CLICK WITH CONFIDENCE:

An Online Safety Guide for People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities and the People Who Support Them

ELEVATUS TRAINING
LEADERS IN SEXUALITY AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY

WELCOME

Being online can be fun, but sometimes the internet can be tricky or unsafe. This online safety guide will help you stay safe while enjoying all the good things online.

Inside this guide, you will learn about:

- Positives and negatives of being online
- Eight tips for online safety
- Important information to remember
- Guidance for supporters

This guide will help you enjoy the internet while staying safe. Please share this with a friend.

Katherine McLaughlin

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THE POSITIVES AND NEGATIVES OF BEING ONLINE

THE POSITIVES

Being online can be fun and exciting. Some positive things about the internet include:

	Staying connected to other people.
	Celebrating important parts of your life.
	Learning new things.
	Watching funny videos.
	Playing games.

What do you like about being online?

_____

_____

_____

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THE NEGATIVES

However, there are some negative things too about being online:

People may pretend to be someone they are not.
Someone might pretend to be your friend/partner just to get your money.
Someone might send sexual pictures without your permission.
Someone might ask you to send them sexual pictures.
People may try to get your personal information or your money.
Some people may be mean or say hurtful things.

What do you dislike about being online?

_____

_____

_____

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8 TIPS FOR ONLINE SAFETY

Most people online will not hurt you, but here are some tips to stay safe when online.

TIP 1 EVERYTHING ONLINE IS PUBLIC

Even with privacy settings, the internet is still a public place. Only post things that are okay for anyone to see.

OKAY TO POST (PUBLIC THINGS):

- **Friendly greetings:** *"Hi friends! Hope you are having a good day."*
- **Updates about weather, work, or school:** *"It's sunny today!"* or *"I worked hard at my job."*
- **Public events:** *"I went to the county fair"* or *"I saw a play today."*
- **General updates that do not share private details:** *"My cousin got married"* or *"I made a new recipe.*

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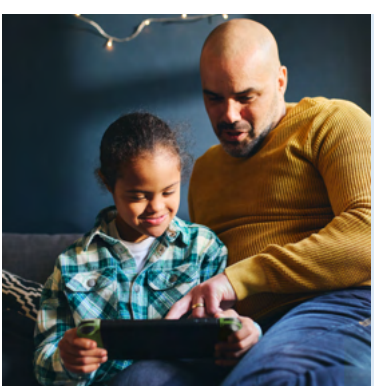
DON'TS

NOT OKAY TO POST (PRIVATE THINGS):

- Your address, phone number, or where you live.
- Your schedule or when you are alone.
- Private or body photos of yourself or others.
- Private topics such as sexual or body information.
- Money or bank information.
- Passwords or login info.
- Complaints about people you know.
- Posts made when you are upset or angry.



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TIP 2 "ONLINE-ONLY" FRIENDS

People you meet online (social media, gaming, and dating apps) are casual friends or "online only" friends. If you want to change the type of relationship, you need to become real-life friends by meeting them face-to-face.

- **Meet in a public place**, such as a park, restaurant, or movie theater.
- **Bring a friend** or trusted adult with you.
- **Take your time** and make sure you feel safe before meeting.
- **Do not invite them to your home for the first time you meet.** If you decide to do so later on, make sure other people are at your home too.
- **Some people decide** to only talk online with people that they know in real life.

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TIP 3 PROTECT YOUR PERSONAL INFORMATION

Personal information is private and should never be shared online, including:

- Full name, address, phone number
- Passwords
- Bank or credit card numbers
- Birthdate or ID numbers

A scammer is someone who tries to trick you into giving them your money or personal information. They might pretend to be a friend, ask for money or passwords, and say things that are not true.

Always check with a trusted person before giving money or personal info.

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TIP 4 NEVER SEND OR ACCEPT MONEY ONLINE

Some people online may try a **romance scam**. This is when someone pretends to be your friend or partner to get money from you.

- **Never** send or accept money online.
- If someone **does not respect your boundary** and keeps asking for money, it is a sign that the situation may be unsafe.

