

Child Safety: Internet Concerns

When used properly, the Internet can be a wonderful learning and entertainment tool for you and your family. In many ways, the virtual world of the Internet is like that of the real world. Similar safety rules apply. Just as you wouldn't tell a stranger on the street where you live, you shouldn't tell someone you just met on the internet your home address. Before allowing your children online, discuss with them safety issues. Talk to them about your concerns and together set up family guidelines for computer use. Here are some ideas to keep in mind.

- ✓ Help your children to understand why it is important that they do not give out personal information, even if their new e-mail pal seems to be real friendly or a "cool" website offers them a free gift for the information.
- ✓ Let your children know that they can come to you if they are receiving messages that make them feel uncomfortable. Tell them that in such an event, they should save the messages for you to read and handle in an appropriate manner.
- ✓ Set up guidelines that deal specifically with meeting people on the Internet. Talk to your children about what to do if their new Internet friend asks to see them in person, or wants your children to send pictures of themselves.
- ✓ Teach children about "netiquette" (etiquette on the Internet), so that they will not accidentally offend someone.
- ✓ Keep the computer in high traffic part of the house such as the living room. You can then easily monitor your children's activities without making them feel as if you are watching over their shoulder all the time.
- ✓ Find websites you think your children will enjoy and "bookmark" them. This will help direct your children away from using search engines, where they might find inappropriate sites.
- ✓ **Most importantly, spend time with your children** talking about their experiences online. Give them a chance to show you what they have learned or the things they like.

Helpful Websites on Child Personal Safety

www.netSMARTZ.org: sponsored by The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children

<https://www.childhelp.org>: A non-profit organization dedicated to the prevention and treatment of child abuse.

<http://www.stopitnow.org>: Stop It Now! Organization prevents the sexual abuse of children by mobilizing adults, families and communities to take actions that protect children before they are harmed.

www.netSMARTZkids.org: for kids a safe site that won't link to any outside sources

www.connectsafely.org: for information on smart social networking

www.internetsafetycolorado.org: for information on smart social networking and internet use.

<http://www.kidsdata.org/> a program of the Lucile Packard Foundation for Children's Health, promotes the health and well-being of children in California.

Children's Entertainment: Making Good Decisions

Parents everywhere are concerned about the increased levels of violence to which children are exposed, often in the name of entertainment. Since television, movies, and other forms of entertainment have the power to influence impressionable children, it is important that parents learn as much as possible about protecting their children from excessive amounts of violence and sexual exposure in all types of media.

The following tips are offered for parents who wish to take an active role in protecting their children from negative images and messages from media:

- Set limits on how much television is allowed each day.
- Make a list of all TV program for the week. Choose some that the whole family can enjoy together.
- Become familiar with video and computer games that children want to play. DO not assume that they are wholesome entertainment.
- Encourage your local Parent-Teacher Organization to take an interest in media violence by offering informative programs.
- Be aware of the ratings and content of movies that your children want to see. Titles and advertising can be misleading.
- Remember that children need adult guidance when selecting movies, television programs, and other forms of entertainment. Be fair, but firm. Don't be swayed by the plea, "But everyone will be seeing/playing it!"
- Let movie theaters know you want to see movies offering something besides violence.
- Form or join a parents' group to discuss concerns about children's exposure to media violence. Strength and support can be found in a group with similar issues and goals. Invite representatives from the media, law enforcement, schools, churches, and business community.

The information on this page was provided by the National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse.