Do you know _how_ your kids access the Internet?

Do you know _what_ your kids access while on the Internet?

Using the internet and technology can be fun, convenient, and educational for children, when used correctly. When your child accesses the Internet, they are entering into the real world and a public setting. Safety precautions need to be set, just as you would if they were outside of the home.

Basic Internet Tips

- Keep the computer in a high-traffic area of your home.
- Establish limits for which online sites children may visit and for how long.
- Remember that Internet technology can be mobile, so make sure to monitor cell phones, gaming devices, and laptops.
- Understand how social media works: Facebook, Twitter, Kik, Whatsapp, etc. Find out which ones your children use. Surf the Internet with your children and let them show you what they like to do online.
- Know who is connecting with your children online and set rules for social networking, instant messaging, e-mailing, online gaming, and using webcams.
- Continue dialogue with your children about online safety.

Whether it is a social network profile page or simply an imbedded chat program, the potential dangers lie in the communication, not the program.

You must monitor Internet use. When protections are lacking, the Internet can be an unsafe environment for children and teens because offenders can lure and groom them there. Create rules and engage kids in making it safer.

Conversation Starters

- What are your favorite things to do online?
- What is personal information? Why should you keep it private?
- What could you do to be safer online?
- What would you do if anyone online asked to meet you face-to-face?
- Besides me, who do you feel you can talk to if you are in a scary or uncomfortable situation?

Internet Safety Risks

Online Predators: The Internet has significantly increased the opportunities predators have to meet victims while minimizing their detection. They can communicate with children anonymously through instant messaging, social networking sites, chat rooms, message boards, and even cell phones. If a child comes to you with a disclosure of exploitation, reassure him or her that talking to an adult is the right action to take and divert any blame away from the victim.

Sexting: It is public and permanent. Talk to your child about the possible social, academic and legal consequences of sexting. Consequences include humiliation, bullying, blackmail, school discipline, and police involvement.

Cyberbullying: Bullying + Technology = Cyberbullying. Examples include: sending mean texts, photoshopping pictures, creating fake profiles, posting fight videos, spreading rumors and gossip, posting embarrassing pictures, sending threatening or harassing comments, etc. The differences between bullying and cyberbullying is that when it's online it spreads faster, it's for a wider audience, and it follows children home.

Inappropriate Content: Encourage your children to come to you or another trusted adult if he or she encounters inappropriate material. Discuss your family values with your children and be clear about what online content aligns with those values. Clarify values and discuss how much of what is readily available may not support healthy values. Use the NetSmartz Internet Safety Pledges to set clear guidelines for going online. You can also install blocking, filtering, and monitoring software in order to block pop-ups, restrict access to sites with adult content, and see which sites your children visit.

React Responsibly & Report to the CyberTipLine

- Anyone who sends your child photos or videos containing obscene content.
- Anyone speaking to your child in a sexual manner.
- Anyone who asks your child to meet in person.

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To learn more about Online Safety, visit **netsmartz.org**

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