

Keep Your Family Safe Online

Kids today are growing up online. Studies show that almost every school child has been online, and three-quarters of young people have Internet access from their homes, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation.

Not only do more children have access to the Internet than ever before, but they are using it more, too. Many schools incorporate the Internet into their curricula and encourage online research for projects.

But that's not all kids are doing online. They also email, chat with friends through instant messenger and in chat rooms, play games, create websites and blogs, and surf the 'net.

We teach children to look both ways before they cross the street; and not to get in a car with a stranger. Long before children go online, parents need to instill in them the essential guidelines that will keep them safe on the Internet.

Look at these alarming statistics: 56% of teens online receive frequent requests for personal information, 42% of teens say they have posted personal information online, 54% frequently have private conversations with strangers through instant messaging, 30% reported that they have talked with a cyber-stranger about meeting in person, and 27% said they have talked with an online stranger about sex. (Polly Klaas Foundation, 2006)



3 RISKS

The three main risks associated with all connected technology are:

1. **Inappropriate Contact** – Teach kids to recognize and protect against contact with cyber-bullies, hackers, phishers, and predators. People aren't always who they say they are. Teach kids to keep away from Internet strangers: the Internet is a place to enhance existing relationships, not a place to meet new people.
2. **Inappropriate Content**- This includes both content that is viewed and content that is uploaded by kids. Help kids understand that the Internet is forever: everything they post online is tracked and stored and will follow them to future job interviews and college entrance interviews.
3. **Inappropriate Conduct** – Because the web environment can feel anonymous, some youth become dis-inhibited. Teach kids that the Internet is a public forum: anonymity is a myth. Help them be the good person online that they are when they're off line.

3 RULES

1. **Keep Current with technology.** You don't have to be an expert, but a little understanding goes a long way towards keeping your child safe online. Get basic technical training and learn about new products as they're released.
2. **Keep Communicating with children** about everything they experience on the Internet. Know their lingo, and ask when you don't understand something. Work to keep communication lines open.
3. **Keep Checking your child's Internet activity.** Know where they go online. Let them know that you'll keep checking because you want them to understand that the Internet is a public forum and never truly private.

For more information on Internet Safety, visit iKeepSafe.org.

Courtesy National Crime Prevention Council

What Parents Can Do

A few simple principles will go a long way towards protecting your child. Predators are a grave threat; they see the entrapment of a child as a hunt and a game, but these predators can not find your child unless personal information is divulged.

- Talk with children about the benefits and risks of the Internet. Ask them what they do online, what websites they visit, who they chat with, and what games they play.
- When possible, go online with your children. Have them show you their favorite websites, online games, and chat rooms.
- Keep computers in a busy area of house.
- Agree on rules of what they can and cannot do online, when they can go on the Internet, and how long they can stay.
- If your children tell you that they saw something inappropriate online, don't blame or punish them. Remember that how you react will affect what your children share with you in the future.
- Ask who your children talk to online and how they communicate (i.e. email, instant messenger, chat rooms, blogs,). Tell them that you expect them to be as nice online as they are offline. Make sure they know the dangers of meeting new friends online.
- Decide if you want to allow your children to purchase items or sign up for online services (e.g., membership to a gaming website) on their own or if they should ask your permission first.
- Consider using a filter, blocking, or ratings system for your computer.