

September – What is Digital Citizenship

You don't have to be an expert on texting, Instagram, Minecraft -- or whatever else your kids are into. Start by reading up on what's going on in your kids' world. Ask them to show you what they like online, and why. Make sure to listen. Then, express a few basic expectations, with the understanding that this isn't a one-and-done kind of chat. Good luck (you'll be fine)!

Here are the 5 basics to cover when talking to your kids about Digital Citizenship:

Be kind.

Try to instill a sense of empathy in your kids. Remember: there's someone else on the other side of the screen.

- **Younger kids:** Treat others like you want to be treated -- and always follow a website's rules for behavior. **Ask:** *How do you see other kids behaving online? What are some nice things you've seen other kids do?*
- **Older kids:** Post constructive comments, and avoid getting into flame wars with trolls. **Ask:** *What kind of positive behavior do you see online?*

Keep private things private.

Talk about what's OK for kids to share online and what's not.

- **Younger kids:** Get kids to think about safety without scaring them. Don't share your name, address, school, age, etc. **Ask:** *Why don't we want strangers to know certain things about us or our family?*
- **Older kids:** Don't broadcast your location, send photos to strangers, or share passwords with friends. **Ask:** *What kind of information can be unsafe to share, and what's fair game?*

Don't believe everything you see.

Just because it's online doesn't make it true. Not everybody is who they say they are.

- **Younger kids:** Teach kids to be detectives. **Ask:** *How can you tell whether something is true online? What are some signs that something might not be true?*
- **Older kids:** Use reputable sources. Learn to recognize red flags. **Ask:** *How can you tell what's a reliable source of information? What are some signs something's a scam?*

Don't overshare.

Think before you post. Use privacy settings.

- **Younger kids:** Help kids understand what sharing something online means. **Ask:** *Who can see what you're doing or saying online?*
- **Older kids:** Encourage kids to pause before they act. **Ask:** *What are some questions you can ask yourself before you share something online? Have you ever regretted something you've posted or said online?*

Stand up for others.

If someone's getting bullied or picked on, speak up, report it, or reach out.

- **Younger kids:** Make sure kids know they can come to you for help. Teach them how to flag misbehavior. **Ask:** *What would you do if you saw someone being mean online or in a game?*
- **Older kids:** Give kids tools to use in a crisis. **Ask:** *If someone was being mean to you online, what would you want your friends to do? Do you know how to flag or report bullying on a social network or in a multiplayer game?*

Having trouble decoding the acronyms your children are using? Go to the Common Sense [Digital Glossary](#).