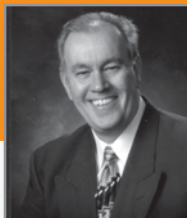


internet safety

Protecting Our Children Online

**Knowledge you can use
to protect your family
from the dangers
of the internet**





A Personal Message From Our President

Dear Parent, Grandparent, Educator or Concerned Friend:

We have produced this guide because we know that you share with us a common goal: Protecting our children!

When our kids reach driving age, we wouldn't dream of letting them out on the highway without preparing them. Without educating them as to the potential dangers; without arming them with the rules of safe driving; and, whenever possible, without knowing where, when and with whom they are driving.

Today's Internet represents one of the most sophisticated, useful, but potentially dangerous highways anywhere.

Yet when our kids become of age to use the Internet, many parents and guardians send them off without any warnings, without any guidelines, without any understanding of the potential dangers.

Citizens for Community Values has produced this booklet and accompanying video to help parents and guardians understand the dangers of the Internet and to provide assistance in establishing controls that will help the children under their care benefit from the Internet without becoming victims of its very real dangers.

One part of the solution to assuring kids a positive, safe Internet experience is having the right guidelines in place. As you study this guide and begin to develop controls that suit the needs of your family or school, please be aware of two truths.

First, computer and Internet technology is in a constant state of change. The technology that you choose today may be inadequate tomorrow. We will attempt to keep an online version of this guide updated as technology changes.

Secondly, technology is only one part of our responsibility. The other, even more important part, involves parental controls and an open, honest relationship with our kids. It can be next to impossible to protect our computer-savvy kids from encountering potentially dangerous materials and situations. The best offset to those dangers is a relationship with our children that is marked by honesty, transparency, respect and love.

Sincerely,

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Internet Ed

The Interstate highway system. It has connected us and expanded our horizons in ways never imagined just decades ago. But it can be dangerous, claiming thousands of lives every year.

So when our children reach the age to drive on that Interstate system, we take definite measures to protect them from the dangers.

In more recent years, our horizons have been expanded by another amazing system, the information superhighway, the Internet. That system, too, has brought some very real physical and emotional dangers.

But too often, when children reach the age to navigate that superhighway, those responsible for their care turn them loose without equipping them to avoid the dangers. We must accept the responsibility of Protecting our Children Online.

This guide and its accompanying video are intended to assist parents and educators – virtually anyone, for that matter – in that important task.

The Need



The need for such resources is at an all time high. While 70% of the homes in America are connected to the Internet, children have access to the Internet in virtually every public school today and in most public libraries. And as children's online time has increased every day so have the increased risks they face from harmful material and predators.

FACT: A Kaiser Family Foundation study revealed that over 90% of teens and young adults have spent time on the Internet at one point or another, with 49% going online at least once a day and 78% doing so at least a few times a week.



Things are Different Now

With the advancement into the technology age, the Internet is affecting everything from the way we communicate and educate to the way we conduct business.

Not too many years ago, pornography was mostly confined to the red light districts in town where children generally did not go. Today, it's as close as a mouse click away. Just about anyone with an e-mail account or access to the Web knows you don't have to go looking for it in order to be confronted with it.

FACT: Informal surveys with student and children audiences reveal that the average age of first exposure to pornography is now around nine years old.

The online time has clearly been accompanied by problems. It is reported that one in five youths have received an unwanted sexual solicitation of some kind. And many parents would be frightened to know that 70% of them occurred in their own home!

FACT: One filtering company, N2H2, reported the appearance of 28 million new pornographic Web pages in the month of July 2003 alone. A simple search with the search engine Google on the word "porn" returns almost 91 million pages.

To compound the risks, pornographers sometimes disguise their websites with common corporate brand names and misspellings in order to attract accidental visitors. A search for 26 popular toys, such as Pokemon or Action Man reveals thousands of links to porn sites.

The Vulnerability of the Adolescent Brain



Psychologist Dr. Doug Reed practices in Greater Cincinnati and has counseled with individuals of all ages who struggle with pornography and problems associated with it. One particular issue of concern to him is how sexually explicit material affects the development of the adolescent brain.

