Get to know the Internet risks for kids

While the Internet is generally a positive place for kids, the potential risks are very real. Educate yourself and your family about online safety issues and use the information in this brochure to understand how you can manage or prevent them.

- **Exposure to adult, racist, or other disturbing material.** Children are curious and adventurous, and can stumble upon inappropriate content while searching for something else, by clicking a link in an instant message or blog, or when sharing files.

- **Meeting predators online or in person.** Predators can use the Internet to find vulnerable children and approach them. Frequently their goal is to isolate the child and get them to meet in person.

- **Invasion of privacy.** Some businesses capture personal information in registration or contest forms. Or children may volunteer personal info (including photos) to predators and other crooks in blogs, on personal Web pages, or when playing games.

- **Careless use of file-sharing (or peer-to-peer) programs.** Exchanging files with strangers is risky. It can lead to downloading pornography, viruses, or spyware. Some file-sharing programs can let other users access your computer any time it's online.

- **Cyberbullying.** Kids or adults may use the Internet to harass or exploit other people. Kids sometimes broadcast bullying comments and embarrassing images in an instant message or blog, shaming a child in a way that's largely invisible to parents or others online.

What you can do if there are problems

If your kids ever feel threatened or scared on the Internet, ask them to tell you immediately without fear of getting into trouble or losing computer privileges. To help them manage the situation, you need to understand what is happening.

Immediately report any threat to your family. If someone stalks, threatens, or continually harasses your kids, or attempts to lure them into face-to-face meetings for illicit purposes *(all of which are illegal)*, report it to:

- The local police. If the child is in immediate danger, call 911.

- The CyberTipline at 800.843.5678 or at **www.cybertipline.com**, which is hosted by the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children and consolidates contact with all appropriate law enforcement.

- Microsoft at **abuse@microsoft.com** if it involves abuse of a Microsoft service.
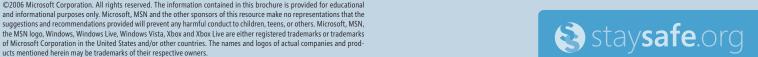
Helpful Resources:

www.staysafe.org
www.microsoft.com/athome/security

staysafe.org

Protect Your Family

Internet Safety & Security are all about you.

staysafe.org

The Internet is a playground to children,

perfect for exploration, learning and fun. As they get older, it's also where kids form social networks—sending e-mail and instant messages, posting blogs, creating personal Web pages, finding music and playing games.

Many of the more social activities can develop healthy communication and personal expression. But they could be the source of serious issues involving personal safety, privacy, theft and computer security.

Protecting your family on the Internet means understanding the risks, having clear guidance for healthy online behavior, talking openly and using technology where it can help. Here's how:

• Talk with your kids about what they do online.

• Keep personal information private.

• Set clear rules for Internet use.

• Use family safety software.

This brochure will help you understand online safety issues and offer helpful tips. For more specific guidance, tools and resources, we suggest you visit *www.staysafe.org.*

Talk to your kids about what they do online

Get to know the games your kids play, what they write in their blogs and what chat rooms they visit. Read their profiles on social networking sites. Talk with your kids about Internet risks including sexual predators, inappropriate content and invasion of privacy, as well as their own behavior. Teach children to trust their instincts and to tell you at once if they feel threatened or scared.

• Let your kids teach you. Ask them to show you what they're doing and who they're meeting online.

• Put Internet-connected computers and gaming devices in the family room or another central location, not in a bedroom.

Keep personal information private

Children should never reveal personal information online without permission. Personal information includes the facts: your child's name, age, sex, phone number, address, school and favorite place to play. But it also includes information such as photos and feelings. Predators look for expressions of vulnerability – sadness, loneliness, anger. They also know how to use seemingly disconnected information to locate a child.

• Consider a rule that your kids never reveal personal information online unless you give permission.

• Help your child choose a screen name or e-mail address that reveals nothing personal and isn't suggestive. For example, musicfan, but not john13 or sexysusie.

• Make sure you understand who your kids are sharing information with through instant messaging, blogging sites and other social networks.

Set clear rules for Internet use

As soon as your children begin to explore the Internet, consider the following rules for a safer experience:

• **Never go alone to meet an Internet "friend" in person.** They may not be who they say they are.

• **Restrict Internet access.** Allow children to use the Internet only when you're home. Young children don't belong in chat rooms; teens should use only moderated chats.

• **Do not open attachments, share music, or click links in messages from strangers.** You could be opening a virus, or downloading bad software or a disturbing image.

• **Treat others as you want to be treated.** Nasty comments are rude and wrong. Bullying online is a crime that might even land you in jail if taken too far.

• **Stand up for yourself.** If someone is mean or bullies you, ignore it. If they keep at it, block them from contacting or playing with you. *(Xbox Live® allows this.)* You may also be able to report them to the Web site.

• **Respect the property of others.** Copying and sharing music, games and other copyrighted downloads is piracy. Plagiarism and hacking into computers are also illegal.

Use Family safety software

No one technology solution will suit every family, so explore different tools to help keep your children safe.

Use family safety software to monitor and limit your kids' Internet use. This can be especially helpful for tweens and teens who may not want to talk about their online activities. You can get a comprehensive list of popular tools for families at *kids.getnetwise.org/tools.*

Build strong computer defenses. Use a firewall, keep your operating system current with the latest security updates, and install antivirus and antispyware software.

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