Internet SafetyNight

Internet Safety FAQs

Answers to some of the most frequently asked questions about how to keep your family safe on the Internet.

How can I protect my child's safety online?

First, it's important to know what the dangers are. While even one incident is too many, the likelihood that your child will be contacted by a sexual predator online is very slim. Research shows that the children who are most vulnerable online are those who are likely to engage in risky behavior in other areas of their life. The greater online dangers are that your child will be bullied online or that he will reveal too much personal information.

What should I teach my child about staying safe online?

Even though the risk of being contacted by an online predator is very low, it's still vital that you teach your child the following:

- Not everyone online is who they say they are.
- Never give out identifying information, including your name, address, phone number, and school name.
- Never post photographs of yourself online or send them to anyone who isn't a close personal friend or a relative.
- Choose a username that doesn't reveal anything about you and is not suggestive or provocative.
- Never download or click anything without checking first with a trusted adult.
- Never open an email from someone you don't know.

What else can I do to make sure my child is using the Internet safely?

- Keep the computer in a common area of your home where the monitor will be visible to others.
- Use the parental controls in your browser or antivirus security software. Most have parental controls and allow you to block websites by categories or even age.
- Consider installing Internet monitoring and filtering software.
- Become familiar with the sites your child visits.
- Make sure your child personally knows everyone on his friend or buddy lists. Sit down with your child and ask him to identify each name on the list.

What if my child accidentally views or reads inappropriate content?

- Make sure your child knows to turn off the monitor and to tell you or another trusted adult right away.
- Reassure him that it wasn't his fault.
- Use the opportunity to talk about your own family's values.

I'm afraid my child will click on something online that will infect our computer with a virus. How can I keep this from happening?

In addition to making sure your security software is programmed to check regularly for updates, tell your child:

- Never open an email from someone you don't know.
- Don't use peer-to-peer networks that connect you directly with other users for music downloads or other file-sharing services.
- Never click on a pop-up ad. Use pop-up blockers available through your Web browser.
- Don't download software from a website that you don't know and trust.
- Go only to trusted websites for news and information. Just because a search engine displays a link to information you're looking for, it doesn't mean that site is secure.

How can I keep my child safe while playing online games?

- Learn what your child is doing by playing the games with your child and other players.
- Set the parental controls in the gaming console.
- Keep the gaming console in a common area of your home so you can easily monitor the action.
- Make sure your child knows not to give out identifying information if he is communicating with other players online.
- Establish rules about the games your child may play and who he may play with.

How can I make sure my child doesn't use his cell phone inappropriately?

- Learn how to use the parental controls that your wireless service provider offers or consider subscribing to a service that allows you to designate which phone numbers your child's phone will allow calls to and from.

- If you have an older child who uses a friend-locator service or app, check his contact list to make sure only people he knows and trusts are on his contact list.

- Establish ground rules for cell phone use and consequences for violating them.

- If your child's phone has a camera, make sure your child understands that it's unacceptable to take (or send) inappropriate photos—and in some cases, sending them may be against the law.

What should I know about cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying is most common among middle-school-age children, but it can occur among children of any age. It can be devastating to a child because online bullies often feel emboldened by the anonymity of the Internet to say and do things they wouldn't in person. Cruel and hurtful comments can also spread quickly among classmates through the Internet and reach children at home, giving them no refuge from the harassment.

When talking with your child about cyberbullying, emphasize the following:

- Be respectful of others online. Don't post anything you wouldn't want posted about yourself. Also, you're more likely to be bullied online when you post mean or hurtful posts about others.

- Don't participate in online bullying, either directly, by retaliating, or by forwarding hurtful posts.

- Tell a trusted adult if you're being bullied or you see another person being bullied.

- Save the offending posts in case they're needed to take action against the bully.

If the bullying persists, you might want to look into filing a complaint against the bully. Most Internet service providers, websites, and cell phone companies have policies against harassment. You may be able to have the bully's account revoked.

For more information on cyberbullying, read the "Cyberbullying" handout that you received during Internet Safety Night, or visit www.trendmicro.com/go/safety and search for "Safety Tips on Cyberbullying."

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