



CANADIAN CENTRE *for* CHILD PROTECTION®

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# The **DOOR** that's not **Locked.**®

## Safety and the Internet:

A Guide for Parents  
of Children 8 to 9  
Years of Age



[thedoorthatsnotlocked.ca](http://thedoorthatsnotlocked.ca)

The Internet can offer incredible possibilities for kids — as long as children and parents are aware of the risks. In growing a better understanding of the online world, you can in turn empower your child with skills to help her/him engage with technology in a safe and responsible way.



At this age, kids have an increased interest in spending time online playing games, socializing, learning, and exploring new interests. The online world is far reaching and largely uncensored, so you need to know what your kids are facing as they explore it. This brochure includes information about: the common online interests of kids 8 to 9 years of age; considerations around safety; and strategies to build their knowledge and competency online.

## Keeping Children 8 to 9 Years of Age Healthy & Safe

ALL WEB.  
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As your child gets older, you will notice changes in her/his behaviour and interests. While it's exciting to see your child seek more independence, parents should be aware of personal and online safety considerations. The following section outlines common characteristics of kids 8 to 9 years of age.

### The Growing Personality

Children 8 to 9 years of age:

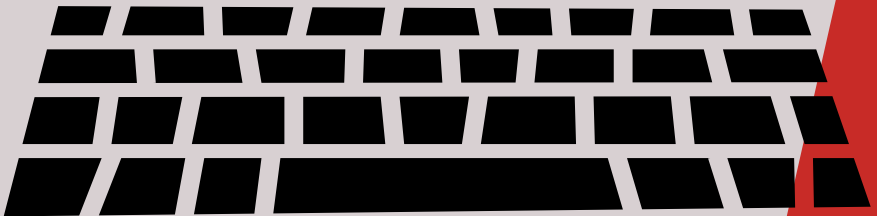
- ✦ Begin to develop a sense of who they are based on how peers treat them (e.g. if a peer says something hurtful, they may conclude that they are not liked).
- ✦ May test parental limits through negative behaviour.
- ✦ Form more complex peer relationships — interactions are based on rules and the “pecking order” becomes apparent.
- ✦ Start to compare their bodies to others (e.g. body image). They may make incorrect judgments about their appearance.
- ✦ Acquire pride and enjoyment from doing something well (e.g. academics, sports, music, art, etc.).
- ✦ Begin to seek privacy (e.g. ask people to knock before entering their room).

- ✦ Are easily influenced. They may not yet be using social networking sites, tweeting, and/or texting, but they are aware of these programs and are paying close attention to how people such as mom, dad, older siblings, celebrities, etc. are using them.
- ✦ Take games very seriously and losing can be taken personally.
- ✦ Fantasy play becomes more realistic. Rather than role-playing their favourite superhero, they may take on the role of a police officer or a veterinarian.

## Online Activities

Children 8 to 9 years of age:

- ✦ Use online games
- ✦ Download and use applications (apps) on tablets
- ✦ Use instant messaging programs (e.g. Skype®, KIK® Messenger, iMessage®)
- ✦ Use email
- ✦ Use the Internet for school work
- ✦ Research topics and interests using search engines (e.g. Google®, Yahoo!®, Bing®)
- ✦ Use online video sites (e.g. YouTube®)
- ✦ Use Wi-Fi capable devices (e.g. personal computers, video game consoles, smartphones, tablets or digital audio players)
- ✦ Use social networking sites (e.g. Instagram®, Twitter®, Facebook®)
- ✦ Download games, music, pictures, etc.



## Online Games

Online games, on websites or apps, are very popular among kids of all ages; particularly those between 8 and 9 years of age. The interactive components of online games make them very appealing. While it is easy for parents to believe their children are safe while playing an online game, precautions need to be taken as most online games have a chat component where children can interact with other players on an ongoing basis.

