FOR PARENTS

Digital Readiness

A Social & Emotional Perspective

Social networking, messaging, gaming and image sharing can be fun and entertaining or extremely upsetting. The effect these modes of media have on children can be directly related to their social and emotional development.

Throughout childhood, children gradually develop the social and emotional competencies necessary for successfully and ethically handling relationships and online interactions. Because each child matures at a different rate, we encourage you as parents and guardians to evaluate your child's readiness for online and mobile experiences by assessing his or her personal and interpersonal abilities rather than relying on age.

As you read through the questions in the chart below, think about your child. If your child has developed the social and emotional skills described here, he or she is on their way to having positive online experiences. While it is impossible to guarantee online safety, these skills better equip children to handle negative or unexpected online experiences.

Regardless of your child's level of digital preparedness and age, it is important that you monitor his or her online activity and engage in continual conversations about his or her technology-driven experiences and choices.

Note: Social networking sites and apps such as Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, Facebook and Twitter require their users to be at least 13 years old.

To contact an Internet Safety Specialist, please call 1-888-414-7678 or email e-info@atg.state.il.us.

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SELF-AWARENESS

Is your child able to effectively...

- control his/her impulses?
- communicate his/her feelings and opinions via written word?
- maintain an accurate self-perception?

SELF-MANAGEMENT

Is your child able to effectively...

- handle stress, disappointment and anger?
- cope with delayed gratification?

SOCIAL AWARENESS

Is your child capable of independently...

- reading social cues via text (without facial expression, body language or tone of voice)?
- expressing empathy?
- accessing assistance in a variety of settings?

RELATIONSHIP SKILLS

Is your child capable of independently...

- recognizing and establishing healthy, safe relationships?
- standing up to peer pressure?
- managing conflict?

RESPONSIBLE DECISION MAKING

Is your child able to effectively...

- take responsibility for his/her actions?
- anticipate consequences?
- ask for help?
- refuse provocation?

Whether your child meets all of these expectations or not, simply knowing their strengths and areas of need can assist you in making decisions that help keep your child safe online. For example:

- If your child has a difficult time resisting peer pressure, you may choose to limit his or her ability to purchase apps to avoid downloading decisions based primarily on what peers are using.
- If your child is 13 or older, has developed the skills described above and accepts that you will know all of his or her account passwords, you may let him or her try social media.

For additional resources, visit the Illinois Attorney General's website at www.ebully411.com.
For video game and app ratings, visit www.commonsensemedia.org.
For more on social and emotional learning, visit www.casel.org.

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