

Access Denied

Pokemon, Beanie Babies, Tickle Me Elmo, and Harry Potter are childhood fads that will come and go. The Internet, however, is a growing phenomenon that is here to stay. It can be a source of entertainment and information for your children, and will be a useful workplace tool as they grow older. Sadly, it also poses threats to their safety. Take a few minutes to review these suggestions on how to make your child's Internet experience wholesome and productive.



Tell Your Children

- ◆ Never give out identifying information — name, home address, school name, or telephone number — in a public message, such as a chat room or bulletin board.
 - ◆ Always ask your parents' permission before using your full name, address, telephone number, or school name anywhere on the Internet.
 - ◆ Never send a person a picture of you without first checking with your parent or guardian.
 - ◆ Never respond to messages or bulletin board items that are obscene, suggestive, belligerent, threaten-
- ing, or make you feel uncomfortable. If you get such a message, don't respond. Instead, show it to your parents or a trusted adult. A response just encourages the sender.
- ◆ Never meet a new online "friend" without adult supervision. (Parents: If a meeting is arranged, make the first one in a public spot, and be sure to accompany your child.)
 - ◆ Remember that not everything you read online is necessarily true. Be very careful about any offers that involve your coming to a meeting or having someone visit your house. The biggest danger to your safety lies in getting together with someone you "meet" online.

- ◆ Regardless of who asks, you don't have to provide any information that you don't want to share.
- ◆ Never give out your password to anyone, even if they say they're from your Internet service.
- ◆ Get to know your children's online friends just as you get to know all their other friends.
- ◆ Watch for these danger signs and take prompt action if your child:

- spends large amounts of time online, especially at night;
- has pornography on the computer;
- receives phone calls from people you don't know;
- makes calls to numbers you don't recognize;
- turns the monitor off or changes the screen when you enter the room;
- receives mail, gifts, or packages from a stranger;
- becomes withdrawn from the family.

If you become aware of any incidents that could put your child at risk, or indecent material involving children, call the police or the FBI immediately. For additional information, visit the FBI Web site, www.fbi.gov, and search for "Internet safety."

Suggestions for Parents

- ◆ Set reasonable rules and guidelines for your children's computer use. Discuss the rules and post them near the computer as a reminder. Remember to monitor the children's compliance, especially when it comes to the amount of time they spend on the computer.
- ◆ Be sure your child is using kid-friendly search engines. Check with your Internet service provider for suggestions.
- ◆ Keep the computer in view in the family room or kitchen – not in a child's room.
- ◆ Monitor your child's chat rooms and e-mail. Set and enforce time limits for chatting, e-mailing, and surfing.
- ◆ Consider software that can monitor where your children have been online, block sites with objectionable words or images, limit computer time, and prevent children from divulging too much information. Remember, however, that filters aren't perfect. Even if they were 100 percent effective, software is no substitute for your involvement and guidance.
- ◆ Find out which safeguards are in use at other locations your child visits.
- ◆ Young children should not be allowed to "surf the Net" alone.
- ◆ Get to know the service your child uses. If you don't know how to log on, have your child show you.
- ◆ If your child receives a message that is harassing or threatening, or of a sexual nature, forward a copy of the message to your service provider and ask for their assistance.