



# 5 MISTAKES PARENTS MAKE WITH THEIR CHILD'S INTERNET SAFETY AND HOW TO FIX THEM

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As a law enforcement expert on Internet safety for families, I have helped tens of thousands of social media-connected teens and their parents in some difficult online situations. Technology is a moving target, but every online incident I have investigated happened because a parent made one or more of the following common Internet safety mistakes. Most online abuse is preventable. Here are the mistakes and how we can fix them:

## 1 GIVING THEIR CHILD A SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNT TOO EARLY

One of the biggest mistakes I see parents make is giving their child a social media account (e.g., Instagram, TikTok, etc.) at too young an age. The minimum age for all social media is 13-years-old. The federal government created this age requirement in the 1998 Children's Online Privacy Protection Rule (COPPA). If a parent gives their child social media before the age of 13, they are setting their child up for failure, and they are sending the wrong message. First, young children do not have the life experience and the emotional assets to manage the situations they will inevitably find themselves in, such as stranger interaction, exposure to explicit material, bullying, and threats. Second, every child knows they should be 13-years-old to have an Instagram account. When you agree to give it to them before 13, you are saying the rules don't matter.

## 2 NOT TALKING TO YOUR CHILD ABOUT WHAT IS AND IS NOT SAFE ONLINE BEHAVIOR

80% of parents have never discussed Internet safety with their child. Talking to thousands of parents every year, I have learned parents are not having this vital talk with their child because they do not know what to say. The number one safety factor in any child's life is a parent that will speak to them about necessary and sometimes tricky topics like Internet safety, bullying, drug use, vaping, etc. My [Mobile Device and Internet Contract](#) is a parent's script to opening a meaningful conversation about Internet safety with their child. Read each point to them, and then ask them to share their thoughts about it. Ask open-ended questions like, "Why do you think this is a good idea," or "what could happen if you let a stranger into your Instagram account?"

## 3 NOT SETTING SCREEN TIME LIMITS

Teens who spent more time on new media (screens) were more likely to report mental health issues than those who spent time on non-screen activities. A study found kids who spent three hours or more a day on smartphones were 34% more likely to suffer at least one suicide-related outcome—including feeling hopeless or seriously considering suicide—than kids who used devices for two hours a day or less. Among kids who used electronic devices five or more hours a day, 48% had at least one suicide-related outcome. We have to start taking screen time seriously. In a new set of guidelines, the World Health Organization said that infants under one year old should not be exposed to electronic screens and that children between the ages of two and four should not have more than one hour of "sedentary screen time" each day. Fortunately, both Apple and Android have remote-access capabilities, where parents can control their kids' phones. Even better, they both generate reports so you can see exactly where they're spending their time on their devices.

American Academy of Pediatrics' recommendations for screen time include:

- Limit the amount of total entertainment screen time to 1 to 2 hours per day.
- Discourage screen media exposure for children younger than 2 years of age.
- Keep the TV set and Internet-connected electronic devices out of the child's bedroom.



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- Monitor what media their children are using and accessing, including any Websites they are visiting and social media sites they may be using.
- Co-view TV, movies, and videos with children and teenagers and use them to discuss important family values.
- Model active parenting by establishing a family home use plan for all media. As part of the plan, enforce a mealtime and bedtime "curfew" for media devices, including cell phones. Establish reasonable but firm rules about cell phones, texting, the Internet, and social media use.

## 4 NOT TURNING ON PARENTAL CONTROLS ON ALL OF YOUR CHILD'S DEVICES

Parental controls are essential from limiting screen time to controlling who can message your child. My book, [Parenting in the Digital World](#), will provide you with step-by-step instructions on setting parental and privacy controls on all of your child's devices. This book will also give a full understanding of how to create a safe online environment for your family, including issues like online predators, pornography, viruses and malware, bullying, and more.

## 5 NOT INSTALLING A PARENTAL NOTIFICATION APP ON YOUR CHILD'S DEVICE

Even with parental controls and screen time restrictions, your kids may still get into some difficult situations. While part of it is just growing up, you'll want to make sure that you're there to help if they need you. Bark helps keep kids safe online, and by extension, in real life. It monitors text messages, emails, YouTube, and over two dozen social media platforms for signs of potential issues like cyberbullying, online predators, adult content, depression, acts of violence, and suicidal ideation. Bark will alert busy parents when problems arise, saving you time and providing peace of mind. Use [cybersafetycop](#) in the promo code when you sign up to get 15% off your subscription.

Thank you for signing up for our e-newsletter. Tackling these first five mistakes is a great start, but there is more to do! Over the coming weeks and months, I will be providing you with the knowledge and tools to make a difference in your child's digital world. It is not too much for you to handle, and I will be helping along the way.

Wishing peace and safety to you and your family,

## About Total Safety Solutions and Cyber Safety Cop™

Total Safety Solutions, owned and operated by Clayton Cranford, delivers training and keynote presentations worldwide on internet safety, cyberbullying, behavioral threat assessment, violence prevention, and school safety. Clayton is a nationally recognized law enforcement expert and regularly presents to schools, public groups, corporate teams, government organizations, and national conferences. Clayton, a National Bullying Prevention Award winner, is also the author of the acclaimed book "Parenting in the Digital World, A Step-by-Step Guide to Internet Safety."

Our timely and powerful advice will positively affect how your family lives and schools operate in a rapidly changing world.

