



How to Keep Kids Safe Online: *A Guide for Parents*

Busy school administrators know just how challenging it can be to keep students safe while they use the Internet. You employ filters and blocking software to keep away inappropriate -- and even dangerous -- online content. But students use the Web at home, too. And unfortunately, when blogs, e-mail, or Web sites are used in a negative way in the home, the consequences can easily creep into your school. Use this document to help educate parents about the dangers that lurk online and how they can protect their children. Your efforts can go a long way towards creating a more peaceful school environment.



Safeguard Your Children

The Web opens a door to a world of useful information. Students can point, click, and learn. Unfortunately, without even trying, they can also inadvertently stumble across information that is not only inappropriate, but at times, illegal. When children *try* to access such content, they generally succeed. What can we as school administrators, and you as parents, do to safeguard our children?

Be Aware

We all know that pornography and explicit sexual content is everywhere online. And while preventing access to such material is a priority, other types of inappropriate information should also be blocked. Parents should be on the lookout to protect their children from sites that do the following:

- ▼ show graphic and inappropriate pornography and sexual content
- ▼ sell contraband, guns, drugs, poisons, or alcohol
- ▼ advocate violent behavior
- ▼ advocate taking drugs and provide instructions on how to do so (purchase, use, etc.)
- ▼ contain violence, gore, and hate literature
- ▼ provide false information
- ▼ allow minors to gamble
- ▼ pose a risk to privacy
- ▼ advertise tobacco and alcohol
- ▼ provide instructions for bomb-building
- ▼ collect and sell private information
- ▼ use unfair interactive marketing strategies that target cybertots
- ▼ promote unhealthy lifestyles and behavior or offer online “support groups” for those involved in dangerous behavior, such as anorexia, “cutting,” or the taking of steroids
- ▼ encourage (or provide the means to) cyberbully individuals
- ▼ encourage the illegal downloading of copyrighted materials
- ▼ provide instructions for computer “hacking”
- ▼ run bogus auctions



Online Safety Guidelines

Parents, carefully review the following online safety guidelines from WiredKids.org.

1. Personal information (including home and school address, phone numbers, e-mail addresses, and photos) stays personal. Giving out information about yourself or any member of the family is dangerous.
2. Limit the amount of time your child is permitted to spend on the computer each day. People, not computers, should be his/her best friends and companions.
3. Help children find a balance between computing and other activities.
4. Keep the computer in the family room, kitchen, living room -- not in your child's bedroom. This way, you can monitor your child's computer usage.
5. Pay attention when your children are online. Watch where they go. Knowing you are watching, kids are less likely to put themselves in risky situations.
6. Have a family discussion about computer rules and regulations and post them near the computer as a constant reminder. Regularly monitor compliance with these rules, especially when it comes to the amount of time spent on the computer. Use the Internet Agreement chart on the following page.
7. Learn enough about computers so that you can enjoy them together with your kids.
8. Make sure that your children feel comfortable coming to you with questions. This should apply to all situations including the computer.
9. Encourage discussions between you and your child about what they enjoy online. This way you can direct children to safe sites that fit in with their interests.
10. Keep kids out of chatrooms or IRCs unless they are monitored.
11. Get to know their "online friends" just as you get to know all of their other friends.
12. Have a frank discussion with your children. Warn them that people may not be what they seem to be. I can say I'm a 12-year-old boy named Billy, but I may be a 49-year-old man. Predators often pose as children to gain our children's trust.
13. Never give out your passwords or store them where they can be found.

Protecting Your Children When They're Not Home

Make sure you and the parents of your children's friends agree about monitoring the children's activities online, and that you use similar tools to enforce your choices. If not, circumventing your parental controls is as simple as your children walking next door and computing at a friend's house. If you can't agree on a joint policy, make sure that parents honor your wishes and keep your children off their computer while visiting.

