

Chances are, if you're a parent with kids online, you've heard of COPPA, the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act. But you may not know exactly how it works to protect you and your kids. Can you spot the truths and the lies below?

COPPA was designed to give parents control over what personal information websites and apps collect from their children under 13.

- A: True
- B: False

COPPA applies to all websites, apps, and services.

- A. True
- B. False

My toddler's new internet-connected doll has to comply with COPPA.

- A. True
- B. False

I clicked a box, so I've provided consent under COPPA.

- A. True
- B. False

The privacy policy mentions COPPA, so they must follow the law.

- A. True
- B. False

COPPA prevents companies from collecting personal information about kids under 13.

- A. True
- B. False

COPPA means a company can't sell my child's information or use it for marketing.

- A. True
- B. False

BONUS: A school can consent on behalf of a parent under COPPA.

- A. True
- B. False

Answer Key

COPPA was designed to give parents control over what personal information websites and apps collect from their children under 13. TRUE. COPPA was designed to put parents in the driver's seat, by making companies explain what information they collect, how they use it, how they protect it, and how parents can review and delete it -- before collecting any information from kids. This way, parents can make informed decisions about whether or not to consent to their children using the services.

COPPA applies to all websites, apps, and services. FALSE. COPPA only applies to websites, apps, and services that are directed to or targeted at kids under 13 (because, for example, they have a lot of cartoons that would appeal to kids) or that *know* a child is under 13 (because they ask for a birthday, for example). Popular social media sites for teens and adults that do not ask for birthdays typically don't -- and don't have to -- comply with COPPA.

My toddler's new internet-connected doll has to comply with COPPA. TRUE. COPPA applies to websites, apps, and services, including internet-connected devices. Note, however, that, like sites and apps, the devices have to be directed to or targeted at kids under 13 or know a child is under 13.

I clicked a box, so I've provided consent under COPPA. FALSE. COPPA requires that companies get *verifiable* parental consent. This means companies must make reasonable efforts to ensure they're getting the go-ahead from a parent and not a clever child. For example, methods of

obtaining consent include talking to a parent via phone or video chat, getting a credit card, or communicating through multiple emails.

The privacy policy mentions COPPA, so they must follow the law. FALSE. Mentioning the law is helpful but not enough. To know whether a company complies with COPPA, you need to understand whether they collect, use, or disclose personal information from kids under 13. If so, you need to understand, among other requirements, what procedures they follow to get parental consent, provide notice, and keep this information safe.

COPPA prevents companies from collecting personal information about kids under 13. FALSE. This one is tricky. But COPPA only prevents companies from collecting personal information online *from* kids under 13, not information provided by adults about kids. And COPPA only prevents companies from collecting information from kids under 13 if sites don't have parental consent. With consent, companies can collect personal information from kids, so long as they don't require more information than is necessary for a child to participate.

COPPA means a company can't sell my child's information or use it for marketing. FALSE. COPPA requires a parent's consent before a company collects, uses, or discloses personal information from your child. But if a company tells you it needs to share your child's information with advertisers to provide a free app, and a parent provides consent, then your child's information can be shared for marketing purposes.

BONUS: A school can consent on behalf of a parent under COPPA. TRUE. A school can provide consent for a parent. However, importantly, this consent is limited to the educational context where it is used, when under-13-year-old students' information is collected solely for the use and benefit of the school. If the information is collected or used for any other commercial purpose, a school cannot consent.