

March 2019

Dear Parents:

The thoughts of what your child might come across online can be worrying. Some of you may have heard recently about the Momo Challenge. Here are some tips and internet safety advice to help make sure going online is a positive experience for you and your child.

### **1. Discover the Internet together**

Be the one to introduce your child to the internet. For both parent and child, it is an advantage to discover the internet together. Try to find websites that are exciting and fun so that together you achieve a positive attitude to internet exploration. This could make it easier to share both positive and negative experiences in the future.

### **2. Agree on rules with your child for Internet use in your home**

Try to reach an agreement with your child on the guidelines which apply to Internet use in your household. Here are some tips to get started:


- Discuss when and for how long it is acceptable for your child to use the Internet. Younger children especially should not be accessing the internet in isolation. An adult should always be able to see and/or hear what the child is accessing. Younger children should also not access
- Agree how to treat personal information (name, address, telephone, e-mail)
- Discuss how to behave towards others when gaming, chatting, e-mailing or messaging
- Agree what type of sites and activities are OK or not OK in our family
- Follow the rules yourself! Or at least explain why the rules are different for adults.

### **3. Encourage your child to be careful when disclosing personal information**

A simple rule for younger children should be that the child should not give out their name, phone number or photo without your approval. Older children using social networking sites like Facebook should be encouraged to be selective about what personal information and photos they post to online spaces. Regardless of privacy settings, once material is online you can no longer control who sees it or how it is used.

### **4. Talk about the risks associated with meeting online “friends” in person**

Adults should understand that the internet can be a positive meeting place for children, where they can get to know other young people and make new friends. However, for safety and to avoid unpleasant experiences, it is important that children do not meet



strangers they have met online without being accompanied by an adult you trust. In any case, the child should always have their parents 'approval first. In addition, it is also a good idea to have a fail-safe plan in place such as calling them shortly after the meeting begins so that they can bail out if they feel uncomfortable.

**5. Teach your child about evaluating information and being critically aware of information found online.**

Most children use the internet to improve and develop their knowledge in relation to schoolwork and personal interests. Children should be aware that not all information found online is correct, accurate or relevant. Show your child how to check information they find by comparing it to alternative sources on the same topic. Show them trusted sites they can use to compare information.

**6. Don't be too critical towards your child's exploration of the Internet**

Children may come across adult material by accident on the web. Also, a child may intentionally search for such websites; remember that it is natural for children to be curious about off-limits material. Try to use this as an opening to discuss the content with them, and perhaps make rules for this kind of activity. Be realistic in your assessment of how your child uses the internet.

**7. Let your children show you what they like to do online**

To be able to guide your child with regard to Internet use, it is important to understand how children use the Internet and know what they like to do online. Let your child show you which websites they like visiting and what they do there.

**8. Remember that the positive aspects of the Internet outweigh the negatives**


The Internet is an excellent educational and recreational resource for children. Encourage your child to make the most of it and explore the internet to its full potential.

**9. Accessing support**

Should you have concerns about your child's mental health and well-being, please reach out to your school principal or Special Education Resource Teacher who can link you to our Board Student Support Services and/or local community supports.

*Credit for content: [webwise.ie](http://webwise.ie), Brant-Haldimand Norfolk CDSB*

**Note:** *The Canadian Paediatric Society reports screen time of any kind is not recommended for children under the age of two. For children between the ages of two and five, the society recommends routine screen time be limited to less than one hour a day and that parents and caregivers watch TV programs or play online games with their preschoolers and kindergartners, rather than leave them to swipe and zone out on their own. The society also urges parents to power down their devices during family time and turn off the background TV. Globe and Mail- June, 2017*



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