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As back-to-school time approaches, children may be thinking about meeting up with friends to share stories about their summer adventures. But when it comes to personal information, parents and kids need to be careful about sharing too much. These days the casual use of sensitive data (like a Social Security number on a registration form, permission slip, or health document) can lead to child identity theft, a serious crime that impacts thousands of kids each year. Parents can take steps to protect their children from ID theft with free resources from the Federal Trade Commission (FTC).

A new brochure, [Protecting Your Child's Personal Information at School](#), explains how the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act protects students' records and gives parents of school-age kids the right to opt out of sharing contact information with third parties. As the publication explains, parents should ask about the school's privacy policies, as well as the policies of sports teams or clubs that aren't school-sponsored. What information do they collect? Why do they need it? And how is the information protected? Need copies of this title? It's [formatted](#) for your printer.

Another publication, [Safeguarding Your Child's Future](#), offers tips on how to keep kids' data safe. It explains the warning signs of child identity theft, how to check if a child has a credit report, and what to do if a report has errors. Get free copies of this 12-page brochure from the FTC's [bulk order site](#). (It's also [Spani](#)

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How can you use these resources?

If you have school-age kids, talk to principals, teachers, coaches, youth group leaders, and PTAs about ways to reduce the risk of child ID theft. Send a link to the person in charge of the school's newsletter, website, or listserv. Before classes gets in full swing, they'll appreciate beginning-of-the-year. And don't forget to talk to your own children about online safety and keeping personal information private.

You can also use your social network to share the information with friends and relatives. Tell your co-workers. If you own a business, provide the information to your employees and customers. The [identity theft resources](#) from the FTC include new, easy-to-share (and easy-to-upload) videos.

So help spread the word! Protecting kids from ID theft is an issue that everyone can support.