

Internet Security

The Internet has become an integral part of our lives and has opened up a virtual world of information for anyone with a computer and an on-line connection. Children seem to have a fascination with computers and the Internet, because they are able to access more information from more sources more quickly than from any other medium. However, they need to learn how to protect themselves from the predators, cheats, and con artists that are lurking behind their screen. With a little bit of planning and appropriate adult supervision, children can explore and learn while essentially eliminating the dangers of being abused or exploited.

Just like in a park or public place, a child's best defense is a sound value system and a plan. As they are ready, teach your children about exploitation, pornography, hate literature, and violence. Teach them what to do when something they see is troubling or bothersome to them.

Set aside time to explore the Internet together. That way, you can set the examples of how suspicious messages or people are appropriately handled, and you may be better informed yourself.

Monitor your children when they are on line. If your child becomes uneasy or defensive when you enter the room, it likely means that they are involved in something unusual or forbidden.

Choose an Internet Service Provider that has parental control features, and learn how to use them. Or, you may purchase commercial blocking software to screen out sites by content and key words you find objectionable. Such blocking is very effective, and is already done by the Walnut Creek schools for the computers they have on campus.

Tell children NEVER to give out personal information, such as address, telephone number, or their parent's name. They should NEVER send pictures of themselves to anyone they don't know, or that YOU have not met in person

Assume NOTHING about anyone you or your child may meet on line. Sexual predators and con artists can easily assume the on-line identity, vernacular, and apparent interests of a child of any age and sex in order to lure and entice their target to respond as they might to a real person. Unless you have met someone in person, what appears to be a chatty 12-year-old girl might actually be a 45-year-old male.

If you or your child comes across material that you find pornographic, threatening, or otherwise offensive, it might well be a violation of law. Save the material, and contact the Police Department

Another resource is the National Center for Missing or Exploited Children. They function as a national clearinghouse for tips and leads regarding the sexual exploitation of children. You can call the 24-hour Child Pornography Tip-line at 1-800-843-5678, or make your reports on-line at their website, www.missingkids.com/cybertip. They will compile and forward the information to the appropriate state, federal, or local law enforcement agency for action.



FOR CRIMES IN PROGRESS DIAL 9 1 1
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