To keep your child safer:

- ✎ Assist with the creation of online profiles. When signing up for online games, provide a family or parental email account rather than your child's email address.
- ✎ Monitor the game apps your child is downloading onto your Wi-Fi capable device. The majority are free and can be easily downloaded without a parent's consent.
- ✎ Explore the online games your child likes to play to determine if they are age-appropriate. Is the game moderated? Does it contain sexually explicit or violent material?
- ✎ When setting up a video game console for the first time, be sure you are present to activate any parental controls and create passwords for those controls.
- ✎ Learn about the features of a game that allow users to restrict/block certain players' access.
- ✎ Be involved and show interest in the online games your child plays. If possible, play the games with your child.
- ✎ Find out more about the games your child is playing online by visiting these sites:
  - "Children's Technology Review" — [childrenstech.com](http://childrenstech.com)
  - "GamerDad" — [gamerdad.com](http://gamerdad.com)

## What Can I Do As A Parent?

- ✎ Teach your child how to use technology safely.
- ✎ Set a good example for your child as kids pay attention to how you use and how often you use Wi-Fi capable devices, blogs and social networking sites. Make sure to model the same behaviour you've set for your child.
- ✎ Balance the amount of time your child spends online with offline activities.
- ✎ Use filtering software (for more information, visit [thedoorthatsnotlocked.ca](http://thedoorthatsnotlocked.ca)).
- ✎ Supervise your child's online activities.
- ✎ Restrict your child's use of adult search engines.
- ✎ Know your child's login information, passwords and email addresses. What username or character names has your child given her/himself? It should not contain identifying characteristics about her/him or her/his hobbies (e.g. shygirl, bookworm, etc.).
- ✎ Explore the online games your child plays to determine if they are age appropriate. Is the game moderated? Is there a chat component? Are avatars used? Does it contain sexual or violent material?
- ✎ Closely supervise what she/he uses the console for and the features offered by the games s/he plays.
- ✎ Seek games that offer the ability to block or restrict individuals who can play with your child and allow you to mute other individuals from chatting with your child.
- ✎ Visit the website of the operating system used on your child's computer (e.g. Microsoft® Windows® 8, OS X Mountain Lion®, etc.) and the gaming system used by your child (e.g. Xbox One®, Wii U®, etc.) to find out about the parental controls you can activate to keep your child safer.

## What Should You Talk to Your Child About?

- ✘ Let your child know that you will monitor her/his online activities because the Internet is a public place.
- ✘ Create and post Internet guidelines that are discussed with your child on a regular basis.
- ✘ Show your child how to use child-safe search engines (e.g. KidRex™).
- ✘ Discuss the difference between public and private information. Personal information is private information, and shouldn't be shared on the Internet without parental permission.
- ✘ Explain to your child that there is a lot of really good information on the Internet but there is also inappropriate material. Let her/him know that if s/he comes across something or someone that makes her/him feel uncomfortable, s/he can tell you without any fear of getting in trouble.
- ✘ Teach your child the safety strategy; "If Asked to Share and Your Parents Aren't Aware — SAY NO!". This encourages her/him to practice checking with parents before sharing personal information online. Review with your child where s/he may be asked for this kind of information online.
- ✘ Teach your child to create secure passwords that others can't easily guess, and that contain a combination of numbers, characters and letters (both upper- and lower-case). Advise her/him not to share passwords with anyone.
- ✘ Reinforce the idea that not everyone is who they say they are online. People can pretend to be older, younger or a different gender than they actually are.
- ✘ Just as you would explain appropriate behaviour in the offline world, the same guidelines should be provided for online activities.
- ✘ Ensure your child gets your permission before chatting with other online gamers, or on social networking sites, instant messaging, etc. Teach them to only have online friends who they also know offline. Explain that the Internet isn't a place to make new friends. Talk with your child about what friendship is and isn't. For more information, visit [thedoorthatsnotlocked.ca](http://thedoorthatsnotlocked.ca).
- ✘ Explain to your child that pictures/videos should only be shared between family members and friends. Explain that once they are on the Internet,



or sent through mobile devices, it is easy to lose control over what happens to them. It is important to encourage your child to check with you before sending or posting any pictures/videos online or through a mobile device.

- ✘ Tell your child not to open any email attachments if s/he doesn't know the sender.
- ✘ Don't allow your child to communicate in unmonitored chat rooms that are associated with many online games. Closely supervise chat that occurs in moderated chat rooms as well.

