

Parents guideline

Safety tips for protecting kids online.

Kids are logging on to the Internet more than ever before, playing games, chatting with friends, and getting help with schoolwork. The Internet has opened up a whole new world for them. However, the online world, like the real world, is made up of a wide array of people. Most are decent and respectful, but some may be rude, obnoxious, insulting, or even mean and exploitative. Areas full of sex, violence, drugs, and other adult themes are another possible danger for them. The fact that crimes are being committed online, however, is not a reason to avoid using these services. Children need parental supervision and common-sense advice on how to make their experiences with the Internet happy, healthy, and productive. In this article we will show you some necessary tips and essential tools and tell you how to put them together to make the Internet a safe place for your child.

Internet Filters

There are programs available to you called Internet Filtering programs, which will run in the background on your computer while your kids are surfing the Internet. These programs filter pornographic and other offensive content, monitor each surfer's online journeys, block access to certain web sites and newsgroups, keep kids out of the shadier chat rooms and log their online activities. **Combining the use of Internet Filtering programs with as much supervision as possible is the best method of protecting your child online.**

Here are 13 online safety tips:

Tip #1 Put the computer in a visible place in the house

Make sure the computer is in a visible place in the house. Ask questions. Walk by and check what is on the screen. If your child quickly closes the screen, this is a red flag and should be investigated.

Tip #2 Spend time on the Internet with your children

Go online with your children as often as possible and help them identify inappropriate communications. Give them a chance to show you what

they have learned or the things they like. Send E-Greetings and Christmas cards to family and friends or participate in interactive games together. Ask your children to tell about their cyberspace friends, just as you would want to know their real-life friends.

Tip #3 Schedule Internet use for your children

Limit young grade-schoolers to 30-60 minutes a few times a week; older kids may need more frequent access for school projects. This will make them more responsible in using the Internet.

Tip #4 Set Traffic Limits

Limit your children to 1-3 megabytes they can download/upload per day to prevent them from downloading pornographic films or non-licensed software.

Tip #5 Limit your children to only certain websites, newsgroups and chat rooms

Sit down with your child and agree on types of websites your child may and may not visit, limit the use of Instant Messaging and chat rooms.

Tip #6 Never to give out personal information

Instruct your kids never to give out personal information (name, address, telephone number, password, credit card number, and so on) in chat rooms, email, or bulletin boards. Be aware that Web sites for children—even the most reputable ones—sometimes ask for e-mail and home addresses, telephone numbers, and parents' professions before allowing children to enter.

Tip #7 Never to have online profiles

Instruct your kids never to have online profiles, so they will not be listed in directories and are less likely to be approached in children's chat rooms, where pedophiles often search for prey.

Tip #8 Use nicknames instead of real names

A nickname—an online alias (like KingStar or PinkPanther)—is also vital to protecting privacy because it conceals a person's real identity. Consider sharing the same nickname and e-mail address with your children under 14 so that you can closely monitor the instant and e-mail messages that come to them.

Tip #9 Never allow a child to arrange a face-to-face meeting with someone they met online.

Instruct children to never arrange a face-to-face meeting with another computer user without parental permission. Never allow them to get together with someone they "meet" online without first checking this "friend" out to the best of your ability. If a meeting is arranged, make the first one in a public place, and be sure to accompany your child. Thus, someone indicating that "she" is a "12-year-old girl" could in reality be a 40-year-old man.

Tip #10 Randomly check visited web sites log

Viewing the log of visited web sites can give you enough information about your kid's habits, interests and online friends. Normally you should do this only occasionally but if your child becomes secretive, then you should check more often. If you find that the history of sites visited is deleted in your Web Browser, this is a signal that something is going on and should be investigated.

Tip #11 Teach children netiquette

Good manners can protect kids, too. Words written are just as strong as words spoken. Tell children never to respond to messages or bulletin board postings that are suggestive, obscene, or harassing. Ask them to be sensitive to others' feelings when posting online messages and to avoid being rude, mean, sarcastic, or excessively argumentative. A comment that's meant to be funny could seem insulting and make others mad. Visit message boards and chat rooms with your kids to point out comments that could be misinterpreted.

Tip #12 Teach children be careful with e-mails from people they do not know

Instruct your child never to open emails, especially with attachments, from people they do not know. Most likely these emails contain a computer virus or they are mass mailing (spam) e-mails with inappropriate content.

Tip #13 Set administrator password for your Filtering program

Do not forget to set the administrator password in your filtering program to protect your settings from being changed by your smart kid. Without this, your filtering program makes no sense. Make sure you store your password in a safe place .

Reporting Internet Abuse

If you become aware of the transmission, use, or viewing of child pornography while online, immediately report this to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children's CyberTipline at 1-800-843-5678

The Internet is a great place for kids. By applying real-world parenting skills and remedies to the wired world, you can make the Internet a safe place for your child to learn and play. The more time you spend with your children, the more rewarding the whole experience of the Internet can be, and the more their safety is ensured. Remember, Internet use is a privilege that can be taken away if misused.