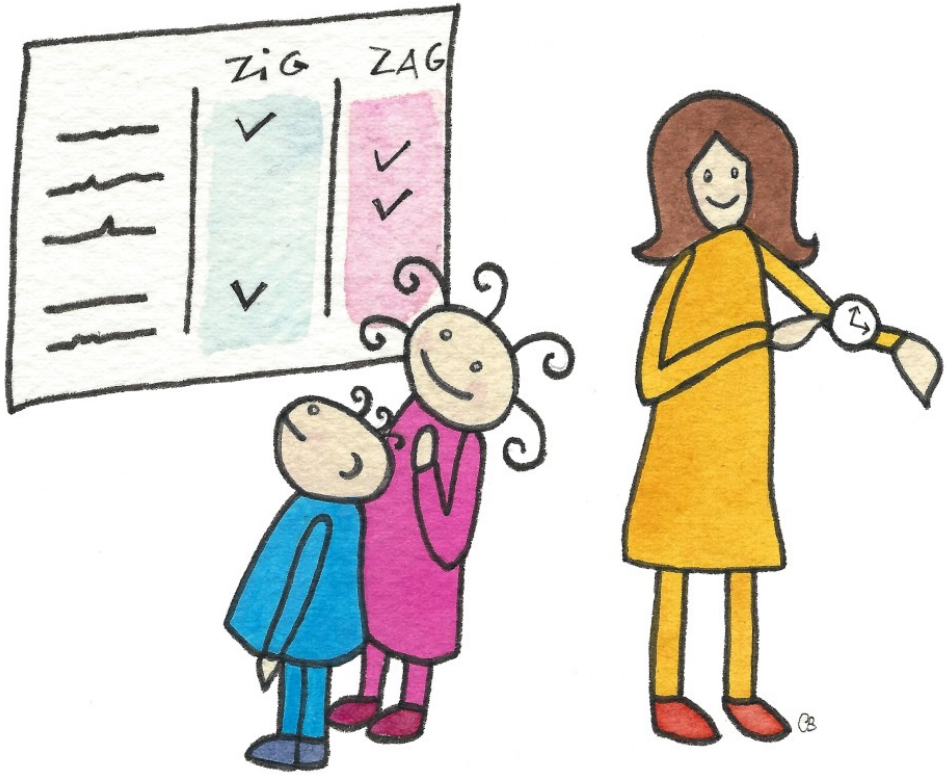
Make sure that your child understands how easily the things they say online can be re-broadcast by their friends. This can happen without your child's knowledge and consent.

A good mindset to adopt is that everything we type online has **some** risk of being quoted elsewhere. Emails have legs, as we have seen.

R is for…

Reminders

Computers are addicted and the online world only makes this problem worse. While online activities can be both educational and socially rewarding, other forms of play and exercise are just as important.



Set a defined period for online activity as a part of a daily schedule for your child. Make a list and put it on the wall. Put it in your own diary as well and set alerts to remind *you*, so that you can remind *them*.

S is for…

Sharing machines

One way to get your child accustomed to the idea that what they do online is being seen by you, is to share their machine with them. Avoid giving a young child their own personal PC or laptop, if possible, and establish the PC as a shared resource.

Sharing like this removes much of the stress involved in trying to take a look at what has been happening on the device historically.

