

Part of our Privacy & Security Series



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What you need to know about... THE DEEP WEB & THE DARK WEB

What is it? 'The Deep & The Dark Web'

While the deep web and the dark web are not the same thing, they do overlap significantly. The Deep Web refers to pages that are not indexed, which means that most search engines (Google, Bing etc) won't return them to you after a search. The dark web is part of the World Wide Web that is only accessible by installing and using special software. It is the unregulated part of the internet; no organisation, business, or government oversees it or can apply rules. This is why the dark web is commonly associated with illegal practices.

Know the Risks

Unmonitored access

Children and young people often dive into the Dark Web using their devices, unmonitored, unregulated, and unnoticed. Whilst children may access and use the Dark Web and/or the Deep Web, a child's curiosity may result in the access and viewing of very inappropriate, unacceptable, and illegal sites, forums, and communities.

Inappropriate content

Children can access sites with indecent images, sites selling drugs and/or weapons; however, this is also the case for the Surface Web. The possibility of users infecting their devices with malware is higher when visiting the Dark Web also.

Online predators

Online child predators are more likely to interact and groom children on the Surface Web than the Dark Web. However, once contact is made, interaction can continue within the Dark Web.

Safety Tips

Question their motives

If you believe your child may be using TOR or accessing the Deep or Dark Web or asks if they can download the software, ask them why they are using them rather than using the surface web. Children should be able to access everything they need via normal web browsers.

Check devices

Check all devices for the TOR (or I2P / Freenet) software and delete any unknown browsers. Monitor your child's online purchases. If you know that your child has been using TOR to access the Dark Web, watch for any unusual mail or packages delivered to your home.

Talk about the dangers

Ask your children what they already know, and then openly speak about the Dark Web. Part of the attraction to the Dark Web may be the mystique and curiosity associated with it so it's important to educate your child about the dangers and how it can be misused by criminals.

How they Work

TOR Software

The most common software used is called TOR (The Onion Router). TOR is a web browser that keeps your identity a secret by hiding your IP address. This means that users largely cannot be tracked while browsing the dark web. Most dark web users use a search engine such as DuckDuckGo, which protects users' privacy. TOR can bypass school internet filters.

Three Web levels

The surface web is the internet we are familiar with; we use it to run businesses and connect with family, friends, and customers. Deep websites emphasise protecting users' privacy. People who need to keep their identities private use this to share sensitive information. The dark web is focused on illegal activities and services. However, unless you carry out unlawful acts, it is not illegal to use the dark web or TOR.

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