

Internet Safety Tips

ISSDA Offers Safety Tips For Parents Children When Surfing The Internet

The Internet and the invention of the personal computer are perhaps the most significant creations of the 20th Century, offering unprecedented communication tools that link families and friends around the world. It provides users access to an incredible volume of information and is an invaluable tool of the academic and business world.

The Internet can also be a seedy and dangerous place for people of all ages, especially children and teens.

Considering that 25 percent of kids online participate in real time chat and 13 million use instant messaging (IM), the risks of such children interacting, either knowingly or unknowingly, with a predator is alarming.

According to the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA), 89 percent of sexual solicitations were made in either chat rooms or instant messages, and 1 in 5 youth (ages 10-17 years) has been sexually solicited online.

Tips for Children and Teens:

Never give out personal information (such as name, age, address, phone number, school, town, password, schedule, your picture) or fill out questionnaires or any forms online. This includes chat rooms, instant messages, email, surfing the Net and even entering contests or registering for clubs online.

Never meet in person with anyone you have met online without Mom and/or Dad's presence.

Do not enter a chat room without Mom and/or Dad's presence or supervision. Some "kids" you meet in chat rooms may not really be kids; they may be adults with bad intentions. Remember, people may not be who they say they are.

Be suspicious of anyone who tries to turn you against your parents, teachers, or friends.

Don't give out your password to anyone except your parents — not even to your friends.

Follow your family's rules for online safety at home, at school, at the library or at a friend or relative's house.

Do not engage in an online conversation that makes you feel uncomfortable. Log off and tell your parents. If you get such a message, DO NOT respond. Instead, show it to your parents and let them handle it.

Never respond to or send an e-mail or instant message to a stranger, or accept e-mails, enclosures, links, URLs or other things online from people you don't know. Talk to your parents first so they can check it out.

Tips for Adults

Place your computer in an area of your home where you can easily monitor your child's Internet activity.

Teach your children not to give out personal information to anyone they do not know in the physical world.

Teach them never to give out any personal information while they are in a chat room with friends, because there may also be others in the chat room that they do not know.

Supervise your child's chat-room activity and only allow your children in monitored chat rooms.

Block instant/personal messages from people you and your child don't know. (Check to see which IM services have this feature.)

Set time limits and monitor the amount of time your child spends on the Internet, and at what times of day. Excessive time online, especially at night, may indicate a problem.

Regularly ask your kids about their online friends and activities.

Be present in the room so you can monitor the screen and your child's IM.

Do not permit your child to have an online profile, which serves as a lightning rod for predators. With this restriction, he or she will not be listed in directories and is less likely to be approached in chat rooms where pedophiles often search for prey.

Be aware that when anyone enters a chat room, their email can end up on a spammer's list. This means that participating in chat rooms can increase the likelihood that you will begin receiving unsolicited pornographic e-mail.

Consider investing in protective software. Ask your Internet service provider or local software retailer for suggestions or visit an Internet search engine and conduct a keyword search for "blocking and filtering software."

The following websites provide useful information to aid parents in educating themselves and their children in safe Internet practices: www.protectkids.com, www.safekids.com, www.missingkids.com/cybertip, and www.getnetwise.org.