InternetSAFETY

While the Internet offers millions of resources and opportunities for people of all ages, it has also introduced risks and dangers that were virtually non-existent just a decade ago - especially for children. As a parent, the responsibility to teach your children about Internet safety AND to educate yourself about how best to make the Internet a fun, safe, rewarding experience for everyone in your family can be intimidating. Here are five key guidelines to help you take on the challenge.

What You Can Do

1. **Surf with Your Son!** Check out what sites he likes to visit. Read Privacy Policies together. Bookmark sites that you know offer good, safe fun and encourage him to use the book-marked links frequently. Basically, ask lots of questions and get involved! Keeping the lines of communication open with your child about the Internet is not only smart; it's essential to his online safety.
2. **Establish Rules and Guidelines.** Set parameters about how much time he should spend online. Consider putting the computer in a family room so computer use can be monitored more easily.
   Idea: Post a copy of family guidelines that you've agreed to near the computer for easy reference.
3. **Be Proactive.** Whether you're a Web master or a mouse-clicking disaster, it's up to you to learn about the Internet from a parent's point of view AND a kid's point of view. Do your research. Gain insight from local librarians, teachers, community centers, and other parents. Most communities have Internet classes for all levels, so go on and sign up!
4. **Be Approachable.** Your son may receive instant messages or "spam" e-mail that is questionable at best and possibly obscene at worst. If your son tells you about something online that made him uncomfortable do your best to listen without overreacting. Then, try to teach him how to avoid such problems in the future. Your reaction will determine whether he will confide in you the next time!
5. **Take Advantage of Parental Control Tools and Software.** There is software on the market designed to help you maintain a safe online environment for your kids. Check with your Internet Service Provider and/or online service about what they have available to help maximize kid-friendly, kid-safe online experiences.

Other Online Resources for Parents

For more information about child safety online, you may want to check out the following sites provided by other organizations.

www.getnetwise.org
www.safekids.org
www.wiredpatrol.org
www.fbi.gov/publications/pguide/pguide.htm