Credit Cards

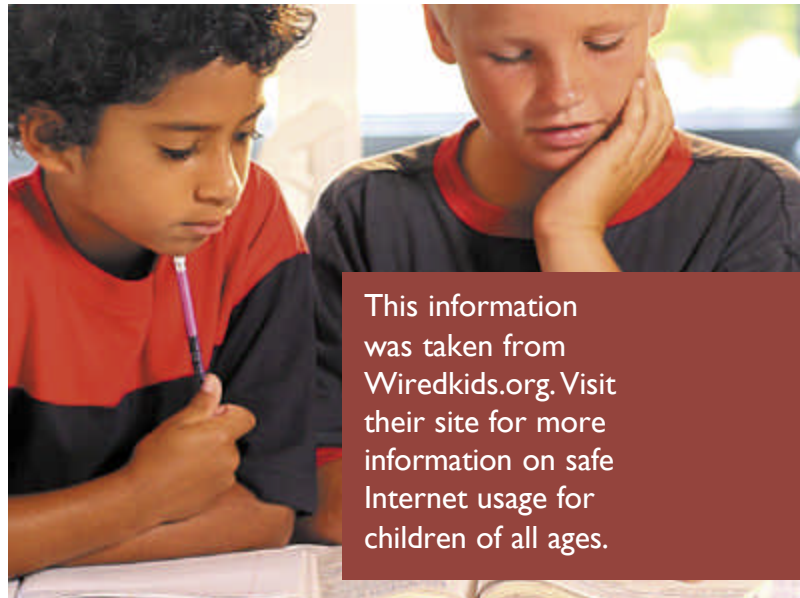
Don't store your credit card information on your computer. As inconvenient as it might be to have to access it from somewhere else, it creates too much of a temptation for computer-savvy kids and their friends.

Internet Agreement

1. I will not give my name, address, telephone number, school, or my parents' names, address, or telephone number, to anyone I "meet" on the computer.
2. I understand that some people online pretend to be someone else. Sometimes they pretend to be kids, when they're really grown-ups. I will tell my parents about people I meet online. I will also tell my parents before I answer any e-mails I get from or send e-mails to new people I meet online.
3. I will not buy or order anything online or give out any credit card information without first asking my parents' permission.
4. I will not fill out any form online that asks me for any information about myself or my family without asking my parents first.
5. I will not get into arguments or fights online. If someone tries to start an argument or fight with me, I won't respond and will tell my parents.
6. If I see something I do not like or that I know my parents don't want me to see, I will immediately click on the "back" button or log off.
7. If I see people doing things or saying things to other kids online that I know is wrong, I will tell my parents.
8. I will not keep online secrets from my parents.
9. If someone sends me any pictures or any e-mails using bad language, I will tell my parents.
10. If someone asks me to do something that I am not supposed to do, I will tell my parents.
11. I will not call anyone I met online unless my parents say it's okay.
12. I will never meet in person anyone I met online, unless my parents say it's okay.
13. I will never send anything to anyone I met online, unless my parents say it's okay.
14. If anyone I met online sends me anything, I will tell my parents.
15. I will not use something I found online and pretend it's mine.
16. I will not say bad things about people online, and I will practice good netiquette.
17. I will not use bad language online.
18. I know that my parents want to make sure I'm safe online, and I will listen to them when they ask me not to do something.
19. I will help teach my parents more about computers and the Internet.
20. I will practice safe computing, and check for viruses whenever I borrow a disk from someone or download something from the Internet.
21. I will not post my cell number on my way message, and will check with someone before posting something personal about me on my blog or on a networking site.
22. I will Stop, Block, and Tell! If I am harassed online or cyberbullied.
23. I will Take 5! before reacting to something that upsets me or makes me angry online.
24. I will practice responsible "thinkB4Uclick" rules. (I know I can find out more about these things at InterentSuperHeroes.org and StopCyberbullying.org.)
25. I will learn how to be a good cybercitizen and control the technology, instead of being controlled by it.

I promise to follow these rules. (signed by the child)

I promise to help my child follow these rules and not to over react if my child tells me about bad things in cyberspace (signed by parent).



This information was taken from Wiredkids.org. Visit their site for more information on safe Internet usage for children of all ages.

Additional Resources

Aftab.com

Cyberlawenforcement.org

InternetSuperHeroes.org

KatiesPlace.org

NetBullies.com

Teenangels.org

WiredCops.org

[Wired Kids, Inc. \(www.wiredkids.com\)](http://www.wiredkids.com)

WiredKids.org

WiredSafety.org