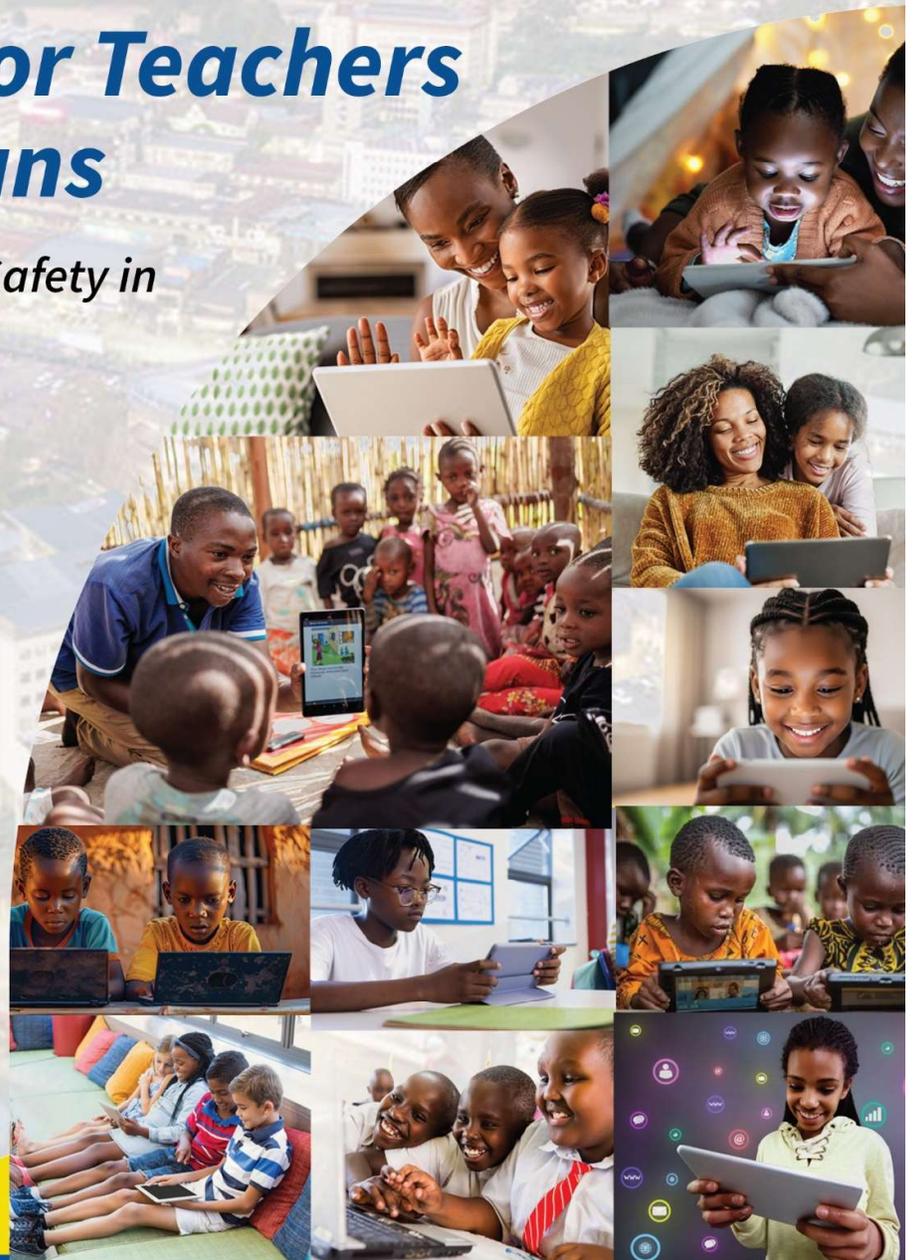


ESWATINI CHILD ONLINE SAFETY GUIDELINES

Guidelines for Teachers and Librarians

*Promoting Child Online Safety in
Eswatini Schools*



Guidelines for Teachers and Librarians

Promoting Child Online Safety in Eswatini Schools

Summary

In today's digital age, where technology profoundly influences education and social connections, protecting the online experiences of our young learners is both a moral duty and an educational priority. This document delivers practical guidance for teachers and librarians in Eswatini to create inclusive, safe digital learning spaces for adolescents and young people. It stresses integrating online safety into teaching practices, addressing risks while emphasizing positive technology use, and promoting continuous professional growth. By focusing on students' relationships and responsibilities, building awareness of varying risks, and using engaging, age-appropriate methods, teachers and librarians can foster critical thinking, emotional resilience, and ethical behavior.