T is for…

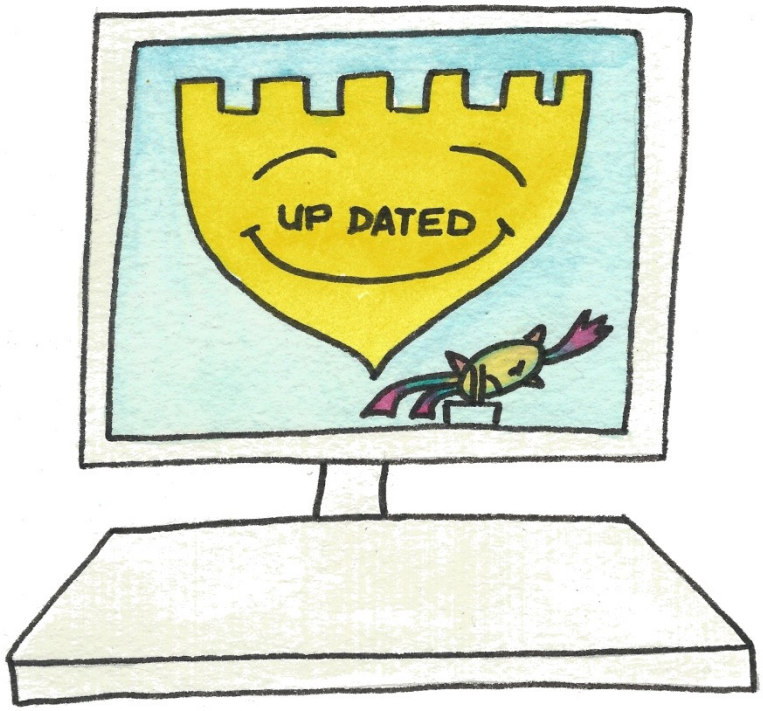
Talking about concerns

Your child is more likely to resent intrusions into their privacy if they don't understand why you are concerned. Discuss this with them. You could show them this A to Z Guide.

If they are mature enough, you can tell them about cases you've read about, or browse the CEOPs site with them.

U is for…

Updating software



The most damaging forms of computer virus are those that came out yesterday and which have only just been detected by anti-virus firms. These are called Zero Day Risks or 0-Day Risks.

Unless you are using and updating your anti-virus, anti-spyware and firewall software automatically, you are not protected against Zero Day Risks.

Always set auto-update to **ON**.

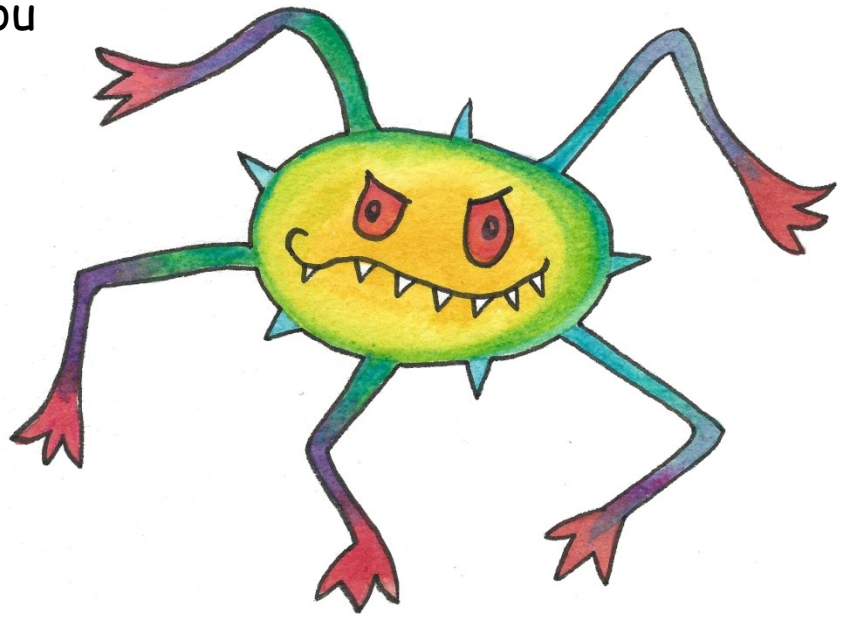
V is for…

Virus protection

Some computer 'malware' can steal personal data from your PC or log every keystroke you enter, so you should never go online without anti-virus software installed.

