Learn about your rights in the digital environment

Council of Europe Guidelines to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of the child in the digital environment

Presented for children and young people under the age of 18

www.coe.int/children

Building a Europe for and with children

Who made this guide and why?

The Council of Europe is a group of

47

countries in Europe that are working together for peace and human rights:

It helps countries in Europe to **protect children's rights – your rights!**

This includes your rights in the **digital environment.**

The Council of Europe wants adults and children to understand what needs to be done to make sure children enjoy their rights in the digital environment.

Children's rights are the promises that governments have made to children to help them to enjoy a good life.

The digital environment means all the ways which children use computers and the internet: smart phones and tablets, computer games and social media.

What are some of the most important things to have in mind when protecting children's rights?

There are **5** **things that are always important and that anyone deciding for you and other children should respect; these are:**

1. **The best interests of children** are one of the most important things to be thought about when decisions are made, or action taken.

2. **Children change from birth to 18**. Teenagers and toddlers have different abilities and needs.

3. **Children should not be treated differently without a good reason.**

4. **Children's opinions should be listened to and taken seriously.**

5. **Governments** should **encourage, support and work with others** (such as businesses, teachers, parents and children) to protect children's rights.

The **"best interests of children"** means that, when a decision is made, the well-being of a child will come first.

Governments that should support children are national, regional and local governments and organisations linked to them.

Which of your rights need to be protected and why?

All children should be able to use the digital environment

This should:

- Be at a low cost (and if possible free of charge in public spaces).

- Also allow to be used by any of you who have disabilities, who live in rural areas and who are migrants.

Your right to information

- Governments should make sure that you have easy access to good information for children.

- You should learn how to respect others online (e.g. do not encourage bullying or violence).

- Businesses should provide information about the terms of use that you can find and understand.

Your right to take part in decisions

- Schools, governments, businesses and international bodies should ask you for your views and take them seriously.

Your right to form and join groups online

- You should not be watched by the government or others when you are online other than when it is allowed by law.

Your right to play

- Governments and businesses should support you to play, be creative, solve problems and work together with other children.

Your right to privacy and protection of **personal information**

- Everyone should learn about your right to privacy.

- You should learn how to keep your personal information private online.

- Your personal information should only be used with your permission (or if you are too young, your parents' permission) and if it is lawful.

- You should be able to understand how your personal information is used and how you can delete it or correct mistakes.

- Smart devices in toys or clothes should not be used to collect information about you.

Personal information means your name, age, where you live and where you are.

Your right to education

- Schools should have the digital technology that you need.

- You should learn the skills you need. To receive support for this is especially important if you are a girl, if your family is poor and if you have a disabilitiy.

## Your right to be protected from **harm**

- There are checks for age limits.

- You and your parents are educated about, bullying, dealing with harmful content and stranger danger.

- You should be able to easily report harmful content or behaviour.

- Child sexual abuse material online is stopped.

Harms include: bullying; getting children to commit crimes; encouraging sexism, racism, suicide or self-harm; gambling; sexual abuse; and using computers, tablets or smartphones so much that it harms sleep or health.

What do governments and others need to make sure that you can enjoy your right in the digital environment?

- Make **law and policies** that protect your rights in the digital environment.

- Make sure that **everyone works together**.

- **Inform and encourage** all those who work with children to understand and do their best to make sure that you can enjoy their rights in the digital environment.

- Make sure that all of you have access to digital environment.

- Carry out **research** to understand how you can benefit from the digital environment and be protected from harms in there.

- **Complaints and remedies**. Governments should make sure that you and you parents can complain when your rights are not respected in ways that are easy to understand and use.
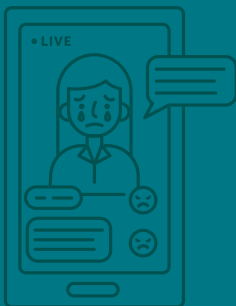
Remedies include: apologies, removal of harmful content, claims, correction of information that is incorrect.

This publication contains the child-friendly version of the Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)7 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on Guidelines to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of the child in the digital environment.

Discover the guidelines and learn about your rights in the digital environment!

To know more about Council of Europe action in the field of children's rights, please see: **www.coe.int/children**

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The Council of Europe is a European organisation of 47 countries based in Strasbourg, France. It was set up to make sure that all these countries protect human rights, including children's rights, by preventing every kind of violence against them and by supporting children to develop their full potential.

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