



Online safety, age by age

What to set up, what to talk about and what to do when something goes wrong — on one resource, from a child's first phone to the teenage years.

For: **parents and grandparents**Ages: **4–17**Reading time: **12 minutes**Format: **printable A4**

■ The basic rule: stay close, not just watchful

No filter replaces a relationship in which your child tells you what happened online. Settings buy you time; conversations build trust. A child who knows they won't lose their phone for telling you about a problem will tell you sooner.

■ Age by age

Age	What to set up	What to talk about
4–7	Devices used only in shared rooms. Apps installed by you. YouTube Kids or playlists you choose. In-app purchases blocked.	"If you see something that scares or confuses you, come to me. You won't be in trouble." What an advert is.
8–10	Parental controls on (Google Family Link or Screen Time on iPhone). Safe search on. Time limits agreed together.	What is never shared: home address, school, passwords, photos that show the house. How to spot a stranger pretending to be a child.
11–13	Most social networks require users to be at least 13. If they open an account: private profile, comments from friends only, location off. Games checked against the PEGI rating.	Online bullying, dangerous "challenges", and why a photo once sent can never be taken back.
14–17	Move from control to agreement: written rules made together and reviewed every term. Two-step verification on important accounts.	Disinformation, pressure to send intimate images, money online (betting, "investments", fake job scams).

■ Five settings that make a difference

- ☐ **Your child's account linked to yours** — Google Family Link (Android) or Family Sharing (iPhone).
- ☐ **Purchases need your approval** — in Google Play and the App Store.
- ☐ **Location shared with family only** — switched off in social networks and photo apps.
- ☐ **Private profiles** on TikTok, Instagram, YouTube and in games.
- ☐ **No phones in bedrooms at night** — chargers live in the kitchen, parents' included.

■ Disinformation in three questions

Before you believe or share a clip or a story, ask together:

1. **Who is saying this?** Is there a name, a newsroom, an institution — or just a page with no author?
2. **What is the evidence?** Does it appear in other reliable sources? Is the picture old or from somewhere else? (A reverse image search helps.)
3. **What does it want me to feel?** If it makes you angry or scared in the first second, stop. Strong emotion is the favourite tool of manipulation.

Warning signs in a child

Suddenly hiding the screen, being upset after using the phone, receiving gifts or money from someone unknown, not wanting to go to school, deleting conversations. Don't react with punishment — ask calmly and listen to the end.

■ If something has happened

- 1 **Keep the evidence.** Screenshots showing the account name, date and time. Don't delete the conversation and don't reply to the person.
- 2 **Block and report** the account inside the app.
- 3 **Get specialist help** — free, from the services below.
- 4 **Tell the school** if classmates are involved — the form tutor and the school counsellor.

In Romania	Contact	For
Ora de Net — online safety helpline	0744 360 446 oradenet.ro	Any online safety question: bullying, stolen accounts, upsetting content.
Telefonul Copilului (Child Helpline)	116 111	Children and teenagers can call any time, about anything.
National child emergency number	119	Reporting abuse, neglect or exploitation of a child, 24/7.
Emergencies	112	Immediate danger (works across the EU).

Outside Romania: 116 111 is the child helpline number in most EU countries, and 112 is the EU-wide emergency number. Check your country's national online safety centre (the Insafe network lists them).

A family agreement

Write it together on a sheet stuck to the fridge: how many hours a day, where phones sleep at night, which apps are fine, what we do when someone writes something nasty. Everyone signs — parents included, who follow the same rules.

Phone numbers checked on 12 October 2026. Minimum ages for social networks are those in the platforms' terms on the same date.



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