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Expert Advice: How to keep kids safe with tech toys this holiday season

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With the holidays in full swing, many children are placing electronic toys at the top of their wish lists, and parents are putting safety on theirs. After the recent hack of many VTech toys, this concern has only increased.

Coles College of Business information and security assurance lecturer Andy Green in an expert on cybersecurity, and walks us through how to keep our kids personal information safe in the age of tech toys.

What kinds of toys should parents be concerned about?

We are starting to see more and more kids toys with Internet connectivity, as well as those that have mobility (think drones). As toymakers start to add new functionality to otherwise traditional toys, or create new toys that offer functionalities and features we never envisioned, parents need to make sure that they understand the potential risks associated with connecting these devices to the Internet, as well as the potential risks posed by creating user accounts associated with these connected devices.

It's also important to make sure that parents think about these risks in terms of likelihood, or probability,

that a potential risk will actually happen. It's not possible to remove all risk from our daily lives, so parents need to think in terms of "how likely is it…" that something "bad" will really happen.

How can you protect your child from "hackable" toys?

s themselves.
Toy manufacturers are responsible for the technical security associated with these toys, and there's very little that parents can do from a technical perspective. The real question is what kind of information do you share about you and your child, when creating online accounts associated with these toys.

With that in mind, there are things parents can do to add an additional safety layer for their children:

- Use a prepaid credit card to pay for any added features online. You can buy these at most convenience stores, grocery stores, or pharmacies
- Question whether or not the personal details being asked for are really necessary for the toymaker to have
- If a piece of requested data isn't mandatory, don't supply it
- Use false data when creating user accounts – including address, telephone numbers, names, and the like
- Create a password that is unique to each account

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