## Quick Facts – Your Child's Online Interests



### Avatar

An avatar is a pictorial representation of an individual. It may take the form of an animal, creature or person, and is often used in chat forums, games and personal profiles.

### Applications (Apps)

Over the past few years, the number of mobile apps has grown exponentially with the significant rise in smartphone and tablet usage. Most of the time that children 8 to 9 years old spend on smartphones, tablets and other Wi-Fi connecting devices involves using gaming, social networking and instant messaging apps. Generally speaking, apps are simple and fun to use but they, like websites, are public domains and therefore their use by children needs to be monitored.



### Webcam

A webcam is a video camera that is, in many cases, built in to a computer or wireless device. A webcam may also be a separate device connected to a computer through a wired connection or over Wi-Fi. Video captured by a webcam can be displayed over the Internet in real time and is often used in conjunction with instant messaging or chat applications. A webcam may also be used to capture still images.



## Instant Messaging (e.g. Skype<sup>®</sup>, Facebook<sup>®</sup> Messenger, KIK<sup>®</sup> Messenger, iMessage<sup>®</sup>)

Instant messaging (also known as IM) allows users to send real-time messages to other users, also known as contacts, friends, or buddies. Short text messages are sent back and forth, and some IM programs also allow file transfer, webcam viewing, voice chat and other applications.

## Search Engine (e.g. Google<sup>®</sup>, Yahoo!<sup>®</sup>, Bing<sup>®</sup>, KidRex<sup>™</sup>)



Internet search engines assist users in finding websites on any given subject. The search engines maintain databases of websites and use programs to continuously gather information.



## Massive Multiplayer Online Role Playing Game (MMORPG) (e.g. RuneScape<sup>®</sup>, World of Warcraft<sup>®</sup>, Conquer<sup>™</sup>).

A MMORPG is a type of online game where a large number of players interact with one another in a virtual/fantasy world.

## Video Game Consoles (e.g. Wii U<sup>®</sup>, Xbox One<sup>®</sup>, Play Station<sup>®</sup> 4)



A video game console is an interactive computer or electronic device that uses a TV or monitor to display the video game. More recently, video game consoles allow users to connect to the Internet so multiple players in any given game can interact online. While players can interact with each other through these games, the conversation history cannot be easily saved with these devices.





## Wi-Fi Capable Devices

Wi-Fi is a popular technology that allows an electronic device to exchange data wirelessly over a computer network. A device that can use Wi-Fi (such as a personal computer, video game console, smartphone, tablet, or digital audio player) can not only connect to the Internet,

but may also connect to other resources on a network such as a webcam, printer or monitor.

## Social Networking Sites (e.g. Facebook®, Instagram®, Twitter®)

Social networking sites focus on facilitating the building of social networks or relationships among people who may share similar interests, activities, backgrounds, or real-life connections. A social networking site features profiles created by each user, information on the user's social contacts in the network, and provides a means for users to interact with other users over the Internet, such as e-mail and instant messaging. Social networking sites allow users to share ideas, activities, events and interests within the network, thereby encouraging individuals to post personal information (e.g. pictures, thoughts, etc.) and chat with others in real time.



### FACEBOOK® TERMS

- ✦ **Tag** — Facebook allows you to 'tag' individuals in photos posted to the social networking site so they are easily identifiable in the image. An individual's name is associated to the photo once s/he has been tagged in it.
- ✦ **Like** — Facebook allows you to 'like' a post made to the social networking site by another user. Individuals use this to show a positive interest in a photo, video, comment, etc. that has been posted.
- ✦ **Poke** — Facebook allows you to 'poke' other users to get their attention. The user will receive a notification that they have been poked by another user.
- ✦ **Follow** — Facebook allows users to 'follow' other users. Followers can view public posts and are not added as 'friends'.

## TWITTER® TERMS

- ✦ **Tweet®** — Twitter is an online social networking service that enables its users to send and read text-based messages of up to 140 characters known as “tweets.”
- ✦ **Retweet** — A retweet is when a user re-posts someone else’s tweet to their followers. Sometimes users type “RT” at the beginning of the tweet to indicate that they are re-posting someone else’s content.
- ✦ **Hashtag** — People use the hashtag symbol “#” before a relevant keyword or phrase (with no spaces) in their tweet to categorize the tweet and help it show more easily in Twitter searches.

