



Children & Cyber Safety

The Facts

Within the last couple of decades our society has been cruising along the cyber highway of the Internet. The Internet has increased the way businesses, organizations and even families operate. In this day-and-age, the Internet is playing a big role in how children learn. The educational benefits they receive from its use include:

- An increase in educational resources
- Assistance with homework and school projects through the use of online encyclopedias, references and even experts
- Advancement in their technology and information skills
- Global learning and communication are more accessible
- Improvement is shown throughout their reading skills and levels

Hidden Dangers

Educationally, the Internet is a fascinating tool in teaching children and adults. However, there are hidden dangers associated with children's Internet use that all parents should be aware of. Here is a list of risks associated with Internet use:

- Improper Material
- Physical Molestation
- Harrasement
- Legal and Financial Harm
- Privacy
- Drugs, Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs
- Gambling and other inappropriate behaviors

Is your Child at Risk?

As drastic as some of those risks may seem, they do at times occur. One of the most common risks parents do encounter is that their child starts to lose time spent socially interacting with real people versus the relationships they maintain online. So how does a parent know if their child may be at risk of any of these dangers?



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According to the U.S. Department of Justice Federal Bureau of Investigation your child may be in jeopardy if they:

- Are online for a considerable amount of time
- Have pornography on their computer
- Receives phone calls from strange men or are making regular or long distance phone calls to unrecognizable phone numbers
- Are having mail, gifts or packages sent to them by senders that are unrecognizable to you
- Reacts to you walking in the room by turning off their computer or by quickly changing what is on their computer screen
- Are becoming reserved and remote from the family
- Are utilizing other online accounts at someone else's house, library, etc...

Guidelines & Rules

Teach your child that the Internet is an educational tool that can be utilized in a safe manner by:

- Setting a time limit for Internet use
- Telling your child that everything online isn't always the true and credible
- Teaching your child that people they meet on chat rooms pose the same risks as do strangers on the streets
- Educating them to never give out personal or family information, credit card numbers and/or passwords
- Warning them that they are in danger of online strangers and that they should never plan an encounter with an online acquaintance
- Giving your child the right to an e-mail address if you believe they can use it in good nature and if you are allowed to monitor their use of it
- Showing them that communication online should follow the same rules as personal communication (i.e., using courteous and polite language and respecting others)
- Restricting them to use the online rules you've established on all computers they utilize outside your home
- Utilizing parental control features, which restrict use of chat rooms, news groups and inappropriate Web sites. These tools may be accessed through your online service and through software programs.

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