

Internet Use in the Home – Tips for Parents

The ability to use the internet at home, particularly with a high-speed connection such as a Cable or DSL modem, connects your child's computer to a virtually limitless amount of information. When used properly, this permits access to a range and depth of research that would ordinarily be impossible.

Unfortunately, it also provides access to sites that may be less positive and sometimes dangerous. Like any other powerful tool, it should be used with your knowledge, permission and with some degree of control.

Some techniques that may reduce your child's exposure to unacceptable web sites or potential harm from internet predators include:

1. Locate the computer used by your child in a room or area where you can monitor its use. Unrestricted use in your child's room is not a good idea.
2. Have a conversation with your child about the proven dangers that exist on the internet, particularly in chat rooms or web sites specifically created for young people.
3. Advise your child to never use, or give out, their real name, address or phone number, to anyone without your knowledge or permission.
4. Never permit them to send their photograph to or arrange to meet with anyone they might have met on-line.
5. Talk to your child about their on-line "buddy list" and make them aware of the fact that someone posing as a teenager may in fact be an adult.
6. Determine what sites are on your child's "favorites" list and visit them to familiarize yourself with the content.
7. If you are unable to monitor your child's internet activity on a regular basis, you might consider using software (similar to programs used by schools) that is designed to filter the sites they visit. Much of this software is free or inexpensive.

Encourage your children to discuss with you anything they encounter on the internet that they think may be inappropriate or makes them uncomfortable. You can do your own internet search for "Internet Safety" or "Monitoring Software." The following may be used to begin your search:

www.netsmartz.org
www.cybersmart.org
www.ikeepSAFE.org
www.wiredkids.org
www.getnetwise.org