Keeping Kids Safer on the Internet

Tips for Parents and Guardians

NATIONAL CENTER FOR
**MISSING &
EXPLOITED**
C H I L D R E N®

OJJDP **Office of Juvenile Justice
and Delinquency Prevention**
Office of Justice Programs ♦ U.S. Department of Justice

Keeping Kids Safer on the Internet was made possible through the joint efforts and expertise of the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children® programs noted below.

CyberTipline® is the Congressionally mandated, online-reporting tool for child sexual exploitation. For more information visit www.cybertipline.com.

The NetSmartz® Workshop is an online, educational resource to help teach kids how to be safer both on- and offline. For more information visit NetSmartz online at www.NetSmartz.org.

Keeping Kids Safer on the Internet: Tips for Parents and Guardians is the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children's newest publication addressing Internet safety. This brochure replaces four earlier NCMEC titles — *Child Safety on the Information Highway, The CyberTipline®: Your Resource for Reporting the Sexual Exploitation of Children, NetSmartz® Workshop: Keeping Kids and Teens Safer on the Internet, and Teen Safety on the Information Highway.*

Allowing kids to go online without supervision or ground rules is like allowing them to explore a major metropolitan area by themselves. The Internet, like a city, offers an enormous array of entertainment and educational resources but also presents some risks. Kids need help navigating this world.

provide

explore
guidance
discussion
educate
online skills
confidence
safety

Where Do Kids Connect?

- Kids go online almost anywhere. They surf the Internet and send messages from a home computer or one at a friend's home, library, or school.

- Kids connect at coffee shops and other "hotspots" using laptops and wireless connections.

- Internet-enabled, video-game systems allow them to compete against and chat with players around the world.

- Cell phones enable kids to surf the web and exchange messages, photos, and short videos from just about anywhere.

You can't watch your kids every minute, but you do need to use strategies to help them benefit from the Internet and avoid its risks.

By exploring the Internet with your kids, you greatly expand its capacity as an educational tool. By providing guidance and discussion along the way, you increase kids' online skills and confidence along with their ability to avoid risks. And you might be surprised by what kids teach you at the same time.

you can't take it back...
think before you type

We at the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children® (NCMEC) urge you to do one of the single most important things to promote safety — begin a dialogue with your kids about the rewards and risks of Internet use. We also encourage you to visit the NetSmartz® Workshop at www.NetSmartz.org and CyberTipline® at www.cybertipline.com to learn more about online safety.

It's up to parents and guardians to assess the risks and benefits of permitting their kids to use the wide range of Internet sites and services available. This brochure provides a list of the most popular online activities for kids along with the strategies for and benefits of reducing the risks associated with those activities.

According to the U.S. Department of Education, 23 percent of nursery school children in the United States use the Internet, 32 percent of kindergartners go online, and by high school 80 percent of children use the Internet.[1]

[1] U.S. Department of Education, "Rates of Computer and Internet Use by Children in Nursery School and Students in Kindergarten through Twelfth Grade: 2003," in Issue Brief, October 2005, page 1, NCES 2005111rev, accessed June 15, 2006, at http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2005//2005111rev.pdf.

Benefits

Browsing the Internet is like having the world's largest library and entertainment system at your fingertips. Kids can read stories, tour museums, visit other countries, play games, look at photographs, shop, and do research to help with homework.

Risks

- Kids may come across sites containing adult images or demeaning, racist, sexist, violent, or false information.

- It is hard for kids to distinguish reliable sources of information from less reliable ones. Some believe because information is posted online it must be true.

Tips to Minimize Risks

- Choose search engines carefully. Some are specifically designed for kids, and others offer kid-safe options.

- Tell kids when they come across any material making them feel scared, uncomfortable, or confused to immediately tell you or another trusted adult.

- Help kids find information online. By searching the Internet together you help them find reliable sources of information and distinguish fact from fiction.

Many Internet service providers (ISPs) offer filters to prevent kids from accessing inappropriate sites. Talk to your ISP about what safe-search options they offer. Remember, as a consumer you have a right to choose an ISP with the services meeting your family's needs.