



IMMANUEL COLLEGE

PARENT RESOURCES

The ABC Model: How to Create a Safe Online Environment for Your Child

In today's digital world, ensuring your child's online safety is a top priority. The ABC Model provides a structured approach to creating a secure and supportive digital environment for your child, focusing on three key principles: Access, Boundaries, and Communication.

- **Access:** Implementing safety settings, parental controls, and privacy measures to manage and monitor digital exposure.
- **Boundaries:** Establishing clear rules around screen time, online behavior, and family technology use.
- **Communication:** Engaging in ongoing conversations about online safety, risks, and responsible digital habits.

By following this model, parents can not only protect their children from potential online risks but also help them develop healthy and responsible digital habits.

ACCESS: THE DIGITAL SEATBELT

Giving your child a smartphone, tablet, or gaming console without safeguards is like handing them the keys to a vehicle with no brakes or seatbelts. Ensuring safe access means setting up protective measures before they start using a device.

1. Activate parental controls on devices and apps to filter or block inappropriate content and manage screen time.
2. Use tools like Google Safe Search and YouTube Restricted Mode for children under 10.
3. Implement strict "off" times at night to prevent excessive screen exposure and ensure healthy sleep habits.
4. Adjust privacy settings on social media and gaming platforms to keep your child's identity private and disable unnecessary geolocation features.
5. For younger children, use a parent's email when setting up accounts to maintain control over access and security.

As you apply these settings, engage your child in discussions about online safety. Help them understand the difference between safe and unsafe online behaviours.

BOUNDARIES: THE ONLINE ROAD RULES

Just as road rules keep drivers safe, clear online boundaries help guide children's digital behaviors. Involving your child in setting these rules increases their sense of responsibility and accountability.

1. Create a family tech agreement outlining screen time, appropriate online behavior, and parental involvement in their digital life.
2. Enforce both positive and negative consequences for online behavior. Reward responsible usage and address any rule-breaking consistently.
3. Establish screen routines that define when and how devices can be used. Younger children may benefit from structured time slots, while teenagers should have clear "off" times (e.g., no screens after 8pm or no social media during homework).
4. Designate screen-free zones or times in your home to encourage face-to-face interactions. Ensure these rules apply to everyone in the household, including parents, to set a strong example.

By reinforcing boundaries through consistent enforcement and discussions, children learn responsible digital habits that benefit them in the long run.



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COMMUNICATION: THE VEHICLE FOR DIGITAL SAFETY AND WELLBEING

Open and ongoing communication about online safety is essential. Conversations about digital habits should start early and be an everyday part of family discussions.

1. Get involved in your child's digital world by asking about their favorite apps, games, and online activities. Show genuine interest and keep the conversation positive to encourage openness.
2. Teach younger children about online privacy, the dangers of interacting with strangers, and how personal information can be misused.
3. Discuss more complex topics with older children, including online conflicts, cyberbullying, peer pressure, digital footprints, and the risks of sharing personal content.
4. Encourage your child to come to you with any online concerns. Let them know they can rely on you for support without fear of punishment.

By fostering trust and keeping the dialogue open, you empower your child to navigate the online world safely and responsibly.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Following the ABC Model—Access, Boundaries, and Communication—helps create a secure digital environment where children can explore, learn, and engage online while minimising risks. By implementing safety measures, setting clear expectations, and maintaining open communication, parents can equip their children with the skills and knowledge they need to thrive in the digital age.

