

Appropriate Use of the Internet

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Trying to find helpful information regarding appropriate use of the Internet by children can be a challenge for parents and educators. One helpful site is [NetSmartz](#), which was created by a partnership of the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children and the Boys and Girls Clubs of America. The following information is from the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children.

Following are some online safety tips to share with your children:

Set up rules: Post clear, simple, easy-to-read rules on or near the monitor. Create your own computer rules or print out the Internet Safety Pledge from NetSmartz. You and your children should sign, and periodically review, the pledge.

Use filters: Consider using filtering or monitoring software for your computer. Look into safeguarding programs or options your online service provider might offer. These can include monitoring or filtering capabilities. Have your children use child-friendly search engines when completing homework. As the parent, the Internet accounts should be in your name, and you should have the primary screen name and control passwords. Don't allow your children to children complete a profile for a service provider, and make sure their screen names are nondescript enough that a stranger won't know the user is a child.

Check out privacy policies: Always read a Web site's privacy policy before you or your children provide any personal information. Also make sure that a Web site offers a secure connection before giving credit-card information. Web sites for children are not permitted to request personal information without a parent's permission. Talk to your children about what personal information is and why you should never give it to people online.

Talk about the dangers of e-mail and chat: If your children use chat or e-mail, talk to them about never meeting an online "friend" face-to-face. Talk to your children about not responding to offensive or dangerous e-mail, chat or other communications. Report any such communication to local law enforcement. Do not delete the offensive or dangerous e-mail; instead turn off the monitor, and contact local law enforcement. Know whom your children are exchanging e-mail with, and only let them use chat areas that you have visited.

Know what's going on: Keep the computer in the family room or another open area of your home. Let your children show you what they can do online, and visit their favorite sites or chat rooms with them. If you suspect online stalking or sexual exploitation of a child, report it to your local law enforcement agency. The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) has a system, the CyberTipline, for identifying online predators and child pornographers and contributing to law-enforcement investigations. Leads forwarded to the site are acknowledged and shared with the appropriate law enforcement agency for investigation.

By following these tips, parents can help keep the Internet a safe place for their children to learn, grow and play.

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