

Child Online Safety



Key Points

- While the Internet enables many enriching experiences for children, there are also risks, including potential exposure to inappropriate content, contact with bullies or strangers, and loss of privacy.
- Microsoft's approach to children's online safety includes technology tools; education and guidance; robust internal policies and practices for moderating content and addressing online abuses; and partnerships with government, industry, law enforcement, and others to help create safer, more trusted computing experiences for everyone.
- Online safety is a community challenge, and government, industry, and others should work together to establish and implement safety principles. As governments address risks associated with emerging technologies and online services, it is important that they continue to encourage innovation and technology adoption in the process.

BACKGROUND

While the Internet provides access to a wealth of positive experiences for children, parents face challenges in monitoring the content their children encounter online, the people they meet there, and what they share. Risks facing children online today include:

- **Inappropriate content.** Children are curious and can stumble upon questionable content while searching for something else by clicking a presumably innocuous link in an instant message or blog, or when sharing files.
- **Inappropriate conduct.** Children—and adults too—may use the Internet to harass or exploit other people. Kids may sometimes broadcast hurtful, bullying comments or embarrassing images.
- **Inappropriate contact.** Adults can use the Internet to find and approach vulnerable youth. Frequently, their goal is to develop what youth believe to be meaningful online relationships, a process referred to as grooming.

MICROSOFT APPROACH

Microsoft takes a four-part approach to children's online safety:

- **Technology tools.** Parents can work to minimize online risks by using safety features built into a wide range of Microsoft products and services. For example, Microsoft Family Safety provides tools that help parents monitor and protect children online. Microsoft enables Microsoft account holders to specify who can view their profiles or contact them. In addition, Xbox 360 comes equipped with Console Safety Settings.
- **Internal policies and practices.** Company-wide policies, standards, and procedures in the development of Microsoft products and services that connect with the web promote online safety. These measures include enforcing a code of conduct for users of Microsoft online services, and moderating content and interactions to address issues such as abuse, illegal activity, and inappropriate material.
- **Partnerships.** In Microsoft's view, creating a safer online environment requires a holistic approach in which consumers, government leaders, technology providers, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) all play a vital role.

- **Education and guidance.** The Microsoft Safety & Security Center provides age-based guidance for Internet use, including tips on how to teach children what's appropriate to view and share online. The site offers guidance on such issues as online bullying, safer social networking, mobile device safety, responsible online gaming, and how to avoid, block, and report inappropriate behavior.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

- **Strengthen and enforce laws against child exploitation.** Microsoft works with the International Center for Missing & Exploited Children (ICMEC), INTERPOL, and other organizations to encourage governments to strengthen and enforce laws against the possession and distribution of child pornography.
- **Support industry self-regulation and legislative frameworks.** As governments address risks associated with emerging technologies and online services, they must also ensure that innovation and technology adoption aren't stifled along the way. In addition, government and industry must collaborate to establish safety principles and help offer a more secure online environment for youth. Examples of this collaboration include the Safer Social Networking Principles for the European Union, an ISP code of practice in Australia, and the European Union's CEO Coalition on Child Online Safety.
- **Promote integration of Internet safety education into school curricula and teacher training.** Microsoft believes that students and teachers can benefit from Internet safety education that teaches them how to avoid online dangers, protect their devices, and conduct themselves ethically on the web. The company encourages governments to work with Internet technology providers, online safety organizations, and school districts to help fill this need, using a range of available online safety curricula.
- **Commission studies and fund research to advance Internet safety.** Research is particularly important for identifying factors that increase online risks and for dispelling myths that can lead to misplaced efforts to advance Internet safety. Government funding for both academic and industry research in these areas is essential.



Helpful Resources

Microsoft Security & Safety Center with age-based guidelines for Internet use
www.microsoft.com/security

The International Centre of Missing & Exploited Children (ICMEC)
www.icmec.org

The Family Online Safety Institute
www.fosi.org

A comprehensive directory of parental control tools and safety education
www.getnetwise.org