How To Stay Safe Online



This guide offers practical steps to help you stay safer online while still accessing the connections and activities that matter to you.

Being online is an important part of everyday life. You use technology to stay connected with friends, go to school or do homework, play games, explore your interests, and express yourself. But people can also use technology to hurt others. For example, an abusive current or former partner may use technology to keep track of you, contact you, gather information about you, or interfere with your online life.

Their abusive behaviour is not your fault. You do not have to stop using social media, give up your accounts, or disappear from the Internet to be safe. There

are steps you can take to increase your privacy and make it harder for someone to access information about you.

1. Think Before You Post

Once something is online, you can't fully control it. Even if you delete it later, someone else may have already shared it, screenshotted it, or saved it. You should only post things you'd be okay with anyone seeing or sharing, even if you are posting them from a private account or in a closed group.

2. Protect Your Personal Info

Be careful what personal information you share online and who can see your content. Set strict privacy settings so strangers or abusive partners can't see your posts.

Don't post things that would make it easier for someone to find or contact you, such as:

- Your phone number or address
- Your school or workplace
- Your birthday or daily routines
- Photos with easy-to-recognize landmarks

3. Set Boundaries Online

You get to decide what's okay to share.

- Ask friends and family not to post or tag you without your permission. On some apps, you can change your settings so you get to approve posts you've been tagged in before they appear.
- Avoid location check-ins, tagging yourself, or posting private details about yourself or friends.
- Tell people not to share your personal info or check-ins.
- Respect friends' privacy too; ask them before posting about them online.

Remember: you should control your own story.

4. Keep Your Passwords Private

Never share passwords, not even with your partner or best friend.
Love doesn't mean giving up your privacy.

5. Be Kind and Do Not Respond to Harassment

Don't say or do things online that you wouldn't do face-to-face.
Words and posts can hurt, and screenshots last forever.

If someone is sending you mean, threatening, or inappropriate messages, don't reply even if you think it's safe to do so. Responding to harassing messages or comments usually makes things worse.

6. Watch Out for Your Friends

If a friend is in an unhealthy or abusive relationship, be careful what you post about them.

Ask before sharing pictures or tagging them, as your post could put them at risk if their partner is controlling or watching them.

When in doubt, ask first, post later.

7. Trust Your Gut and Talk to Someone You Trust

If something doesn't feel right, it probably isn't. If you're concerned, scared, or hurt by the way someone is acting online, reach out to someone you trust. You don't have to deal with this alone.

- Tell a friend, school counsellor, or trusted adult. If you have a youth counsellor or support worker, let them know what's happening.
- You can also reach out to the following resources for help:
    - Kids Help Phone: 1-800-688-6868, text CONNECT to 686868 or chat through their website
    - Suicide Crisis Helpline: Call or text 9-8-8
    - A local shelter or counsellor who understands digital abuse

You don't need to delete your accounts or give up your phone to be safe. With the right boundaries and privacy settings, you can use technology safely and confidently.

Technology-facilitated gender-based violence is part of a continuum of violence that can be both online and in-person. If you or someone you know is experiencing technology-facilitated violence, you are not alone. Encourage them to chat with a trusted adult, connect with the Kids Help Phone to create a safety plan, or use ShelterSafe.ca to find a shelter/transition house

near you to discuss options and create a safety plan. You don't need to stay in a shelter to access free, confidential services and support.