



CYBERSPACE SAFETY FOR KIDS

Children today spend an average of six hours a day in front of a screen (computer or TV). But parents need to take steps to ensure that their children stay safe when they're online.

- One of the basic rules for all kids also applies to kids online: Don't talk to strangers.
- Keep kids' computers in a common area of your home – kitchen or family room, for example. Don't allow children to have a computer in their bedrooms, where no one else can see what they're viewing. Learn to use and activate the privacy settings on the social networking sites, online games and instant messaging sites that your child uses.
- Visit the Web sites that your children frequent. Create your own password for these sites and monitor them.
- Teach your children what information NOT to give online (or on the phone): their last name, their street address, their birthday, Social Security numbers, credit card numbers, or other identifying information such as where they attend school or when they will be out of town.
- Also teach your children to keep their password safe from everyone except you.
- Teach your children to come to you when something online makes them uncomfortable, whether it is the bullying of a classmate, a plea for help from an abused or suicidal teen or a stranger asking for a face-to-face meeting.
- Teach your children not to believe everything they see or hear on the Internet. Healthy skepticism will keep them safer, and will teach them useful critical thinking skills. Discuss with them what they see and hear on the Internet (as well as on TV and on the street.)
- Be aware of all the ways that children can access the Internet, from cell phones, MP-3 players, Wii games and more. Make sure they understand that Cyberspace Safety rules apply in all of these settings.
- For older children and teens, be sure they understand that photos and comments they post now can be seen everywhere, by everyone – including future employers – in years to come.
- Encourage your children not to spend TOO much time in front of a computer or TV screen – they still need at least an hour of active exercise every day!

Here are a few Web sites that can provide additional information to help you:

- **Safe Surfing Tips for Teens**
http://kidshealth.org/teen/safety/safebasics/internet_safety.html
- **Online Safety Rules for Kids**
http://www.fema.gov/kids/on_safety.htm
- **A Parent's Guide to Internet Safety**
<http://www.fbi.gov/publications/pguide/pguidee.htm>
- **The Internet and Your Family**
<http://www.app.org/family/interfamily.htm>



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