



IJM



FROM INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE MISSION

Keeping Kids Safe Online

**A practical guide for parents and grandparents
in a digital world**

The internet is always on.

SO IS THE FIGHT TO PROTECT OUR CHILDREN.

While summer invites us to slow down, the fight for justice never takes a break. Slavery, trafficking and violence persist around the world—and at International Justice Mission, our teams are on the ground every day to stop it. From rescuing children from online exploitation to helping survivors rebuild their lives, we work to bring freedom and safety to those who need it most.

As a parent, grandparent, neighbor or friend, you may not be facing global trafficking firsthand—but you are on the front lines of protection in your own home and community. And your role is vital.

TODAY'S DIGITAL WORLD OFFERS AMAZING OPPORTUNITIES—BUT ALSO ALARMING RISKS. RECENT RESEARCH SHOWS THAT:

1 IN 5

9-17-years-old reported having an online sexual interaction with some they believed to be an adult.

1 IN 7

minors have shared a nude image or video of themselves. Among them 1 in 3 reported sharing one with an adult.

1 IN 17

minors reported having personally experienced sextortion.*

* Sextortion is one of the fastest-growing threats facing children online. Offenders approach minors on social media sites, gaming sites, or chat applications and deceive them into producing explicit images and videos, then threaten them to release the images unless a demand is paid.

The reality is sobering. But here's the good news: **you are not alone.**

This guide offers three essential conversations every family should have about online safety. You'll find encouragement, tools and practical steps to help your children navigate the digital world with confidence and wisdom.

At IJM, we believe every child deserves to be safe—and every person can play a part in the fight for justice. By taking action in your home, you're standing alongside a global movement to protect the vulnerable.

Until All Are Free.

“Preparation is the best protection. The more kids know, the better they can respond.”

—THORN



Tip #1

DON'T JUST SHIELD YOUR KIDS FROM THE ONLINE WORLD. PREPARE THEM FOR IT.

The internet evolves faster than most of us can keep up. New apps, platforms, and trends pop up constantly—and it can feel impossible to monitor it all. That's why the goal isn't just to control access. It's to equip your children with wisdom and awareness.

Parental control tools are helpful, and many devices come with built-in safety settings. But eventually, kids will encounter digital spaces you can't monitor. When that happens, they'll be safer if they're prepared—not just protected.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- 1 Use age-appropriate language to explain online risks
- 2 Talk about things like image-sharing, online friendships, and how to respond to uncomfortable situations
- 3 Let them know they can always come to you without fear of shame or punishment
- 4 Use discussion guides from trusted organizations like [Thorn.org](https://www.thorn.org) to help start the conversation

Tip #2

MOVE BEYOND “STRANGER DANGER.”

We all grew up hearing it: “Don’t talk to strangers.” But in the digital world, it’s not enough. Online, a stranger can look like a friend—and time spent chatting doesn’t mean someone is trustworthy.

Even adults are tricked by online deception. For kids, the risks are even greater. Predators can pose as peers, create fake identities and spend weeks or months building false trust.

Your child needs to know that just because someone “seems nice” or “feels familiar” doesn’t make them safe.

RED FLAGS TO WATCH FOR IN ONLINE CONVERSATIONS:

- Asks them to keep the conversation a secret
- Wants to move the chat to a different app or platform
- Starts asking personal questions (like age, school or location)
- Sends or asks for photos—especially if the conversation turns flirty or uncomfortable
- Says things like “You’re mature for your age” or “I feel like I can really trust you”
- Tries to make them feel guilty for not responding quickly

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- 1 Explain that online trust is different from in-person trust
- 2 Reinforce that anyone can pretend to be someone else online
- 3 Share real (age-appropriate) stories of online deception
- 4 Help them identify red flags and know when to walk away

PARENT TIP:

ROLE-PLAY DIFFERENT SCENARIOS WITH YOUR CHILD SO THEY CAN PRACTICE HOW TO RESPOND—OR DISENGAGE COMPLETELY.

Tip #3

RULES ARE IMPORTANT—BUT THEY'RE NOT ENOUGH. BUILD TRUST.

Rules are necessary. But let's be honest: most kids will break them at some point. That's why trust is more important than control.


The most powerful protection you can offer your child is an open, shame-free relationship. One where they know they can come to you—no matter what.

Only 6% of kids ages 9–17 told a trusted adult after being sent a nude photo by someone they believed to be an adult.

Many were afraid of getting in trouble. Let's change that.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- 1 Tell your child they can always come to you—especially if they feel scared or confused
- 2 Emphasize that their safety is more important than any rule they might have broken
- 3 Identify together who the “trusted adults” in their life are
- 4 Keep lines of communication open, even when it's uncomfortable

A warm, intimate photograph of a man and a young boy. The man, with dark hair and a gentle smile, is leaning over a table, looking down at a birthday cake. The boy, with dark hair and a curious expression, is looking up at the man. In the background, out of focus, are several colorful balloons in shades of green, pink, and yellow. The overall mood is celebratory and supportive.

**No child ever
deserves to be
hurt—no matter
what they've
done. They need
to know you're on
their side.**

Partner Resources

YOU DON'T HAVE TO FIGURE IT OUT ALONE.

As you guide your child through the digital world, you can rely on a network of trusted experts and organizations dedicated to keeping kids safe online:

TECH SAFETY TOOLS

COMMONSENSEMEDIA.ORG

App reviews and media guides

BARK.US

Offers parental controls for screen time and monitoring

CANADIAN CENTRE FOR CHILD PROTECTION (C3P)

PROTECTKIDSONLINE.CA

Age-based online safety tools

NATIONAL CENTER FOR MISSING & EXPLOITED CHILDREN (NCMEC)

MISSINGKIDS.ORG/NETSMARTZ

Safety tips and videos for every age

CYBERTIPLINE.ORG

Report online exploitation

THORN

THORN.ORG/PARENTS

Guides and conversation starters

How IJM is Fighting Back

**CHILDREN ARE BEING EXPLOITED.
TOGETHER WE CAN STOP IT.**

At International Justice Mission, we believe every child deserves to be safe—whether at home, in their community or online. While this guide focuses on helping you protect your child in the digital world, it also connects to a much bigger mission: ending violence and exploitation everywhere.

THROUGH OUR GLOBAL TEAMS AND LOCAL PARTNERS, IJM WORKS TO:

Rescue children, women and men from trafficking and slavery

Prosecute perpetrators

Strengthen justice systems

Support survivors in their healing journey

This includes confronting online sexual exploitation of children—a horrific crime where predators pay to abuse children through video and messaging platforms. IJM collaborates with law enforcement, aftercare partners and tech experts to bring freedom and justice.

We know that
transformation is
possible—when
courageous
people like you
refuse to look
away.



Take Action Today

YOU'VE TAKEN A POWERFUL FIRST STEP—DON'T STOP HERE.

Protecting children in a digital world starts with small, faithful actions—conversations, awareness and preparation. But it doesn't have to end there.

At IJM, we work every day to stop the violence and exploitation that threaten children's lives around the world. And we believe the same courage it takes to talk to your child about online safety is the courage that fuels a global movement of protection and justice.

HERE'S HOW YOU CAN TAKE THE NEXT STEP:

STAY INFORMED

Sign up for IJM's updates for more tools and stories

SPREAD AWARENESS

Share this guide with others

SUPPORT THE MISSION

Your gift helps rescue children and restore survivors

Join the movement. Be a voice for the vulnerable.
Because justice doesn't take a break.
And neither does your impact.

UNTIL ALL ARE FREE.