

GUARDIANS OF THE NET



Helping Educators Spot, Prevent and
Respond to Online Risks Facing Learners

Online Safety Guide for **TEACHERS**

INTRODUCTION

Why Teachers Matter in the Digital Age

Teachers play a vital role in shaping young minds – both in the classroom and in the digital world. As students increasingly live and learn online, the dangers they face have become more complex.

This guide is here to help you identify warning signs, create safer learning environments, and open conversations around responsible digital use.

UNDERSTAND THE DIGITAL RISKS LEARNERS FACE

Children between the ages of 8–13 are particularly vulnerable to:

Sexting

learners may be pressured into sending or receiving explicit images.

Online grooming

predators may use gaming chats or social media to build trust.

Catfishing

students may interact with fake accounts posing as friends.

Cyberbullying

harmful messages or threats may be shared anonymously.

Inappropriate content

exposure to sexual, violent, or self-harm related material.

Spot the Signs

of a Learner in Trouble



Be alert to these classroom or behavioural changes:

- 01** Withdrawal from peers or group activities.
- 02** Sudden changes in mood, anxiety or emotional outbursts.
- 03** Inappropriate knowledge or language for their age.
- 04** Secretive use of devices or phones.
- 05** Drops in academic performance or engagement.

Create Safe Digital Spaces

in the Classroom



01

Use monitored platforms for online classwork and communication.

02

Set clear ground rules for respectful online behaviour.

03

Avoid one-on-one digital interactions between staff and learners via personal accounts.

04

Share age-appropriate content only, with disabled comments if possible.

05

Remind learners often: "If you see something that doesn't feel right – say something."

Teach Responsible Social Media Use

Even if it's not in the curriculum, it's essential to:

- Talk about **age restrictions** and why they exist (e.g. Snapchat is 13+, WhatsApp is 16+).
- Help learners understand the risks of sharing images or personal info.
- Encourage empathy online – every message affects a real person.
- Teach them how to block, report, and tell a trusted adult.



Tip

Here is a tip to teach responsible social media use.



Use real-life examples, anonymous question boxes, or roleplay scenarios to make lessons more relatable.



PARENTS & SCHOOL STAFF

It is necessary to work with them.

- Share signs of concern early with parents and caregivers.
- Organise workshops on digital safety.
- Ensure your school has a digital policy in place – and that it's reviewed annually.
- Stay updated on the latest apps and safety trends.

Stay calm

01

and listen without judgement.

Reassure them

02

that they did the right thing by telling you.

Don't promise secrecy.

03

You are required to report.

Document clearly

04

what was said and escalate through the correct school channels.

Contact Childline SA or authorities

05

if the risk is immediate.

What To Do If a Learner Is at Risk

If a learner discloses something:



Childline SA
08000 55 555



Call
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Website
www.childlinesa.org.za



FINAL ENCOURAGEMENT

Teachers are the first line of defence. By noticing, listening, and acting – you can change the course of a child's life. Thank you for the work you do every day.



Want to teach these principles in class?

Request our Digital Superhero Kit for Educators at <http://guardiansofthenet.co.za/>