## KIK® MESSENGER TERMS

- ✦ **Kik me** — This phrase is often used in a social networking (e.g. Instagram®, Twitter®, Facebook®) status update and is followed by the user’s KIK Messenger name for the purpose of encouraging others to add them as KIK Messenger contact.



## Common Language Used by Children Online

Do you know what your child is saying?

ABBREVIATION	MEANING	ABBREVIATION	MEANING
asl	age/sex/location	nvm	never mind
bf/gf	boyfriend/girlfriend	omg	oh my gosh
brb	be right back	pic	picture
cam/kam	webcam	plz	please
g2g/gtg	got to go	ppl	people
h/o	hang on	sxy/sexi	sexy
jk/jks	just kidding/jokes	ttyl	talk to you later
kk	ok cool	ty	thank you
lol	laugh out loud	ud	you would
noob	new individual	ur	you are

**TIP:** Sounding out the string of letters may help you understand the word or words. Also try adding letters to a string of text to figure out the word.

# Risks to Children 8 to 9 Years of Age on the Internet

It's important to teach your child strategies that will make her/his online experiences safer.

## Content

### Exposure to Sexually Explicit Material

Kids have never before been so exposed to sexually graphic and harmful material. At this age, they are not developmentally ready to handle viewing graphic sexual content, yet in the online world it is easy to stumble upon. Kids will often use search engines to learn just about anything. While searching, they can come across sexually explicit material. In an effort to reduce their exposure, be sure they are using child-appropriate search engines (e.g. KidRex™). Test a few to decide which one to use.

## Conduct

### The Public Nature of the Internet

Kids underestimate the public nature of the Internet. They aren't always aware that once information is sent online, the sender loses control over what happens to it. Teach your child to be careful about what s/he shares online.

### Building Relationships

A large portion of a child's social world has now moved online. The 8- to 9-year-old age group typically begins communicating through online games and email. Relationships can start quickly, and caution should be taken as kids can easily be tricked. Monitor your child's Internet use closely, and discuss the qualities of healthy and unhealthy friendships (see the *Healthy Friendships and Internet Safety* and *Unhealthy Friendships and Internet Safety* safety sheets at [thedoorthatsnotlocked.ca](http://thedoorthatsnotlocked.ca)).

## Contact

### Chat Component of Games

The multiplayer capability of online games makes them appealing to kids. While it's easy to think your child is safe while playing a game, adult supervision and guidance is necessary. Most online games have a chat component where children can interact with others in real time.



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**The Canadian Centre for Child Protection** is a registered charitable organization dedicated to the personal safety of all children. Our goal is to reduce child victimization by providing programs and services to Canadians. We do this through Kids in the Know, our personal safety education program ([kidsintheknow.ca](http://kidsintheknow.ca)); Cybertip.ca, our national tipline for reporting the online sexual exploitation of children ([cybertip.ca](http://cybertip.ca)); MissingKids.ca, our national missing children resource centre ([missingkids.ca](http://missingkids.ca)); and Commit to Kids, our program to help organizations prevent child sexual abuse ([commit2kids.ca](http://commit2kids.ca)).

## The Door That's Not Locked — All web. No net.

The web is a wonderful place for kids, if you understand the dangers. The Canadian Centre is committed to helping parents, teachers, and anyone else who would like to better understand the good, the bad, and the ugly about the web. We're here to help keep kids safe while exploring and enjoying the online world. To learn more, visit us at [thedoorthatnotlocked.ca](http://thedoorthatnotlocked.ca).

To make a report about the online sexual exploitation of a child, go to [cybertip.ca](http://cybertip.ca).

### Founding Partners:



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More information on child safety is available at [protectchildren.ca](http://protectchildren.ca) or by contacting us at:

615 Academy Road  
Winnipeg, MB R3N 0E7  
204.945.5735  
1.800.532.9135

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