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TIP 5 BE CAREFUL SENDING SEXUAL PHOTOS

Some people might ask you to send sexual photos. This can lead to serious problems.

Sexting means sending sexual photos, videos, or messages to someone using your phone, computer, or online apps.

- **Online-only friends:** Never send a sext.
- **In a relationship:** Think carefully – what if you break up? Do you want them to have that photo forever?

Sextortion: This means someone tries to blackmail you for money after you send a sexual photo. Here is an example:
"If you do not send me $100, I will show this photo to everyone you know!"

Rule: If they are an online-only friend, do not send sexual photos.

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TIP 6 THINK BEFORE YOU POST

Ask yourself before posting anything online:

- Would I be okay if my grandparents, boss, or the local newspaper saw this?
- If the answer is no, do not post it.

Once you send or post something, you cannot always take it back.

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TIP 7 NOT EVERYONE ONLINE IS HONEST

Some people pretend to be someone else online.

- Example: They might say they are 18, but they are really 56.

A helpful reminder:

> *Nice is different than good.*
>
> – Kate Napolitano

This means that just because someone seems friendly or kind online, it does not always mean they are safe or can be trusted. Always pay attention to their actions, not just their words. Ask a trusted person for help if something feels wrong.

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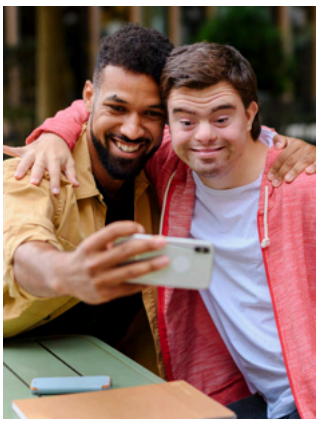
TIP 8 SPEAK UP IF SOMETHING FEELS WRONG



If someone or something online makes you uncomfortable or you are unsure, tell a trusted person right away. This helps you recognize abuse and stay safe.

Examples of trusted people are:

- Family members
- A friend you have known for a long time
- Support worker
- Teacher or school staff member
- Doctor or healthcare professional

Who can you ask for help?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

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THINGS TO REMEMBER

The internet can be fun and helpful, but it is important to stay safe. Remember these rules**:**

- **Only share things** that are safe for anyone to see.
- **Never share** personal information, money, or passwords.
- **Do not send sexual photos** to online-only friends.
- **Meet online friends in public places** with someone you trust, too.
- **Think before you post**, and remember that not everyone online is honest.

Most importantly: If something feels wrong or confusing, ask someone you trust for help. This helps keep you safe and lets you enjoy all the good parts of the internet with confidence.

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TIPS FOR SUPPORTERS

Supporting people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to navigate the internet safely is about building skills, confidence, and independence. These tips will help you guide them in learning about the internet, practicing safe habits, and building confidence while online.

1. Share the Guide: Give this guide to the people you support. Review it together or let them read it and ask questions. Encourage curiosity and discussion—it helps them learn and remember.

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2. Use a Healthy Foundations Approach

- Focus on building skills rather than just giving rules.
- Encourage them to practice safe habits step by step.
- Celebrate small successes to build confidence online.

3. Use Scenario Examples: Give real-life situations to practice with examples. Practice responses together so they know how to react safely.

> *"Someone asks for your password —what should you do?"*
>
> *"A new friend online asks to meet —how do you stay safe?"*

4. Talk About Where to Get Help: Help them make a list of trusted people and remind them it is always okay to ask for help if something online feels confusing or unsafe.

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5. Share Resources and Learn More: Help them access videos, workshops, or guides in a way that matches their learning style. Some helpful resources include:

Project SHINE | Your Sexual Health Toolkit
Common Sense Media | Digital Citizenship
NetSmartz | Safety Education
AMAZE Video | Being Safe On the Internet

The best way to support someone online is to share knowledge, practice together, and encourage questions. By guiding them with knowledge, patience, and trust, you help them stay safe, confident, and empowered in the digital world.

For more resources to support people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to learn about healthy relationships and sexuality, visit our website at www.elevatustraining.com.

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