



the screen guardians

PARENT RESOURCE LIBRARY

# How Do I Talk to My Child About Social Media Safety & Child Predators?

*Conversation Strategies for Parents*

When communicating with children about social media usage and the risks associated, it's essential to approach the topic with sensitivity, clarity, and age-appropriate language. Here are some effective strategies:

**Start Early:** Begin discussions about online safety as soon as children start using digital devices. This helps establish a foundation of awareness and responsibility from an early age. The unfortunate reality is, children are being exposed to pornography and harmful material at younger and younger ages as technology advance.

**Open Communication:** Create an environment where children feel comfortable discussing their online experiences and any concerns they may have. Encourage open dialogue and assure them that they can come to you with any questions or issues. This means you will have to swallow the angry outburst you're tempted to have when you find out your daughter sent a picture to a stranger on the internet.

**Use Age-Appropriate Language:** Tailor your conversations to the child's age and maturity level. Younger children may need simpler explanations, while older children can engage in more detailed discussions. A great resource for this is the book *Good Picture, Bad Pictures* by Kristin A. Jenson.

**Teach Online Safety Basics:** Explain the importance of privacy settings, not sharing personal information online, and being cautious when interacting with strangers. Emphasize that not everyone online is who they claim to be. I also make a habit of explaining to my kids they don't get to be "friends" or "followers" of anyone on the internet that they aren't friends with in real life. That includes other children.

**Discuss Red Flags:** Teach children to recognize warning signs of potential predators, such as individuals asking for personal information, requesting to meet in person, or making them feel uncomfortable. Now is the time to cover the various grooming techniques child predator's use so your child is aware of what to look for.

**Set Clear Rules and Boundaries:** Establish guidelines for safe online behavior, including time limits for usage, which platforms are allowed, and rules for interacting with others online. Make sure children understand the consequences of breaking these rules.

**Monitor Online Activity:** Keep an eye on your child's online activity, including the websites they visit, the apps they use, and their interactions with others. Consider using parental control software or privacy settings to help manage and monitor their online presence.

**Lead by Example:** Be a positive role model by demonstrating responsible online behavior yourself. Show your child how to use social media and the internet safely and responsibly.

**Empower Children to Trust Their Instincts:** Encourage children to trust their gut feelings and speak up if they ever feel uncomfortable or threatened online. Assure them that they won't get in trouble for reporting concerning behavior.

**Stay Informed and Updated:** Keep yourself informed about the latest trends and risks in social media and online safety. Stay up-to-date with resources and information provided by trusted organizations like child protection agencies or internet safety advocacy groups. Or Prudent Parent Guides! 😊

**Reinforce Regularly:** Consistently revisit the topic of online safety and remind children of the guidelines and strategies for staying safe online. Repetition helps reinforce good habits and awareness.

**Seek Professional Help if Needed:** If you suspect that your child has encountered a predator or has been a victim of online exploitation, seek help from law enforcement and child protection authorities immediately.

By employing these strategies and maintaining open communication, you can help empower children to navigate the digital world safely and responsibly.

**You don't have to navigate screen time alone.**

This guide is part of The Screen Guardians Parent Resource Library — real tools, real voices, real support, grounded in research, not fear. For more help starting hard conversations and protecting your kids online, explore the Parent Portal at [thescreenguardians.com/parent-portal](https://thescreenguardians.com/parent-portal) or join our free newsletter at [thescreenguardians.com/subscribe](https://thescreenguardians.com/subscribe).

*Not anti-technology. Pro-child.*