- The brain of an adolescent undergoes plasticity. The adolescent brain cannot foresee adverse consequences from emotionally based decisions. A big task is to develop frontal cortex controls: to overcome raw emotions with logic and self-regulation.
- Parents and teachers serve as monitors and regulators for adolescents who are not yet able to do this for themselves.
- The brain overproduces neuronal pathways and then later prunes unused pathways. The frontal lobes become more efficient, even though some of the remaining neuronal pathways are "unhealthy" ones.
- The choices made in adolescence determine and shape the brain cells and connections that survive into adulthood.
- The adolescent body and brain is also flooded with sex hormones at this key time of necessary self-regulation.

The Vulnerability of the Adolescent Brain



- If something is engaged in - such as Internet porn - which further heightens the power of emotions while reducing the controls of the prefrontal cortex, it will keep the adolescent captive to their emotions and the negative consequences of living by emotions.
- The stimulation of the reward pathway is the most powerful reinforcer the body can experience.
- Porn and subsequent masturbation simulates the reward center. Images are retained and sought out. Emotions control logic and self-control. Tolerance and escalation occur.
- The adolescent has a limited ability to foresee adverse consequences because the prefrontal cortex is poorly developed until the 20s.
- Addiction, compulsion, or dependency develop by continued use of any powerful mood-altering activity.
- The addiction is to the self-induced mood state - not the substance or behavior itself.

Different Times Require Different Measures



The good news is that as parents and educational institutions ask for help in this task of protecting children online, resources are constantly being developed and improved to keep up with every single new and emerging threat.

This guide will approach Internet safety solutions from three perspectives:

- (1) Establishing rules and guidelines
- (2) Installing appropriate technology
- (3) Building honest relationships and open lines of communication.

Up front, everyone needs to know a few, hard, cold facts about safely surfing the Internet. There are no silver bullets and no foolproof defense systems. The Internet moves at a very fast pace and changes often, so it takes constant attention. Technology is no substitute for adult supervision and involvement. So don't expect some software to give you a complete sense of security because it doesn't exist.

Without question, many in the pornography industry are committed to exposing children to sexually explicit material. No matter what we do to protect them, these pornographers are going to work to stay one step ahead. We must be just as committed to protecting our children online!



Establishing Rules & Guidelines

- Set rules that fit your family or school; put them in writing and discuss them together. Make sure everyone knows that the rules apply whether they are at home or away.
- Place the computer in a central location, such as the family room, living room, kitchen or area where others are likely to be present. Users will much less be likely to engage in inappropriate behavior when in public view. Additionally, by making the Internet a family or public issue, you can more easily learn how children behave online.
- If children have a personal e-mail account, they should never be allowed to set up a public profile that provides personal information such as their name, address, photos, school name, hobbies, etc.

FACT: One company, *eMarketer*, found that 75% of children are actually willing to share personal information online about themselves and their family in exchange for goods and services.

Children need to know that just as they wouldn't give this information to a stranger on the street, they shouldn't give it to a stranger online. Someone with criminal intent can easily use this kind information to find the child.

- Children should always go online with a purpose and not surf aimlessly, with the youngest children supervised at all times. Set time frames and time limits when it is allowed.

Establishing Rules & Guidelines



- They need to know that harmful information is often sent out in unsolicited e-mails called “spam” and should be told to never open e-mail from an unknown person.
- Children need to know that if something on the Internet makes them uncomfortable, they should tell you or another adult immediately. They need to know that they should not be ashamed of something that accidentally happened to them.
- Along with the harmful material that can be accessed on the Internet, online communication may well be the most dangerous and should be limited and monitored most closely. E-mail, chat rooms, instant messaging, message boards, and blogging are the most common ways to communicate online.

FACT: The FBI says that at least one adult crosses state lines every day to meet with a child they have developed a relationship with online. Children often don't realize that the Internet is an open, anonymous community, and that people are not always who they say they are online.

- They need to know they should never arrange a meeting with an online friend face-to-face alone. Emphasize to your children that not everyone online is exactly who they say they are. Someone who would pressure your child to meet face-to-face could have dishonorable or even dangerous reasons for doing so. And if for some reason you approve of your child meeting a particular friend, make sure you accompany them and make sure the meeting is held in a public place.



Establishing Rules & Guidelines

- Teach them that communication over the Internet is just another way to talk to someone. There is no excuse to talk in a way that you would not normally do so just because they are not in the same room or in front of you.

