

Keeping Your Kids Safe on the Internet

The internet has become a great source of information, research, education, and entertainment in our lives. Children in preschool are already learning how to use the computer and navigate the web and as parents, we must be vigilant about protecting our children in every setting. Just like you would not let your child drive a car without proper instruction, you need to provide instruction on using the internet and you need to monitor your child's activities to ensure their safety.

While you do not want to scare children when talking about the dangers of the internet, you do need to let them know how to protect themselves in any setting in real life or on the web.

- Be computer literate and learn about the internet. Know what websites your child likes to visit and regularly check them for inappropriate content.
- Ask your internet service provider about features that allow parents to block access to adult oriented sites, chat rooms, and bulletin boards. A variety of programs allow you to restrict who can email your child and what types of sites your children visit.
- Set and discuss guidelines for safe internet searching with your child. Involve them in the discussion. Have your child sign a "safe surfing" agreement that you put together that reminds them about the rules of being on the internet.
- Let your children know they can come to you if they are receiving messages that make them feel uncomfortable. Help them understand that not everything that you read online is true and that people on the internet may be who they seem.

- Be aware of cyber-bullying. Bullying on the internet can take the forms of threats, negative emails sent about your child, or distribution of photographs of your child without permission. Regularly check in with your child about their internet activities.
- Keep the computer in a high traffic area of your house and out of your child's room. This will help you be aware of your child's internet habits.
- Teach your children about safe behavior on the internet (what types of information are safe to share, how to spot inappropriate behavior, etc.)
- Talk openly with your child about the dangers of the internet and spend time with them online together. Remind them to never give out personal information or send photographs of themselves online.
- Contact law enforcement if someone online solicits your child in any way. Remember, the internet is like being in a public place. You need to be aware of your child's safety and to protect them from dangerous situations.

Websites with Internet Safety Tips

- www.safekids.com
- www.kidshealth.org
- www.netsmartz.org
- www.fbi.gov
- www.wiredsafety.org