

# Important Internet Tips for Parents and Families

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Children need parents and carers to teach them how to make smart choices about who and what they find online. Here are some tips to help you guide your kids experience online:

- Spend time online with your kids. Check out good sites together. The internet can be a fun family activity! Help your kids use the internet as an effective research tool - learn about handy homework tips for kids and also good searching ideas.
- Learn about the world out there. Kids are communicating in a diverse range of ways, from chat to IM, and from message boards to blogs. Learn how these work and what tools they offer to protect your child's privacy. Be aware of online stranger danger, particularly in chat rooms.
- Set house rules about what information your children can give out and where they can go online.
- Put the internet computer in a public area of the home, such as the living room, rather than a child's bedroom.
- Talk to your kids about their internet experiences, the good and the bad.
- Let them know it's OK to tell you if they come across something that worries them. (It doesn't mean that they're going to get into trouble) Teach your kids that there are ways they can deal with disturbing material - they should not respond if someone says something inappropriate, and they should immediately exit any site if they feel uncomfortable or worried by it.
- Teach children that information on the internet is not always reliable.
- Encourage children to treat others in the same way they should in real life by giving them an understanding of Netiquette. Know the best ways of avoiding spam. Consider using filters, labels and safe zones.

REMEMBER: Children need parents and family members to help them become cybersmart.

## Growing Up with the internet - Tips for Different Age Groups

Your involvement with your children's internet activity will depend on their age and experience.

### Young Ones (2-7 years)

Preschoolers can begin to explore the internet and to learn about the computer. Sit with them and teach them Net navigation and computer skills via educational games on appropriate web sites.

Children from about 5 years may start to visit children's web sites with you, and to enjoy email correspondence with family and friends (a great way to start learning keyboard skills).

Check out good sites for young ones - you should be responsible for selecting the sites that children in this age group can visit. Very close supervision is strongly recommended.

Select sites and set up bookmarks for very young users. Consider using safe zones for this age group,

particularly when they start school and can do more on their own.

Limit email correspondence to a list of friends and family you have approved. Use filters to limit accidental access to unsuitable material. Kids (8-11years)

**From around 8 years old children can become increasingly interested in exploring the internet, chatting and corresponding online.**

Some older children may begin to assert their independence and look for 'forbidden' material.

They may be targeted by marketers, but increasingly they learn to recognise the difference between advertising and other material.

It helps to talk to children about commercial information and how to deal with it.

Whilst their skills and independence are increasing, making internet exploration a family activity allows you to maintain close supervision.

Be actively involved in your child's internet use.

Emphasise the safe behaviour tips in the cyber rules and discuss why these are needed.

Investigate any chat rooms or online clubs that your child wants to join, to make sure they are legitimate.

Consider setting rules about the use of IM and blogs, both in terms of the importance of protecting privacy and also setting time limits spent on each activity.

Consider using filters to block access to undesirable sites or forums. Discuss use of good cyber manners (Netiquette) just as you do for the real world.

Put the computer in a public area of the home, to help keep an eye on what's going on. Use search engines designed for children.

### **Teenagers (12-18 years)**

The internet becomes a valuable tool for homework and projects for teenagers. At the same time, younger teens start to become more independent and self-assured, wanting more freedom and coming under more peer influence.

Their online and email contacts tend to expand. Some may challenge the use of filtering or blocking software and attempt to access 'forbidden' material.

Many are 'net savvy' and understand basic computer programming, sometimes even going so far as to attempt to hack into different systems.

They are more able to differentiate between advertisements and other material, and recognise persuasion techniques.

Many older teens can write their own programs and know how to manage computer hardware and software.

Their use of the internet includes school research, job and further education searches, global communication and enhancing their technical skills.

This increasing knowledge can also get them into trouble if they explore ways of getting around technical tools and methods for breaking into private systems.

Stay in touch with what your children are doing online. While it may become less feasible to actively supervise their access, continue to discuss internet issues and share internet experiences.

Keep the computer in a public area in the home. It helps to be able to keep an eye on what's going on.

Reinforce the safety messages in cyber rules. Younger teenagers in particular should be reminded of the need to protect their privacy.

Remind teenagers that material posted to blogs which have not blocked caching by search engines can be very, very hard to remove from public view. They may not want to post something now, only to be embarrassed by it later in life!

Ensure teens understand that posting to newsgroups makes their email address public.

Have them change email address if they suspect they are being tracked.

Ensure both you and your teenagers understand laws relating to copyright, privacy, software piracy, hacking and obscenity.