FACT: Peer-to-Peer programs, which most often are used for swapping music files, can be very problematic due to the fact that up to 97% of the total files available are either illegal – that is, they are in violation of copyright laws and are subject to criminal prosecution – or the files contain pornography.

Installing Appropriate Technology



As noted earlier, the sophistication of technology available today to help keep kids safe online continues to keep pace with most every known threat. Although nothing can provide a 100% secure environment on an open Internet connection, a general sense of safety when online is available through a variety of technology products on the market today. Parents and adults responsible for children's online protection have many options that can fit anyone's needs and values. Here are some objectives to consider:

- Prevent access to harmful sites by using either specific words or site addresses.
- Control activities such as making purchases, or online communication, or file swapping.
- Establish time limits when someone is on the Internet.
- Block the sending of personal information such as a name or address or financial data.
- Prevent computer viruses from harming your computer.
- Set up a firewall to stop hackers from getting into your computer.
- Block spam or junk e-mail from ever reaching your computer. This is especially important because these often contain sexually explicit messages.



Installing Appropriate Technology

All of these options can come in annual, monthly, or hourly fees.

It may sound like a lot and that's because there is a lot to consider in keeping children safe online. The good news is that some companies have made it easy by bundling most of these objectives in one software package.

Bsafe
ONLINE

One Internet filter product recommended by CCV is *Bsafe Online*, a company run by people who are committed to working to stay on top of every single new and emerging threat. That goes a long way to providing an excellent product.

When comparison-shopping, several factors should be taken into consideration:

- The software must be easy to install. It needs to be userfriendly with some basic pre-set functions. One shouldn't have to be software engineer to get it to work right.
- It should have easy-to-find helps and, ideally, provide live customer support.
- One should be able to customize and adapt the software to meet individual needs and values.
- The software should be compatible with services like AOL, CompuServe or Prodigy. Some filters only work with their own Internet service. This allows a child to sign up for a free service using a disk they found in a store lobby or through an Internet website and thereby get around a specific service's filter.



- The software should be impossible to disable or by-pass without an authorized password. Many parents may not realize that their child can easily get around every level of protection offered by some Internet services simply by signing in under another user name as a guest. Often, it's as easy as switching the browser. Other products such as filtered browsers or filtered search engines may provide a simple or even fun solution for children but they are in no way considered secure.
- Another important feature is the ability to create activity reports and logs. We all know how effective accountability is in helping keep on track. If someone knows they are being watched, there is a higher degree of integrity. And if children choose not to discuss Internet problems, parents will still know what's going on so that they can take protective actions. Below is an example.

Weekly [Saturday] BsafeHome Tamper-Proof Online Report 12/27/2003 - 1/3/2004

AccountID: 86321
UserID: 86321-1-csv
Sent To: cc@ccw.org

Activity Summary

	Web Pages	Unique Sites	Objectionable Sites
86321-1-csv	38	11	0

Web Pages: Total number of visits to all internet sites, including multiple visits to the same site.
Unique Sites: Total number of different sites visited once or more times.

Blocked Internet Sites Attempted

Page	Reason Blocked	Views
86321-1-csv	--- No History Recorded ---	Master Account

This section identifies the Internet address of the Internet sites visited on your computer, which were blocked.

Unblocked Internet Sites Attempted

Page	Views
86321-1-csv	Master Account
1 http://ms.chromedata.com/updates/updates.htm	14 (36.84%)
2 http://ms.chromedata.com/google.com	10 (26.31%)
3 http://www.google.com/search?hl=en&lr=&btnG=Search	3 (7.89%)



Building Honest Relationships & Open Lines of Communication

Communication is key to keeping children safe on the Internet. The most important one thing, that you can do, is to develop a relationship with your kids that makes open, honest communication possible.

Studies show that most will be exposed to inappropriate material on the Internet.

FACT: According to the January 07, 2002 edition of the UK News Telegraph, the NOP Research Group found that 90% of children 8-16 years old have viewed sexually explicit material on the Internet, most often unintentionally while doing homework.

If this happens, it is imperative that children feel comfortable coming to you to discuss what they have seen. Let them know that you care about what they are feeling.

If you do find your child has accessed pornographic material, use this as an opportunity to discuss what they have seen. Sexual curiosity is normal, especially for boys. Talk to them about the true intention for sexuality and respect for others.

It's important not to over-react but to have a reasoned and calm response that is well thought out. A child should sense your concern for their well-being and know that it's because you care that you want to protect them from pornography.

