

ONLINE SAFETY

A PARENTS GUIDE TO
PROTECTING YOUR CHILD
AGAINST SEXUAL
EXPLOITATION ONLINE



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THE STATS

There has been an 88% increase in sextortion and other online exploitation, since the COVID-19 pandemic began.

Almost half of parents have never talked to their children about sextortion or sexting.

4.3 Million exploitation reports have been processed by cybertip.ca between 2014-2020.

39% of online luring attempts (reported to cybertip in the last two years) have involved victims ages 13 or under.

WHAT IS ONLINE SEXUAL EXPLOITATION?

It includes, but is not limited to...

Child sexual abuse material: Commonly known as child pornography.

Sexting: Youth-generated explicit images and/or videos.

Sextortion: Use of coercion and threats to extort child sexual exploitation images and/or videos from youth.

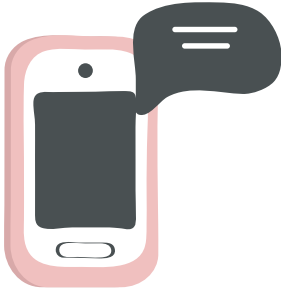
Grooming and luring: Use of applications and platforms to connect with children and youth for the purpose of sexually exploiting them.

Live child sexual abuse streaming: Viewing of child sexual abuse in real-time, often involves the offender directing the abuse.

Made-to-order content: Ordering videos and/or images to suit offenders' preferences.

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HAVE THE TALK AND HAVE IT OFTEN.



When it comes to talking to your child about being safe online, try to keep the conversation open and re-visit it often. But where do you start? There's so much out there, it certainly can feel overwhelming. So let's start with a few basics. Each step you take forward matters no matter how big or small.

DON'T GO IN BLIND... DO YOUR RESEARCH.

TIP: App Inventory. Which apps does your child use/have on their device? Which video games are they playing? Are they playing with people they don't know? Is there a chat feature?






If you don't know this info, ask them.

TIP: Learn the signs. What are ways that predators abuse those specific apps or streaming platforms? What are the risks and are there privacy settings or features that could protect your child.

TIP: Get specific info on their most frequently used apps in order to give relevant advice. Your words will have greater impact if you're giving relevant info to their specific online world.

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POPULAR APP RISKS

- SNAPCHAT**  Users of this app often share intimate images knowing they'll disappear within seconds, however a quick screenshot can be taken and the image is now captured for potential exploitation. Predators have also been hacking into accounts and threatening to share images.
- TIKTOK**  A popular video sharing app. All videos are public by default unless you are between ages 13-15. Age verification is easily bypassed. There is a high risk of your child being exposed to explicit content.
- KIK**  Users can send quick text messages and photos. The app lacks age verification and can be downloaded by kids who are younger than 13. This app has been used by predators to identify younger children and compel them into sending intimate photos or share their personal information.

OTHER APPS TO LEARN THEIR RISKS: OMEGLE, WHISPER, ASK.FM, TINDER, INSTAGRAM

IT IS ILLEGAL TO...

1. **SEND sexual photos/videos of anyone who is under 18.** This includes taking and sending sexual photos/videos of yourself if you're under 18.
2. **SAVE child pornography** on a phone, computer, cloud storage or any other kind of device.
3. **SELL OR SHARE child pornography.** This includes:
 - showing it to people on your phone or computer
 - forwarding it through text or email
 - posting it on the Internet

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ESTABLISH GROUND RULES

It's easy to let your child just do their own thing on their devices, but don't forget how important it is to set guidelines and boundaries. The online world is too big for them to navigate on their own.



1. **Keep computers out in the open.** Computer time can happen on the table or in the family room. This isn't so you can peer over their shoulder every 5 seconds, but it provides an important layer of safety and accountability.
2. **Bedtime means phones go away.** Consider having a spot to put devices until morning. (TIP: Try to model this yourself as well.)
3. **Follow recommended age requirements for specific apps.** No younger.
4. **Set digital time limits.** The more your child is 'connected' the more vulnerable they may become.

IDEA: FAMILY DIGITAL DETOX

Strategies for a Digital Detox:

- **A monthly digital-free day** - Select one day every month for a family day with no screens, in or out of the house. Commit to spending quality time together without using electronics for just one day every month.
- **A week-long break from electronics** - A camping trip, a vacation, or a week in a remote cabin could get everyone away from the electronics. Stepping away from technology could renew everyone's appreciation for simple activities, like board games or playing catch.
- **An electronics-free weekend** - If you can't afford a vacation—or you have a job that makes unplugging for a week a challenge—consider a digital detox on a smaller scale. Make a plan to unplug a few weekends each year.

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RECOGNIZE THE SIGNS

By knowing *some* of the common tactics that online groomers use to manipulate your child in order to comply with their demands, you can empower your child to recognize these red flags promptly and report them to you or another trusted adult.

- Falsely identifying themselves online as a peer (e.g., child from another school, connected through sport, friend of a friend, or known to the child in some way)
- Flattery/compliments/support
- Promise of gifts, money, tablets, drugs, alcohol
- Pitting the parents against the child (e.g., your parents are too strict, your parents don't understand you)
- Exchange of sexual pictures to make victim more comfortable in sending sexual pictures/videos in return
- Take pictures with or without the child's knowledge while live-streaming. This is often followed by the use of extortion to control the child and/or threatening to share the material unless the child produces additional sexual images/videos
- Threats, intimidation, and harassment

TIP: Always encourage your children to never share identifying information with someone online who they haven't met. Explain the why age appropriately.

Reporting: Report concerning online behaviour to 911 and [cybertip.ca](https://www.cybertip.ca)

TREATMENT/SUPPORT

Maybe you have found sexual content on your child's device, or you have seen evidence of one or several of the above red flags...

Consult one of our provided resources at the end of this document for advice on how to protect and provide support for your child. Try to avoid fear based response. Step back, slow down and enlist appropriate support.

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RECAP

Education is power. The goal is to help our kids navigate their world wisely, not to shield them from it entirely. Locking away all technology, as tempting as it is, isn't the answer... Helping our kids be smart users, is.

Increase both your and your child's awareness. Learn the early and active signs of grooming or exploitation. Identify some trusted adults and reporting options for your child, that they trust. Set boundaries around technology use. And finally, include your child/teen in developing a safe tech use plan.

WEBSITES

CYBERTIP.CA
PROTECTCHILDREN.CA
SAFEWISE.COM

www.canada.ca/en/public-safety-canada/campaigns/online-child-sexual-exploitation.html

<https://kidshelpphone.ca/get-info/sexting-privacy-and-law>