

Keeping Kids Safe Online

THE INTERNET IS VALUABLE FOR INFORMATION, ENTERTAINMENT AND COMMUNICATION. While much of the information found online is accurate and helpful, some information may be misleading, offensive or even dangerous. Education and parent involvement allow kids to benefit from technology while protecting them from danger. Here are some ideas you can use to help your child stay safe online, followed by a few Web sites you can visit for more ideas and information.

- 1. Set Ground Rules.** Agree on what is reasonable for each child, from the amount of time they can spend online each week, to which sites they can visit without permission. If kids are searching for information, it is a good idea to assist them during the search process and then let them navigate the sites once you are sure they are safe.
- 2. Explain Safety Rules.** When children know what you expect of them and have clear, consistent consequences for not following rules, they are more likely to follow rules and avoid dangerous situations.
 - **Personal Information** Let your children know that it is dangerous to reveal any personal information about themselves to someone they meet online. This includes their names, where they live, their ages, the school they attend or where their parents work..
 - **Pictures** Do not allow your children to send any pictures of themselves to someone online without your permission.
 - **Meeting in Real Life** Tell your children never to get together with someone they meet online without your permission. If your children make a friend online they wish to meet in person, go with them to a public place to meet the person.
 - **Cyber Bullying** Have your child agree never to post anything that is mean toward another person online. If someone sends your children a nasty message, tell them to let you know so that you can report it to the Web site.
- 3. Keep the Computer in a Common Room.** When everyone in the house can see the screen, there is a better chance kids will follow the rules of online safety.
- 4. Supervise.** Just as we want to know where our children are physically, who they are with and what they are doing, we need to know where they are going on the Internet and whom they are meeting there.
- 5. Respectfully Monitor Online Activity.** Online activities are unrestricted and open for your review. Checking up on children online for their safety is very different from looking through their rooms for their private diaries. What is available about your children online could place them at risk, while personal thoughts they journal and keep to themselves allow for healthy self-expression and reflection.
 - **Online Profiles** If you want to see if your children have online profiles, such as MySpace or Facebook, you can search the Internet by inserting your children's names, or their friend's names, into a search engine like Google.
 - **Web site History** Check your computer's history. This will tell you what Web sites were viewed recently.
 - **Filtering and Monitoring Software** Check with your Internet service provider to see what free filtering and monitoring options are available.
- 6. Talk to Your Children.** Music, television, magazines, and the Internet are all sending messages to your children. Balance these messages with what YOU want them to know about different issues. If your children tell you about something they found online that is a concern, DO NOT OVERREACT. Talk to your child about what you know and believe about the issue. Remember to praise your child for coming to you with this information!

Web sites with additional information about keeping kids safe online:

| Web Safety Guides | Safe Sites for Kids & | Tools for Adults Supervision Tools |
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| www.getnetwise.org | www.annesdiary.com | www.netlingo.com |
| www.webwisekids.org | www.netmom.com | www.teenchatdecoder.com |
| www.ikeepsafe.org | www.seniornet.org | www.mymobilewatchdog.com |
| www.cybertipline.com | http://kids.getnetwise.org/ | |

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