

Playing It Safe in Cyberspace

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INTERNET SAFETY TIPS FOR PARENTS



The Internet is a virtual playground for children everywhere. Children use the Internet while they are at school, the library, and at home. While the Web is fun and informative, it is a public place just like any other. Today's parents and children need to use their "cybersense" to play it safe. Why?

- Approximately one in five children in the last year received an unwanted sexual solicitation or was approached over the Internet.
- One in 33 children and teens was asked to meet somewhere, received a telephone call, or received postal mail, money, or gifts from someone they met on the Internet.
- One in four was exposed to pictures of naked people over the Internet in the last year.

Cybersafety Tips

Would you send your child out into the streets without any supervision or rules? Of course not. The same goes for the Internet. Talk to your kids. Pay attention to what they are doing online. Follow Cybersafe guidelines:

- **Learn About the Internet with Your Child.** Speak openly with them about what they see and do online. Let them tell you about their favorite sites and what they searched. Listen carefully and never overreact.
- **Keep the Computer in a Public Space in Your Home.** Parents can more easily monitor what their children and teens are doing on the computer if it is placed in a public part of the house, such as the family room or kitchen.
- **Limit the Amount of Time Your Children Can Use the Computer.** Children and teens should be given a time limit when using the computer, as well as rules about when and how it can be used.
- **Help Your Children Create Screen Names.** Children should never reveal their name, age, gender, address, or any information that would identify them to a predator. Make sure they understand what personal information is.
- **Give Your Children an "Escape" Plan.** Children should know what to do if they see or read something that scares them or makes them feel uncomfortable. Show them how to exit from a Web site and how to turn off the computer. Make sure they know they can come to you for help in any situation.
- **Use Monitoring and Protection Tools.** Many Internet providers offer free monitoring or filter features for your Internet account at home. Use anti-virus software and consider buying tracking software for your children's e-mail and Internet visits. You can also restrict certain Web sites from appearing on your computer. Click on the "Help" feature of your Internet provider to learn how.
- **Report Anything Dangerous.** Tell the police about any potential stalking or suspicious situations. Child exploitation can be reported at: CyberTipline.com or 800-843-5678.



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- **Never Let Your Child Meet Someone from the Internet Alone!** Tell children and teens that their online chat buddies are not always who they seem to be. Children and teens must never be given permission to meet someone alone.
- **Talk to Teachers.** Find out how they and the school are monitoring student Internet traffic. If no Internet safety monitoring or education is offered, parents can speak to the principal and the PTA to express concern.

Warning Signs That Your Child Might Be at Risk Online

- Chatting online becomes your child's primary activity.
- You find pornographic materials in your child's computer.
- Your child receives phone calls from callers you don't recognize.
- Your phone bill has long-distance calls to numbers you don't recognize.
- Your child receives mail, gifts, and packages from someone you don't know.
- Your child turns the monitor off or quickly changes the screen on the monitor when you come into the room.
- Your child spends less and less time with friends and family.

Cybercode

When your kids chat online, they are probably using special codes that hide what they are saying from a parent looking over their shoulder. Some of these codes are more dangerous than you might think. Parents should not be afraid to monitor and ask their children and teens about their online conversations.

A/S/L	age, sex, location
DIKU	Do I know you?
CYO	See you online
F2F	face to face
GF, BF	girlfriend/boyfriend
H&K	hug and kiss
ILU	I love you
IPN	I'm posting naked
IWALU	I will always love you
KOL	kiss on lips
LMIRL	Let's meet in real life
MOSS	members of same sex
MOTOS	member of the opposite sex
NIFOC	naked in front of computer
NP	nosy parents
P911	My parents are coming
PA	parental alert
PM	private message
RPG	role-playing games
WTGP	Want to go private?
WUF	Where are you from?

Sources: FBI, Florida Trade Commission, Netsmartz, On Guard Online, CyberSmart.org



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