The guidelines cover creating safe environments, teaching digital literacy, monitoring and intervention, and advocacy with ongoing improvement. Through regular reviews, data use, and collaborations, educators can ensure programmes remain relevant. This approach supports student wellbeing, prevents harm, and aligns with national priorities like the Eswatini Computer Crime and Cyber Act (2002) for equitable, protected education.

Introduction

Digital technologies enhance learning by providing access to information, fostering collaboration, and sparking creativity. However, they also expose students to potential harms that can impact their development and safety. This guide offers evidence-based strategies to help educators design, deliver, and refine online safety lessons. The emphasis is on recognizing students' rights to participate and be protected in digital spaces, understanding that risks differ by technology, access, and personal factors, and involving the whole school community to meet diverse needs based on gender, age, culture, ability, or location.

By following these guidelines, teachers and librarians can teach online safety to all students across year levels, using relatable methods and providing clear feedback. This not only mitigates risks but also empowers young people to engage positively and seek help when needed.

Importance of Teachers and Librarians in Online Safety

Teachers and librarians serve as frontline educators in promoting student safety and wellbeing in digital environments. They integrate online safety into daily lessons, modeling responsible behavior and helping students develop the skills to navigate challenges independently. They uphold students' rights by placing them in the context of their relationships with others, acknowledging the opportunities technology offers while building awareness that not all risks lead to harm. For example, cyberbullying can harm emotional health and academics, but teaching resilience reduces its impact.

By respecting student diversity and using strengths-based teaching, educators meet individual needs and foster inclusive learning. Their role extends to partnerships with parents, administrators, and services, creating support networks for guidance. Ultimately, effective teaching in this area enhances students' digital citizenship, critical thinking, and ability to manage emotions, preparing them for a safer, more empowered future.

Guidelines:

1. Creating a Safe Digital Learning Environment

A secure classroom or library sets the foundation for positive online experiences, where safety is taught proactively and inclusively.

Actions:

Establish clear online safety policies for classrooms and libraries, covering rules for device use and responses to issues.

- Educate students on key threats like cyberbullying, online exploitation, and misinformation, using age-appropriate examples to build understanding without exaggeration.

- Promote responsible internet use by recommending suitable content and activities that encourage learning and creativity.
- Integrate at least one online safety topic into lesson plans each term, making sessions engaging through videos, role-playing, and real-world case studies.
- Always employ school-approved safe search tools for research to filter harmful material, and model secure habits like locking screens when stepping away.
- Focus on the needs of all students, adapting lessons for diversity in gender, age, culture, ability, appearance, socioeconomic status, family background, location, or access levels.

2. Teaching Digital Literacy and Ethical Online Behavior

Building knowledge and skills across subjects helps students think critically and interact respectfully online

Actions:

- Incorporate critical thinking into digital lessons, teaching how to evaluate information, recognize biases, and understand media influences for civic engagement.
- Cover essential topics like privacy settings, creating strong passwords, and protecting personal data to prevent misuse.
- Encourage ethical interactions, such as respectful communication, avoiding hate or exclusion, and understanding the impact of online actions on others.
- Develop social and emotional skills to help students manage emotions, form healthy relationships, and build resilience against setbacks.
- Address current and emerging risks, including those students identify as important, like sharing self-generated content or dealing with loot boxes in games that mimic gambling.
- Use strengths-based methods to frame technology positively, showing how it can enhance opportunities while noting that risks vary by platform, usage, and access—not all lead to harm.

3. Monitoring, Guidance, and Intervention

Ongoing support and quick responses ensure students feel safe to report issues and learn from experiences.

Action:

- Use engaging teaching strategies with trustworthy, relatable, and technically confident educators to maintain student interest.
- Guide students on responsible social media use, online etiquette, and structured activities that promote safe engagement.
- Set clear learning goals, regularly assess knowledge and skills, and provide feedback to track progress.
- Train to identify signs of cyberbullying or online abuse, such as changes in behavior or withdrawal.
- Establish confidential reporting mechanisms for students facing threats, and collaborate with parents, administrators, and authorities for resolution.
- Help students recover from negative incidents by focusing on lessons learned and building digital resilience, avoiding confrontational or scare-based tactics.
- Ensure that clear and confidential referral pathways are in place for students affected by online abuse. Where appropriate, guide learners toward professional mental health services and trauma support. In cases involving criminal behavior, follow institutional protocols and refer the matter to law enforcement authorities to safeguard student wellbeing and uphold child protection standards.

