



Safe Surfing

A guide to keeping kids safe online

Netintelligence

www.netintelligence.com



The Internet

When a child logs on to the Internet, he or she is linking up to a vast network of computers which extends all over the globe. The Internet neither belongs to nor is controlled by any one person, organisation or government. It's not a legal vacuum - the law applies online exactly as it does offline, and people who break the law are subject to investigation and prosecution.

The Main Dangers are:

Contact - the greatest danger in the virtual world is letting online contact lead to a meeting in the real world with someone who is not what they pretended to be and who poses a real physical threat. Young people must re-learn the old 'stranger danger' messages in a new context and use the anonymity of the Net to hide their real location, their passwords and their contact details.

Content - legal or illegal, there are some sorts of content that might harm younger users, or that offend the values and standards that you want to apply to your children's development. You can agree the ground rules about where your children go and how they behave and perhaps choose some software tools to help apply those rules.

Commerce - with the growth of e-commerce there are increasing concerns that in an unregulated global market place young people (and adults too!) may be exploited by dubious marketing practices, phishing or simply cheated out of their money.



Our Top Ten Safety Tips

1. Stay public

Homes these days are full of technology. Whether it's a desktop computer, laptop, tablet, e-reader or smartphone, try to ensure that your children use them where you can see what they are doing. Acquaint yourself with the basic language children and young people use on the web, so if you do see transcripts of their conversations you will understand what's been said.

2. Get Buy In

Sit down with your children, talk them through the very real dangers of the internet and set some ground rules. Some experts even recommend that you draw up an informal internet usage contract with them. Once they know the reasons for the rules, and feel they have contributed to them, children will more often than not abide by them.

3. Check the chat

Teach your children not to give out too much personal information about themselves, their family or friends to people they don't know. Posting photos and using web cams can be risky as can chat rooms, Instant Messaging and Twitter. Never allow them to arrange a face-to-face meeting with another computer user without your permission. Enquire whether your Internet Service Provider has any "moderated" chat rooms specifically for their age.

4. Friend Them

If your children join social networks make it a condition of their membership that you become a member of their online community. If they want an email account try to ensure that you create and administer it. Keep an eye on the kind of material your children are looking at and make sure that they go to the sites that you want them to see and not to ones that you don't.

5. Getting 'Gifts'

Unsolicited 'gifts' sent to your children online can contain offensive or potentially harmful files such as pornography or viruses. Teach your children not to open emails and attachments or download files other than from people they know and trust offline and to be careful about giving out credit card details when shopping online.

6. Getting Hooked

Limit the amount of time your children spend online and encourage them to keep up their other activities and friendships. Set reasonable rules and guidelines for their computer use, discuss these rules and post them near the computer as a reminder. A young person's excessive use of the internet, especially late at night, may be a sign of a potential problem. Remember that the internet should not be used as an electronic babysitter.

7. Stay Alert

Always be mindful of any behavioural changes that might occur as a result of your child using the internet. For example, If your child starts becoming secretive about their time online, or copies downloaded files onto disk rather than the computer's hard drive (so that people cannot view them) or their mood changes after using the computer, you ought to try to establish the reasons.

8. Get the Benefit

There are many wonderful websites where children can discover, learn about and connect with other young people around the world. Just as you look out for suitable TV programmes for your children, take the time to find the best and most useful sites for you and your family. If you regularly use search engines such as Google, Bing or Safari, make sure that you select to have the Adult Filters switched on in the search preferences.

9. Safety Software

There are commercially available security and parental control products, such as Netintelligence, which can be installed on your home computers to help keep your children safe on the internet. They allow you to control access to certain websites, filter and block unsuitable content and also limit the amount of time your children spend online. If you do use such software make sure it's kept up-to-date because new threats appear all the time.

10. Stay Safe Together

Finally, do remember that the best way to keep your children safe online is to work with them and not against them. By explaining that your intentions are to protect them while still allowing them freedom online, you will earn their trust. Together you can stay safe.



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