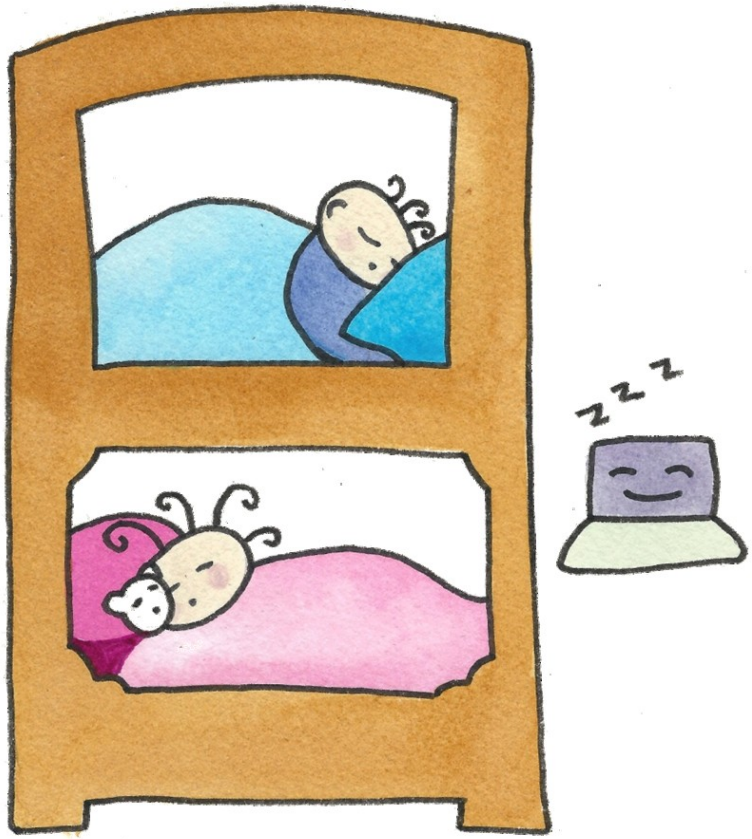
Read some reviews to see which program is best for you. We use a free anti virus program and (fingers crossed!) we have not suffered any serious problems to-date.

Make sure that your child understands why this is important, so that they don't deactivate or turn anti-virus off.



W is for…

Watershed



In addition to bedroom bans and daily schedules, enforce an online watershed. This is primarily to allow you to monitor usage effectively. If a child is still online after you have gone to bed, that's likely to be the period of highest risk.

It's computer off, PJs on, wash face, brush teeth, bedtime story, goodnight kiss and lights out, along with any additions you choose.

X is for…

eXample setting

Need we say more?

Y is for…

Yelling for help

Online bullying and inappropriate content are not only offensive, they may be illegal. Report them to the school and possibly to the Police.

People have been successfully convicted for online bullying and other offenses.

Don't let your child endure in silence. Make sure they know that effective investigation and prosecution is possible. Make sure they Yell for Help.

Z is for…

Zealous adherence

Just like a decision to get fit or to stop smoking, the decision to get safe online demands that you adopt new habits and abandon old ones.

This change needs to be adopted by everyone in the household. You are going to have to be zealous both in your adherence and in encouraging the rest of your family to change too. It won't be easy, but it is very important.

L is also for...

Links

To download this guideline in PDF format go to www.trmg.biz and navigate to **The A to Z Guides** section.
To view other examples of the work of Corinne Blandin, go to www.corinneblandin.com

Other useful links:

- The Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (UK) http://ceop.police.uk/
- The Internet Watch Foundation (www.iwf.org.uk)
- The Children's Safety Education Foundation (http://www.csef.net/)
- HENRY - Health Exercise and Nutrition for the Really Young (http://www.henry.org.uk/)

(This list will be updated and expanded in the online version of the guideline as we receive links from interested parties).

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Frequently asked questions

Q: Is the guideline offered free of charge?
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Q: Can I produce printed copies for my organisation and contacts?
A: Yes. You are free to make copies and to use those in any way you choose, other than for commercial purposes.

Q: Is the guide available in other languages?
A: At the time of writing, the guide is only available in English. If you would like to help us produce a translated version please email us at info@trmg.biz. As translations become available, we will add them to the website.

Q: Can you localise the guide for us to show, for example, Police website links in our country?
A: Yes. We plan to add a list of such web links and have included a page at the end of the guide for this purpose. We also plan to add this list to the website. Please contact us if you require localisation support.

Q: Are the recommendations contained in the guide officially sanctioned?
A: No. While the recommendations are based on common sense and common practice, they are only our personal opinions. You need to adapt them to fit your circumstances. Please read our Disclaimer for more information.