

- ✓ Chatroom and messaging safety
- ✓ Staying away from pornography
- ✓ Avoiding internet bullying



Keeping your child safe on the **internet**

AT A GLANCE



Using the internet and messaging safely

- Not everyone who uses a chatroom or instant messaging is who they say they are. Teach your child when and where it is unsafe to give out personal details when using the internet.
- If your child has a web-cam or sends pictures of themselves or their friends via the internet make sure they are aware of the associated risks.
- Encourage your kids to introduce you to their online and text messaging friends. If they want to meet an online friend face to face, make sure you or an adult you know goes with them and always insist that they meet in a public place.
- Agree a set of rules for using the internet that everyone in the family follows.
- Sending text messages from the internet is becoming more common. If your child uses this service make sure they know how to conceal their mobile phone number from other users.
- Always check for spam emails in your inbox and never reply to them.
- Encourage your child to talk to you if they are being bullied on the net or by instant messaging or text messaging.
- Never respond to internet bullying.

Did you know?

You can use internet filtering systems and child-friendly software like Yahoooligans or Ask Jeeves Kids to stop your child accidentally going onto pornography websites.

Surfing in safety

Sports, history, science – there’s no end to the subjects your kids can explore online. Children are growing up with the internet and it plays an important role in their life – whether they are chatting to friends, finding material for homework or playing games. They also love staying in touch through instant messaging and text messaging.

Most children’s use of the internet and mobile phones will be perfectly safe and enjoyable. But there are some dangers. So how can you help them explore online and chat to their friends while making sure they are safe from the risks?

That’s what this booklet is about. It’s about ways of using the internet safely for people with kids. It contains plenty of advice that will show you the danger areas and help your children chat and explore in safety.

This booklet explains what you need to know. It will:

- help your child use chatrooms, instant messaging and text messaging safely
- help you protect your child from adult content, such as pornography
- advise you on online spending
- help you protect your child from internet bullying
- help you to find out more about internet safety in general (check out the websites on the back page).

Keep your computer in a place where everyone can use it. And go online with your child so you can see what they are doing on the internet.

Internet jargon – what it means

Internet filtering software

This allows you to block certain websites from your computer.

ISP

An Internet Service Provider that connects your computer to the internet.

Moderated chatroom

A chatroom that has a person or some technology that makes sure the 'chat' is suitable.

Spam

Unwanted emails you have never asked for, like the junk mail that comes through your door.

URL

A website address.

Peodophiles often pretend to be children and try to make friends in supervised chat online before continuing in personal, one-to-one conversations (this is known as 'whispering'). As they gain the child's confidence, they may try to text or telephone your child. This is called 'grooming' and people who do it can be punished by law.

It is vital that your children remember that many people on the net are not who they say they are.

- Never allow kids to give out their personal details such as a telephone number, school or home address, email address or mobile number – anything that will let people they don't know contact them offline. Use a nickname when you log on.
- Kids love to chat but restrict online activity to moderated chatrooms which are supervised and for people their age. Remember, even these are not completely safe. If they use instant messaging, make sure they know exactly who is on their buddy list.
- Encourage your kids to introduce you to their online, instant or text messaging friends, just as they do with their usual friends. If they want to meet an online friend, make sure you or an adult you know is with them and that the meeting takes place in public.

Using chatrooms and messaging

Chatrooms and instant messaging are particularly popular with children and teenagers, but there is a risk that paedophiles or sex abusers might use them to look for their victims. This can also happen through text messaging on mobile phones. Make sure your child does not reveal their mobile phone number when sending text messages from the internet.

- Sign up for a chatroom yourself. This way you will learn how they work. There is also instant messenger software, that allows people to make immediate, real-time contact with their 'friends' while they are surfing other sites. You should learn to use instant messenger software. Kids also chat using mobile phone text messaging.
- Discourage your child from chatting or whispering in a private chatroom with a stranger. Let your child know that they can tell you if any chat makes them feel uncomfortable, worried or scared.
- If there are any problems, tell the moderator and contact the ISP (Internet Service Provider) of the site holding the chatroom.
- If any child is in immediate danger, you should contact your local police straight away. If you want to report other suspicious activity in a chatroom or an instant message, go to:
www.virtualglobaltaskforce.com/contactus/vgt/

Teach your children to treat new online friends with the same caution they would treat a stranger. Remind them how easy it is to conceal your real identity and explain why it's important never to meet an online friend alone.

