

Supervising Children Online

Children need parents and carers to teach them how to make smart choices about who and what they find online, to deal with commercial material, safeguard their privacy, to have a positive experience when meeting people online, and use their time on the Internet effectively.

The types of rules you may have made about how to deal with strangers and what children can watch on television or video are also relevant to the Internet.

There are some general principles that apply to children in most age groups:

- Involve the family.
- Set some appropriate guidelines for Internet use and discuss them with the children you care for.
- Take an interest in the new sites children are finding online and spend time exploring with them. This will help children retain your values for when you cannot be together.
- Keep in touch with what children are doing online.
- Put the computer with the Internet access in a public area of the home, such as the living room, rather than a child's bedroom or playroom.
- Have family talks about the Internet and encourage children to let you know if they come across anything disturbing.
- With older children, you may choose to discuss the nature of material found on the Internet.

Remember that children will have access to the Internet not only at home, but also at other places they frequent such as schools, friends houses and libraries. Mobile Internet Devices such as phones and PDA s are also being used by a number of children today for Internet access.

By allowing children to make informed decisions about the content they access, and by developing a sense of trust at home, your children will be in a good position to use the Internet in a responsible way when they are away from the home environment.

Kids on the Net

"This is a wake up call for parents to get more involved in their children's Internet lives. But the good news is that by simply moving the location of the family PC, taking a greater interest in what our kids are doing online and talking to them about it, we can make an immediate difference." Martin Hoffman, former CEO of Ninemsn.

Facts from The 'Online Safety for Teens' survey conducted by NetAlert and Ninemsn.

- 43% of teenage boys have downloaded files that they didn't want their parents to know about
- 50% of parents believe they always know what sites their children visit
- 56% of parents thought they had enough information about online safety
- More than half of parents claimed that they had better Internet knowledge than their children
- 24% of teens claim that their parents are never around when they are online. 6% of parents claimed that they were never around when their children were online
- The older the children, the less likely it is that their parents will join them online
- 71% of parents believe their children use the internet for research, while only 23% of teens say they research online.
- 55% of all parents claimed that they were checking their childrens ' online behaviour by watching them.

Internet Safety Tips for Kids and Teenagers



Kids! Enjoy your time on the Internet
but BEWARE:

1. Always be alert when on the Internet while there are some excellent sites to visit there are also some bad ones like pornography, animal cruelty and hate sites.
2. If something appears on your screen that disturbs you, tell your friends, a teacher or parent or phone the NetAlert help line on 1800 880 176 or email enquiries@netalert.net.au for some advice on what to do. Remember you will not get into any trouble by letting people know what you have stumbled across.
3. If you hear or see your friends getting into places that look unsuitable, remind them of the potential dangers and advise them on how to get out of the site.
4. Keep all personal information to yourself (including photos, your name, the name of your school, the name of your family members and your phone number). Strangers might use your personal information in a way that you never intended them to.
5. Chat Rooms are great ways to talk to people but be aware that some people in them are not who they say they are. If someone or something disturbs you in a Chat Room, leave and find another one where there are people you like. Talk to your parents, carers or teachers about advice on how to deal with Stranger Danger.
6. Remember not everything you read on the Internet is true. Be smart and make decisions for yourself on what you think is right and wrong.
7. Be careful downloading free games or files. Sometimes people can trick you into clicking on a link that sends you to an Unsafe Zone or makes your computer download a Virus.
8. Only give your mobile phone number to your family and friends and if you start getting upsetting or annoying text messages, tell a teacher or parent.
9. Always seek help from adults or friends. Mum and dad might not know as much about the Internet as you, but they know about life and together you can work out any problem that you might encounter when online.

Source: And for other fact sheets in this series visit: www.netalert.net.au

The PARENTING TIPS PAGE is provided as a service to the
Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia

To receive **Parenting Tips** by email: parentingtips@pared.edu.au