

Child Internet Safety

Today, most children/teens have access to the Internet. The Internet holds a vast amount of information, opens up a whole new social world and brings together people from all over the planet. However, these very same aspects are reasons for parents to worry about what their children do on the Internet and what kind of people they meet.

The following are steps that parents can take to protect their children who use the Internet.

General Rules for Internet Safety

- Educate yourself about the Internet.
- It's important to be knowledgeable about the Internet, because even if you don't have a computer at home, your child can access it at school, at a friend's house, or at a public library.
- Create a family agreement for Internet use, including hours of use, which sites can be accessed and which ones shouldn't be.
- Place your computer in a central, open location, like the living room, so Internet use can be supervised.

Guiding Your Child Online

- Look at the sites your child visits.
- Look into software or online services that filter out offensive material. Check with your Internet service provider (ISP) for any blocking features they might offer.
- Consider installing a children's search engine, like Yahoooligans.
- Create a special folder of "bookmarks," or "favorites," for your child on your computer's browser.

Preserving Your Family's Privacy

- If you have a web site, avoid putting your children's pictures on it.
- Teach your children to never give out identifying information about any family member. This includes: names, addresses, phone numbers, e-mail addresses, passwords or credit card numbers.
- Encourage them to tell you if anyone is pressing for personal information.
- Teach your children that talking to a stranger on the Internet is no different than talking to a stranger on the street.

Minimize Possible Risks

- Talk to your children about potential online dangers such as giving out personal information to strangers. Chatroom acquaintances are strangers and your child should never arrange to meet them in the real world unless you give permission and/or know who they are.
- Better yet, if your children are young, steer them away from chat rooms.
- Older children should only participate in chat rooms you approve of.
- If your child starts receiving phone calls from strangers, or places calls to people you don't know, get to the bottom of it immediately.
- Tell your children that if someone harasses them on-line, says something inappropriate, or makes them feel uncomfortable in any way they should tell you, their teacher, or a trusted adult.
- Contact the police immediately if your child receives child pornography, has been sexually solicited or has received sexually explicit images from an adult.

By following the above the guidelines, you make the Internet a much safer place. While it's important that you know what your children are doing online, the aspect that should carry the most weight is that you, as the parent, can feel safe and know that your children won't get into any kind of trouble. If parents have a healthy attitude towards the Internet, odds are that so will their children.