ONLINE GAMING SAFETY TIPS

Online games entertain and connect children, but they can also deliver danger in many unsuspecting ways. Downloads for games can contain viruses, "free" games can become costly and online friends may be dangerous adults posing as children.

Ensure that the rewards of online games, which are played through social networks, mobile apps, boxed games and digital downloads, outweigh the risks by encouraging your son or daughter to practice safe gaming practices.

Steps to take to protect your child:

- Check the ratings of games to make sure they are age-appropriate.

- Learn about online games by playing with your child.

- Create guidelines. Set limits on how long and how often he or she can play.

- Keep the computer in a central space where you can see it and monitor activity.

- Instruct your child to get your permission to download, since games from links in email, instant messaging, or text messaging can contain offensive content or malicious software.

- Teach your son or daughter to protect personal information such as real name, age, address and birthday. He or she should also use an avatar instead of a real photo.

- Encourage the creation of strong passwords for gaming accounts. Mix in letters, numbers and symbols for a password of at least 8 to 10 characters.

- Urge your child to block or report cyberbullies. By helping your son or daughter learn how to handle certain situations, online games can be fun, safe and age-appropriate. Now, go play one with your child!

NAVIGATING
TECHNOLOGY TIPS

Are you a tech-challenged parent? If so, what you don't know can hurt your child.

The good news is that your journey to becoming digitally savvy starts with recognizing the need for guidance and answers.

There are many free resources to reduce your learning curve. Start at *www.aplatformforgood.org/parents/tpt*, **which can help you learn basic information.**

Be open with your child about the need for safety versus privacy when it comes to the use of social media.

Consider these strategies to learn more about technology and how to use it:

- **Take a social media class at your local library or community college.**

- **Attend the "University of Google" for free. Find many tutorial videos by googling what you need to know. You can learn to do everything from embedding tweets to holding a 12-person video chat.**

- **Switch roles. Learn from your child how to use his or her devices. Focus on often-used features and take notes.**

- **Install age-appropriate filtering, blocking and monitoring software to see what your child is doing on the Internet. Check browser history and text messages. Discuss safety with your child.**

- **"Friend" your child on Facebook, follow your son or daughter on Twitter and Instagram. Bear in mind that children, especially teens, may have secret accounts.**

- **Talk to teachers and other parents about the technology young people embrace.**

Today's technology brings with it many threats. Protect your child's safety and privacy by learning the basics.