



INTERNET SAFETY TIPS

1. EDUCATE YOURSELF, THEN YOUR CHILD

Banning a child from certain sites may only motivate them to spend more time on them. They can go elsewhere to go online where you then have no control. Talk to your child about how to be safe in life and online. Talk with your child about the dangers of posting personal information. Talk about people who are online may not actually be who they say they are.

2. TEACH CHILDREN THE OBVIOUS RULES

Tell your children NOT to put their photos on the Internet or to give out their names, addresses, phone numbers, schools, or other personal information. Once a picture is on the Internet there is no way to know where that picture has gone. There is no way to get it back. Pictures can be manipulated. Pictures can be saved by sex offenders.

3. INSTALL AN INTERNET FILTER OR FAMILY SAFETY SOFTWARE

Software is an effective way to filter dangerous content. This software usually comes with tools like time management, remote monitoring and reporting, and keystroke recognition. Check with your Internet Service Provider (ISP). Some ISP's have filters you can purchase or they may provide filters for free. Visit a local electronics or computer store to examine and purchase a filtering software program or research and order a filtering software package online. Choose one that is best for your family.

4. KNOW THE DANGERS ASSOCIATED WITH SITES YOUR CHILDREN FREQUENT

Whether it is MySpace, Facebook, Runescape or ANYPLACE, talking to your child about the dangers associated with any social networking site is important. Communication is the most important thing you can do. You may control your child's environment at home, but when they are away from home someone else might not have your same rules and concerns. Communicating and helping your child understand the dangers online is our most important message.

5. TALK WITH YOUR CHILDREN ABOUT ENCOUNTERING PORNOGRAPHY.

Teach your child that if they encounter pornography to quickly turn the power off and get an adult. This can prevent a child from attempting to stop the situation by clicking more buttons and thereby spreading the attack and being exposed to more pornography.

Talk with your child about the dangers of pornography and how it can become an addiction. Many teenagers are now becoming addicted and obsessed with the viewing of pornography. The addiction to pornography can become just as dangerous as an addiction to drugs. Addiction to pornography can lead to boundary issues and worse.

6. MANAGE YOUR CHILD'S TIME ON THE INTERNET

Scheduling times when a child can be on the Internet and the amount they can be online ensures that you know when they are on the Internet and for how long. When you set guidelines or limits on their Internet usage you reduce their chances of being exposed to inappropriate content.

7. SET INTERNET GUIDELINES AND ENFORCE CONSEQUENCES IF THEY ARE NOT FOLLOWED.

Providing guidelines will ensure they know where they stand when it comes to how they use the Internet as well as the consequences when they break the rules. If you enforce consequences consistently, children will be more likely to follow the rules.

8. KEEP COMPUTERS OUT OF CHILDREN'S BEDROOMS.

If you place the computer in a more open room, one that is commonly used by the entire family, children will be less inclined to view and access material that may not be acceptable. Based on conversations with children in Jefferson County, we have learned that 65% of them have online access in their bedrooms.

9. CREATE A RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR CHILD THAT FOSTERS TRUST AND OPEN COMMUNICATION.

Open communication and trust is the key. Many times parents overreact. If your child comes to you about pornography on the computer or about being approached by a stranger, they should be applauded. Many parents immediately react out of fear and love. They tell their child they cannot go to that specific site or prohibit Internet usage altogether. That defeats all trust and closes the door to communication.

10. IF YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND THE INTERNET, A WEBSITE OR A GAME SITE, ASK YOUR CHILD TO SHOW YOU.

Who likes to show off their skills and knowledge about the Internet to adults? Our children. You also are accomplishing other things when you ask for your child's help. You are spending valuable one-on-one time with them as well as communicating with your child and learning where they go and what they do online.

11. COMPROMISE – COMMUNICATE

Teenagers are attracted to MySpace and similar sites. Many parents do not allow their children to be on these sites. The 1st Judicial District Attorney's Office recognizes that this is a tough decision to make. Keep in mind if a child is determined to be on a site, they WILL find a way. They can access these sites from friend's homes and other places.

Parents should, keep in mind that some teenagers have two different accounts. They have one for mom and dad, and they have one for their friends. In Internet Safety classes with teenagers, we warn them that if they can't show mom and dad their account then they are probably putting themselves in harms way.

We suggest that children set their account settings to private and limit who can access those accounts. Be careful with the personal information (#2 tip) contained on the account.

If you are communicating with someone online that you don't know in person, they could be anyone. In these situations, do not give out any personal information.

12. VIDEO GAMES – GAME SITES

Many children and teenagers frequent popular game sites Online, such as Club Penguins and Runescape just to mention a couple. They are fun and very attractive to kids. Many of these game sites let you communicate with others who are also playing in these areas. We tell children and teenagers that if they choose to communicate with others, talk only about the game. If someone asks how old you are, your name, where you live or any other personal information, THAT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH THE GAME.

THE INTERNET IS HERE TO STAY. THE INTERNET HAS A LOT OF GOOD INFORMATION AND CAN BE A GREAT LEARNING TOOL AS WELL.

THE FIRST JUDICIAL DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE IS COMMITTED TO HELPING KEEP CHILDREN AND TEENS SAFE ONLINE.