

The Internet is Flat and Other Lessons for Online Safety



The young person's guide to
#StayingSafeOnline.

Appropriate for
pre-teens and teenagers

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Contents

Introduction.....	1
LESSON 1 - BE IN CONTROL.....	4
Angela's Findings.....	4
How Do I Stay In Control Of The Internet And Mobile Phones?.....	7
How Old Are You?.....	7
Do Not Desire It Just Because Everybody Is Using It.....	7
Set A Time Limit To Media Use.....	8
Not Every Content Or Information Online Is For You.....	9
So, What Do I Do About Pornography?.....	10
Gentleness And Kindness Are Still Important Virtues Online.....	11
Say 'No' To Inappropriate Conversations And Request For Photos.....	12
Activity.....	13
LESSON 2- BE SAFE.....	14
Tony Puts The Family At Risk.....	15
How Do You Keep Yourself Safe Online?.....	16
Set Strong Passwords For All Your Social Media Accounts.....	16
Be Strict About Your Privacy Online.....	17
Dealing With Online Grooming And Sexting.....	19
Sextortion.....	20
Are There Limits To My Right To Privacy?.....	22
Dealing With Cyber-bullying.....	24
Dealing With Financial And Other Fraud.....	26
Online Gambling.....	28
The Practice Of Safe Search.....	28
Activity.....	29
LESSON 3 - BE SMART.....	30
Bisi Falls In Love With Stem.....	31
So, How Do I Use The Internet Smartly?.....	32
1. Be Hungry For Knowledge.....	32
2. Surround Yourself Online With People Who Are Likeminded.....	33
3. Acquire Digital Skills.....	33
4. Become Media Literate.....	34
Between The Yahoo Boy, Hacker And Innovator.....	35
Intellectual Property And Creative Rights.....	37
Activity.....	39



HOW DO I STAY IN CONTROL OF THE INTERNET AND MOBILE PHONES?

HOW OLD ARE YOU?

You may already know that you must be thirteen years before you can join most social networks. The sites will always ask you for details of your date of birth during the registration process. With that information, they can prevent those who are not yet thirteen from joining.

To avoid being shut out, many pre-teens input a false year of birth in order to be allowed to register. It is important to note that the age restriction is in the best interest of young persons.

Firstly, it is for the purpose of privacy: The laws of some countries do not allow online companies to collect personal information belonging to young people.

Secondly, for the purpose of security: Very often, young persons are approached by strangers on social media. The age restriction required by law is for the purpose of making sure that individuals who use the platform attain some level of maturity before they get on board.

However, it is important to note that despite the age that social media companies set for entry, parents have the final say and can determine when their children or wards should join a social network.

It is important that you build integrity as a young person. So, do not get caught up in the desire to create a false profile. Social media companies eventually go ahead to delete the profiles of under-age users when they discover them.

DO NOT DESIRE IT JUST BECAUSE EVERYBODY IS USING IT.

This is because, firstly, you are not everybody. Secondly, using things merely because everybody is using it is not the smartest thing to do. Mobile phones, the internet and social media are there for specific purposes and it is good to make use of them because there is a need and not merely because every other person is using them.

Now, this may seem like basic information, but it is very foundational and important.

Before the personal computers we have today, computers were way bigger, yet, people were excited at the possibilities they offered.

Today, you don't hear of all those who were merely 'excited' or just 'users' of those large computers, but you hear of Bill Gates and Steve Jobs – because they played key roles in pioneering the personal computers we have today through creative and productive use of those large computers that others were merely excited about.

Your continuous question should be, 'How can I use the internet, social media and smartphones to grow my knowledge, better my academics, and help society?'

SET A TIME LIMIT TO MEDIA USE

Social media sites, chat sites and streaming sites are all great inventions. They help keep us entertained, informed and stay-in-touch with family and friends.

However, the word **moderation** is very key. It is therefore important that you obey rules that have been set by your parents/guardians, school or other authority concerning where and when to use these devices. These rules help for moderation.

Moreover, too much social media use, for example, has been linked with different issues, including less sleeping time and low self-esteem. Being cautious about how much time you spend online will help you not to become hooked on selfies, likes and comments of others online.

You should ask yourself, How do I feel whenever I am away from my mobile phone or my favourite social media/chat apps?

If the feeling is negative, you should set out a strategy to deal with overuse of mobile phone and social media.