

# INTERNET SAFETY

## Quotes

*1 in 4 youths has been exposed to sexually explicit pictures online without seeking or expecting them.*

— National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, 2002

*Cyberbullies, who generally are around ages 9 to 14, tease, threaten and humiliate other children through Web logs, Web sites, chat rooms, and text messaging. Electronic bullies can make victims depressed, anxious, and angry and cause them to develop low self-esteem. The children may avoid school and suffer academically.*

— The Arizona Republic, May 23, 2005

## Notes

Today's technology is amazing! Computers and the Internet have radically changed the way we communicate shop, work and learn. All this technology has benefited our children in many ways, but it has put much fear and concern in the minds of parents and teachers. Children are always at risk while searching the Internet. They may be exposed to inappropriate material, be victims of harassment, and become targets of child predators. Teens are at a higher risk than younger children because they are more apt to use computers unsupervised and more likely to participate in online discussions and chat rooms. Quite often our children will not let us know if they have been exposed to "bad things" on the computer, even if by accident, because they are afraid of losing computer privileges.

How can you tell if your children may be at risk online? The United States Department of Justice and the Federal Bureau of Investigation offer these cautions:

- your child spends large amounts of time online, especially at night
- you find pornography on child's computer
- your child receives phone calls from adults you don't know or is making calls, sometimes long distance, to numbers you don't know
- your child receives mail, gifts, or packages from someone you don't know
- your child becomes withdrawn from the family
- your child turns computer monitor off or quickly changes the screen when you enter the room
- your child uses an online account that belongs to someone else

Parents and teachers always have to be one step ahead of the children when it comes to computer use. There are no simple solutions. As soon as we intervene and think we've solved a problem, someone else comes up with a new, more creative way to get to our children. For instance, many parents think that by installing a filtering product on their computer that their children are safe from inappropriate internet material, but while filters do help, they are not 100% effective. Children need a lot of adult supervision.

## Recommended Resources

- Be Safe Jane, Be Safe
- No Room for Bullies: From the Classroom to Cyberspace





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## Strategies

1. Set limits on how much time children sit in front of the computer. They need to get outdoors, read, get exercise, and spend time with other family members.
2. Consider keeping the computer in a central location rather than in the child's room. This will help you to monitor your child's activities.
3. Remind your children to never give out any personal information.
4. Tell them to never respond to threatening or offensive messages and have them tell you immediately if they do get such messages.
5. Contact your internet provider to place a filtering program on your computer. This will limit the children's access to certain web sites.
6. Children need to be told to never meet in person anyone they have met online without parental permission.
7. Closely monitor children's access to chat rooms.
8. Do not let child send photos without your approval.
9. Experts recommend that parents share an email account with their child.
10. Be aware of the services your child uses online.
11. Consider drawing up a family contract regarding internet use. The following contract is adapted from the North Carolina Department of Justice's free publication.

## FAMILY RULES FOR INTERNET USE

Using the computer is a privilege. In order to enjoy this privilege and use the computer, we agree to the following rules:

1. Computer use is not confidential, and we do not hide what we are doing on the computer.
2. In our family, we get permission to access the Internet, and we use our personal login.
3. We visit websites that are appropriate for our age, and we do not visit websites or access information that is "off limits" for us.
4. We don't send photos or give out personal information without permission, and we will tell our parents about online messages we receive that make us feel uncomfortable.
5. We share an email account with our parents. We will not open or use any other email accounts.
6. We do not enter chat rooms.
7. We go online between the hours of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
8. Time on the computer is limited to: \_\_\_\_\_ hour(s) a day.
9. Time on the Internet is limited to: \_\_\_\_\_ hour(s) a day.
10. Instant messaging is only allowed with people that we already know.  
We will provide our parents with a list of our current email friends.
11. We do not respond to messages from people we do not know.
12. These rules apply to our home computer and all other computers we use.

Signatures: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
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