



Guidelines For Parents and Guardians

How to Help “Keep Kids Connected and Protected”

The NCSA and various consumer and education organizations suggest implementing these recommended safety and security guidelines as a first line of defense in helping keep kids safe when using social networking sites:

Supervise Computer Use: Keep the computer in an open area and be aware of other computers and other devices children may be using outside of the home. Placing the computer in an area, such as the kitchen or family room, gives parents the ability to supervise a child’s online navigation. Pay attention to other computer and Internet-enabled mobile devices children are using. Consult with other parents to encourage them to use safety and security procedures at home.

Keep the Lines of Communication Open: Use the Internet with your child. Parents should be familiar with their child’s online activities. Interacting with children online sets the example and provides an opportunity for parents to engage in dialogue about websites their children visit and programs they are using. Parents should be open to learning about technology so they can keep up with their children. Understanding how children use the Internet will give parents a better idea of the risks they may face while on the Internet.

Virtual Parenting: Set-up the family’s Internet service accounts. Parents should take an active role in setting up Internet service accounts, including any online community services children may join. Parents should periodically monitor accounts to supervise online friends, chat areas and blogs.

Cyber Patrol on Duty: Consider installing software that allows parents to control where children go online. Monitoring software gives parents the ability to view activity on the Internet and the authority to determine their child’s usual online chat buddies. These programs give parents a better understanding of what their child is doing online and empowers parents to set online boundaries for their children.

Exercising Parental Control: Consider implementing parental control tools.

Parental control tools are provided by some Internet Service Providers (ISP) or are available for purchase as separate software packages. These tools allow parents to restrict websites a child can view from their home computer. Settings are password-protected. Remember – *no program is a substitute for parental supervision.*

Restrict Access: Use privacy settings to restrict access to the child’s website. Social networking sites provide a variety of privacy settings that limit who can view the child’s website. By using these privacy tools, parents may be able to approve which friends from school, clubs, teams, and community groups are able to view a child’s profile or blog, or block unknown individuals from accessing a child’s information. On most social networking websites, you can access and change your child’s privacy settings by clicking on “account settings.”

Act Like the Child: Search blog sites children visit to see what information they are posting. To ensure that children are not engaging in risky online behavior, it is recommended that parents do a simple online search. Parents can type in their child’s name, nickname, school, hobbies, grade, or residence to determine information availability.

Pay Attention to Online Photos: Know the type of photos your child is posting online. Children use various forms of technology to post information and photos online, such as videos and web cams. Photos from camera phones can also be uploaded. Parents should be aware of the imagery children post on the Web—these images most likely pose a risk to their children, exposing them to online predators and strangers.

Be a Technical Geek: Secure the family computer by regularly updating the operating system and installing a firewall, and up-to-date anti-virus and anti-spyware software. The instant a computer is connected to the Internet or an “always on” broadband connection, hackers and thieves can attempt to gain access to the family’s financial and personal information. By securing your computer, you can protect against these Internet intruders and the malicious programs they can download onto your computer.