

Internet-Related Safety Tips

Make sure the computer your kids use is in an open area in your home.

- Kids should always let their parents know when entering a chat-room
- When visiting a chat-room kids should always use a nickname and NEVER give out their real name, address, age, phone number, mobile phone, school, whether they are a girl or boy, and NEVER send or publish their photos.
- Some chat-rooms will want to publish all or some personal information each time your kids sign on in the chat-room. Others will allow them to create a profile just for publication on the web. Kids should remain PRIVATE!
- Make sure your kids know that not everyone in the chat-room is their age or even there for the same reason your kids are. Some adults like to trick kids.
- If something worries or scares your kids when in a chat-room they should report it to the chat-room provider immediately. They should save conversations if they are being bullied or harassed.
- Kids should never arrange to meet anyone they meet online ... no matter what!!!
- All passwords should be kept private and NEVER given out.
- Kids should not enter chat-rooms for adults or for anyone over 18. By doing so, it is very dangerous. You could also end up with a huge phone bill.
- Kids send attachments. Attachments can spread viruses on your computer and do serious damage. When opening attachments, make sure you know the person who is sending you the attachment. Even when you know the sender, you can save it on your desktop and scan them with anti-virus software before you open them.

Internet Safety Laws

A federal law has been created to help protect your kids while they are using the Internet. It is designed to keep anyone from obtaining your kids' personal information without you knowing about it and agreeing to it first.

The Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) requires websites to explain their privacy policies on the site and get parents' consent before collecting or using a child's personal information, such as a name, address, phone number, or social security number. The law also prohibits a site from requiring a child to provide more personal information than necessary to play a game or contest.

Online Tools to Protect Your Child

There are online tools that you can use to control your child's access to adult material and help

protect your child from Internet predators. No option is going to guarantee that your child will be kept away from 100% of the risks on the Internet. So it's important that you be aware of your child's computer activity and educate your child about the online risks.

Many Internet service providers (ISPs) provide parent-control options to block certain material from coming in to your child's computer. There is also software that can help block your child's access to certain sites based on a "bad site" list that your ISP creates. Filtering programs can block sites from coming in and restrict your child's personal information from being sent online. You can also find programs to monitor and track your child's online activity. Also, it's a good idea to create a screen name for your child to protect his or her real identity.

Getting Involved in Your Child's Online Activities

Aside from these tools, it's a good idea to take an active role in protecting your child from Internet predators and sexually explicit materials that are online. Here are some steps that can help you do that:

- Become computer literate and learn how to block objectionable material.
- Keep the computer in a common area, not in individual bedrooms, where you can watch and monitor your child.
- Share an email account with your child so you can monitor messages.
- Bookmark your child's favorite sites for easy access.
- Spend time online together to teach your child appropriate online behavior.
- Forbid your child from entering private chat rooms; block them with safety features provided by your Internet service provider or with special filtering software. Be aware that posting messages to chat rooms reveals your child's email address to others.
- Monitor your credit card and phone bills for unfamiliar account charges.
- Find out what, if any, online protection is offered by your child's school, after-school center, friends' homes, or any place where he or she could use a computer without your supervision.
- Take your child seriously if he or she reports an uncomfortable online exchange.
- Forward copies of obscene or threatening messages you or your child receives to your Internet service provider.
- Call the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children at (800) 843-5678 if you are aware of the transmission, use, or viewing of child pornography online. Contact your local law enforcement agency or the FBI if your child has received child pornography via the Internet.
- Many sites use "cookies," devices that track specific information about the user, such as name, email address, and shopping preferences. Cookies can be disabled. Ask your Internet service provider for more information.
- Be careful about any site that asks for personal information – online gambling and even other commercial sites that require personal information to play games. Online marketers will then target you with information.
- When searching for information, use a search engine, don't just type what you think the name is in the URL location.