When discussing an incident, try to find out what the payoff is when looking at pornography. Does it cause a particular mood change and why is that mood change desired? Are they troubled or upset at something unrelated? Once a parent can help the child work through questions like these, an effort can be made to find another way to achieve the same mood change.

Warning Signs to Look For



Parents should be on the alert for certain signs that might point to inappropriate activity on the Internet. Mark Merrill of Family First in Tampa, Florida has identified several.

- Look for secretive behavior, such as your children hiding disks, going online late at night or after you have gone to bed, or quickly exiting a website when you walk near.
- Be cautious when your child routinely brings home disks (or CDs) from a friend's house. They could easily be downloading images from their friend's computer onto a disk to view at home.
- Look for changes in behavior, such as increased use of new slang words, inappropriate sexual knowledge, sleeping problems, or withdrawal from the family. There may be an avoidance of social, recreational, or occupational activities in lieu of the Internet.
- Pornographic pictures on the computer hard drive or on disks.
- Phone calls or packages to your children from adults you don't know.
- Increased mood changes when not being able to spend time on the Internet.
- Addition of new and/or unknown programs to your computer system.



Sample Family Internet Agreement

Courtesy of FamilyFirst.Net

Our family agrees to surf safely and will obey the following rules:

Adults:

- I will maintain open communication with my children and let them know they can always come to me if they find something harmful on the Internet.
- I will honestly talk with my children about the dangers of the Internet and do my best to protect them from harmful sites.

Kids:

- I will tell an adult if I see anything that makes me uncomfortable or if someone I'm talking to online tells me something inappropriate. I will never enter a site that says "For adults only" and will avoid other sites that my parents say I cannot go to.
- I will not reveal any personal information about myself, such as my real name, where I live, what school I go to, specific places I will be going, or send photos of myself to anyone online. I will never let anyone know that I am home alone. If asked where I live, I will only tell them _____ (parents choose the approved answer, whether only the country, the state, or simply "I don't want to say").
- I will not download any programs, photos or games; open any email attachments; or send any files without permission. I will not click on any links in e-mails or websites that I am not sure where they lead.
- I will not meet any of my online friends in person without asking a parent's permission. I also agree that if I am allowed to meet my friend, a parent will accompany me and it will be in a public place.
- I will not apply for any e-mail accounts, online contests or other website registrations without permission.

Sample Family Internet Agreement

Courtesy of FamilyFirst.Net



- I will not order any merchandise or use a parent's credit card or other form of online payment (such as PayPal) without a parent's supervision.
- I will follow the same safety rules at friends' houses that I do while I'm at home.

Everyone:

- I will not allow my time on the Internet to interfere with my family time or other responsibilities, such as homework, chores or work.
- I will not give out any passwords to anyone outside the family, even to friends.
- I will remember that even though I can't see the people I talk to online, they are real people. I will not be rude or mean to others online just because they are not in the room with me.
- I will be cautious of what I see and who I talk to online. I understand that not everything I see online will be true or that people I talk to will always be telling the truth.

Specific Rules for Our Family:

(Include rules pertaining to length of time allowed on Internet, what times of day, what sites are/are not allowed, rules on chat rooms, e-mail, etc.)

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-
-

Signed by:



The Ball is in Your Court

Remember, this really is something that is in our control as parents and adults who are responsible for children's safety. We do have permission to protect our children! When it comes to protecting our children from potentially life-threatening situations, we have the right and responsibility to set and enforce boundaries!

Sometimes our families may not understand why we do the things we do. And they may not necessarily agree with us. But in the end, if very reasonable guidelines and boundaries are established and then communicated in a caring way, the Internet can be blessing instead of a curse.



Helpful Links & Resources

Citizens for Community Values.....www.ccv.org

Check here for updates to this CD's companion booklet

Bsafe Online.....www.bsafehome.com

Research all their products and try their Internet filter

FREE for 10-days

Focus on the Family.....www.family.org

A wealth of resources to help your family succeed

Report a possible Internet crime at one of these two websites:

ObscenityCrimes.Orgwww.ObsecnityCrimes.org

National Center for Missing & Exploited Childrenwww.ncmec.org



Citizens for Community Values
*Officially Associated with Focus on the Family
as a Family Policy Council in Ohio*

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