Did you know?

Unwanted email, or spam, is routinely used by online pornography distributors. Check the email inbox and delete any mail before letting your children use the internet. Never reply to spam or click on unsubscribe links or attachments, it's a trick to get your email address or spread a virus. A significant proportion of pornographic sites include viruses and other bugs which can compromise your computer and sensitive information on it.



Stay away from pornography

The internet has made pornography (also called 'adult content') more easily available. So much so that people sometimes find it accidentally. Even with internet filtering software, children can find things that make them feel uncomfortable, upset or threatened. Try to help them understand that they can always talk to you about these things without you blaming them or stopping them using the net.

- Use child-friendly search engines like Yahoo!igans or Ask Jeeves Kids and surf the net with your child.
- Use internet filtering software to limit access to unsuitable sites and material. Set it up at the right level for each member of the family and keep downloading the updates.
- 'Walled gardens' (services that give you access to collections of websites selected by you) are a good way of ensuring a safe environment.
- Agree a set of rules about using the internet that the whole family follows. Write it down, keep it by the computer and try to make sure everyone sticks to it.

Protect your child with software

A list of protection software is available at www.getnetwise.org. This will give you more control over what your child can do on the internet.

What about online bullying?

Online bullying or abuse is just as serious as playground bullying. But it can be harder to spot. Abuse can be sent through text messaging, instant messaging and unmoderated chatrooms. You can put a stop to this type of bullying.

- Teach children that bullying is always wrong and that seeking help is right. It doesn't mean you've given in to bullying.
- Never respond to internet or text messaging bullying, this is exactly what's expected. It's best to ignore it.
- Encourage your children to block text messages or leave a chatroom if bullying or abuse starts. They should then tell you, the moderator and the site manager or editor.
- In some chatrooms, you can report any abusive behaviour by clicking an on-screen 'report button' or by phoning their customer services.
- If your child is being stalked or harassed, go to the local police.

Online shopping – the risks

Shopping on the net can be a real time saver as well as good fun. But it does come with the dangers of overspending and doing online transactions that are not secure. Like most people, kids find it easy to spend money. If they've got your credit or debit card details, you could get a nasty shock when your statement arrives. Be as careful about spending online as you would when you're out shopping for real. Don't give your credit or debit card details to your children. Online shopping connections can be unsecure. Make sure the connection is secure any time you give out your personal details, by following the advice given here.

- Your children should always ask your permission before buying anything on the internet with your card details, and you should help them fill out any online forms.
- Only buy from well-known companies, if you can. If this isn't possible, try to contact the online shop to check its details before passing on yours.
- Card details should only be given through a secure connection. You can see if the site is secure by checking whether the site address shows 'https://' when it is asking for your payment or personal details.

- Remember, you can always complain to your credit card issuer if you feel that a site is dishonest. The issuer may be able to get your money back and withdraw card processing facilities from the site.
- If a product, invitation or deal looks too good to be true, it almost certainly is. Use your common sense before parting with any money, personal or financial details.

Be secure!

Look for the little padlock or key at the bottom of the web page to see if the page is secure. If in doubt, don't buy.



Want to find out more?

If you want to find out more about using the internet safely, go to:

www.parentscentre.gov.uk/usingtheinternetsafely

www.virtualglobaltaskforce.com/contactus/vgt/

www.safety.ngfl.gov.uk

www.childnet-int.org

www.kidsmart.org.uk

www.chatdanger.com

www.nch.org.uk

www.thinkuknow.co.uk

 **0870 241 4680** for a leaflet.

If you want to learn computer skills your local learndirect centre can help.

 **0800 101 901** or visit:

www.learndirect.co.uk

Can't get onto the internet at home?

Visit your local library which will have computers and internet access.

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