



Internet Safety Tips

- Keep the computer in a common area, such as the family room or kitchen.
- Utilize a software filtering system or subscribe to an ISP that offers filtering from its mainframe computer.
- Show your children what to do if they accidentally stumble onto a bad site. Teach them how to escape by using the back button on the web browser or the "Home" key, which will return them to the default home page on the computer. If all else fails, turn off the computer.
- Set up ground rules for use of the computer and stick to them. Let your children know the consequences that will follow misuse and follow through if necessary.
- Consider using filtering software that keeps a log of all the sites your family visits.
- Don't use the computer as a babysitter. Set time limits on Internet usage, and discourage late-night use.
- Don't talk to strangers; it's a rule that's as valid on the Internet as it is on the streets. The Internet hides the true identity of users, so there's no way to know if people are who they say they are.
- Guard your family's privacy by never giving out your name, address, or telephone number (except, of course, when placing an order with an established retailer).
- Don't allow children to reveal too much about themselves in the "personal profile" sections that some Internet companies provide. Pedophiles prey on this information. Parents should become familiar with new rules for website operators established by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). The Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA), effective April 2000, restricts how website operators may collect and use personal information from children under age thirteen. The rules spell out when and how these operators must seek parental consent and what responsibilities they have to protect your child's privacy and safety online. For more information, see the FTC's article "How to Protect Kids' Privacy Online" at www.ftc.gov ("Kidz Privacy" section, click on "Resources").
- Supervise your child's chat room activity. Pedophiles are lurking in chat rooms, especially where children gather.
- Check the history files regularly and perhaps even read email if you have reason to suspect a problem.
- Help children to set up "bookmarks" to enable easy access to positive, fun, and educational sites.
- Report incidents of hard-core pornographic spam and pornographic websites at www.obscenitycrimes.org. Veteran law enforcement officers review these reports, and those meeting the definition of obscenity are forwarded to the Department of Justice's Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section and to the office of the U.S. Attorney for the district from which the complaint originated.