



PARENTS: TIPS ON HOW TO PROTECT YOUR FAMILY FROM INTERNET RISKS

“Although the Internet is a valuable resource and generally a positive place for kids, the risk of harm is very real. Understand these risks and educate yourself and your family about the issues. Use the information in this brochure to understand how you can prevent your kids from becoming victims.”

– Attorney General John Suthers

Safe Surfing Tips for Parents

Discuss the Dangers of the Internet with Your Children

> Talk with your children about the potential hazards of the Internet, including sexual predators, inappropriate content and invasion of privacy.

Become Computer Literate

> Resources like software and classes can help you become computer literate. By learning just a few simple techniques, you can see where your child has been online recently.

Learn Internet Lingo

> IM (Instant Messaging) has given birth to a slew of acronyms to describe phrases. For example, POS = “Parent Over Shoulder.”

Use Parental Controls and Blocking Software

> Most software and Internet Service Providers offer safety settings that block inappropriate sites.

Maintain Access to Your Child’s E-Mail Account

> Given the anonymity of the Internet, e-mail is an easy way for predators to track down victims. Randomly check your child’s e-mail and keep track of who is contacting them.

Pay Attention to What Your Kids do Online

> Know what information your kids are sharing online and with whom, either through instant messaging, social networks, chat rooms or network games. Let your kids be the teacher, ask them to show you what sites they visit and who they meet.

Set Clear Rules for Internet Use

Keep Personal Information Private

> Teach your children never to give out personal information online without your permission. Predators know how to use seemingly disconnected information to locate a child.

Help Your Child Choose a Screen Name

> Find a screen name and e-mail address that reveals nothing personal and is not suggestive – john1234, not john13 or QTPIe. Predators look for expressions of vulnerability, sadness, loneliness and anger.

Never Allow Your Child to Meet an Internet “Friend”

> An Internet “friend” may not be who they say they are. Never allow your children to meet with someone they have met online.

Restrict Internet Access

> Allow children to use the Internet only when you are home. Young children do not belong in chat rooms; teens should use only moderated chats.

Put Internet Devices in a Central Location

> Internet access should be placed in a family room or other central location, not in a bedroom.

Do Not Open Attachments or Links from Strangers

> Opening attachments, sharing music and clicking on links in messages from strangers could lead to getting a virus or downloading bad software or a disturbing image.

Teach Your Children to Report to You When Feeling Threatened

> Teach your children to trust their instincts. If your kids ever feel threatened or scared on the Internet, ask them to tell you immediately without fear of getting into trouble or losing computer privileges.

Know the Internet Risks for Kids

Exposure to Adult, Racist or Other Disturbing Material

> Children are curious and adventurous, and can stumble upon inappropriate content while searching for something else. This can occur by clicking a link in an instant message or blog, and even when sharing files.

Meeting with Predators Online

> Predators use the Internet to find and groom vulnerable children. Frequently their goal is to isolate a child and get them to meet in person.

Invasion of Privacy

> Some businesses capture personal information in registration or contest forms. Children might unknowingly volunteer personal information (including photos) to predators and other criminals in blogs, personal web pages or network games.

Careless Use of File-Sharing (or Peer-to-Peer) Programs

> Exchanging music, videos and other files with strangers is risky. It can lead to accidentally downloading pornography, viruses or spyware. Some file-sharing programs can also let other users access your computer any time it is online.

Cyberbullying

> Bullying comments and embarrassing images can easily be sent via the Internet.



Attorney General John Suthers teaching Castro Elementary fourth graders about Internet safety at the launch of the Attorney General's Safe Surfing Initiative. May 25, 2005

Safe Surfing Tips for Kids

Choose a Safe and Sensible Screen Name

> Choose a screen name and e-mail address that reveals nothing personal and is not suggestive.

Keep Personal Information Private

> Do not share your personal information or that of your parents with someone you meet online. Keep your passwords private, except from your parents.

Talk to Your Parents

> Be honest with your parents about people you meet online. Do not sign-up for e-mail accounts without your parents' approval or answer any e-mails or instant messages from strangers without your parents' consent. If you encounter pictures, links to bad sites, e-mails, instant messages or Chat rooms with bad or hateful language, log off and tell your parents. Never Call or arrange a meeting with someone you have met online.

Teach Your Parents

> Show your parents the sites you visit. Teach your parents more about the Internet so you can have fun and learn together.

Understand Your Parents

> Understand that your parents will supervise your time online and use software to monitor or limit where you go online. They are doing this because they want to protect you!

Think About Your Personal Safety

> Make your personal safety a priority. There may be people you meet online pretending to be someone they are not. Do not do anything someone you meet online asks you to, especially when you know it is something your parents would not approve.

Report Threats Immediately!

If someone stalks, threatens, or continually harasses your kids, or attempts to lure them into face-to-face meetings for illicit purposes (all of which are illegal), report it to:

- > The local police
- > If the child is in immediate danger, **call 911**
- > The Cyber Tipline at (800) 843-5678 or www.cybertipline.com, hosted by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children

For more information on how to protect your family online, visit any of these helpful sites:

- www.ago.state.co.us/InternetSafety/SafeSurfing.cfm
- www.staysafe.org
- www.microsoft.com/athome/security
- www.missingkids.com
- www.bgca.org
- www.icactraining.org

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INTERNET CRIMES AGAINST
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Additional copies available for print at:
<http://www.ago.state.co.us/pdf/InternetSafety.Pdf>



**Colorado Department of Law
Office of the Attorney General**

Attorney General's Safe Surfing Initiative

Protect Your Family on the Internet



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