4. Advocacy, Professional Development, and Continuous Improvement

Staying current and advocating for change ensures online safety education evolves with needs.

Actions:

- Support national efforts to strengthen child protection policies, such as expanding ICT access through government investments.
- Advocate for inclusive digital education that prioritizes safety, wellbeing, and equitable opportunities.
- Engage in community awareness programmes to promote responsible internet use beyond the school.
- Complete mandatory annual training on online safety, keeping records for professional growth.
- Stay informed about new apps, games, and trends popular with students to better relate to their digital world.
- Participate in staff discussions to share practices, review programmes annually for strengths and weaknesses, and use data or evidence to update content based on current risks and harms.

Child Online Safety Checklist for Teachers and Librarians

Use this checklist to evaluate and maintain effective practices:

Creating a Safe Digital Learning Environment

- Have you established clear online safety policies for classrooms and libraries, covering rules for device use and responses to issues?
- Do you educate students on key threats like cyberbullying, online exploitation, catfishing and misinformation, using age-appropriate examples?
- Do you build student understanding of threats without exaggeration or scare tactics?
- Do you promote responsible internet use by recommending suitable content and activities that encourage learning and creativity?
- Do you integrate at least one online safety topic into lesson plans each term?
- Do you make online safety sessions engaging through methods like videos, role-playing, and real-world case studies?
- Do you always employ school-approved safe search tools for research to filter harmful material?
- Do you model secure habits, such as locking screens when stepping away from devices?
- Do you focus on the needs of all students by adapting lessons for diversity in gender, age, culture, ability, appearance, socio-economic status, family background, location, or access levels?

Teaching Digital Literacy and Ethical Online Behavior

- Do you incorporate critical thinking into digital lessons, teaching how to evaluate information, recognize biases, and understand media influences for civic engagement?
- Do you cover essential topics like privacy settings, creating strong passwords, and protecting personal data to prevent misuse?
- Do you encourage ethical interactions, such as respectful communication, avoiding hate or exclusion, and understanding the impact of online actions on others?
- Do you develop social and emotional skills to help students manage emotions, form healthy relationships, and build resilience against setbacks?
- Do you address current and emerging risks, including those students identify as important, like sharing self-generated content or dealing with loot boxes in games that mimic gambling?
- Do you use strengths-based methods to frame technology positively, showing how it can enhance opportunities?

- Do you teach the learners that risks vary by platform, usage, and access, and that not all risks lead to harm?

Monitoring, Guidance, and Intervention

- Do you use engaging teaching strategies with trustworthy, relatable, and technically confident educators to maintain student interest?
- Do you guide students on responsible social media use, online etiquette, and structured activities that promote safe engagement?
- Do you set clear learning goals for online safety education?
- Do you regularly assess students' knowledge and skills in online safety?
- Do you provide feedback to students to track their progress in online safety?
- Have you been trained to identify signs of cyberbullying or online abuse, such as changes in behavior or withdrawal?
- Have you established confidential reporting mechanisms for students facing threats?
- Do you collaborate with parents, administrators, and authorities for resolution of reported issues?
- Do you help students recover from negative incidents by focusing on lessons learned and building digital resilience?
- Do you avoid confrontational or scare-based tactics in interventions?

Advocacy, Professional Development, and Continuous Improvement

- Do you support national efforts to strengthen child protection policies, such as expanding ICT access through government investments?
- Do you advocate for inclusive digital education that prioritizes safety, wellbeing, and equitable opportunities?
- Do you engage in community awareness programmes to promote responsible internet use beyond the school?
- Do you complete mandatory annual training on online safety?
- Do you keep records of your online safety training for professional growth?
- Do you stay informed about new apps, games, and trends popular with students to better relate to their digital world?
- Do you participate in staff discussions to share practices?
- Do you review online safety programmes annually for strengths and weaknesses?
- Do you use data or evidence to update content based on current risks and harms.