

Browsing the Internet

The web is loaded with rich educational and cultural resources that would otherwise be unavailable to your child. However, it is also easy to find sites with sexually explicit content, and sites that promote hatred, bigotry, violence, drugs and cults.

What Parents Can Do:

- 1) Keep your computer in a family area to better monitor your child's activity.
- 2) Regularly spend time on-line with your child to learn about his or her activities.
- 3) Use a filtering software that allows you to control access to the Internet and to applications on your computer. Filters can be set to prohibit computer users from visiting certain sites on the Internet unless a password is entered. Examples of filtering software can be found at: www.saferinternet.org/filtering/filters.asp or www.getnetwise.org
- 4) Teach your child how to promptly log-off when he or she feels uncomfortable or scared by an online experience. Establish an atmosphere of trust with your child by not blaming him or her for uncomfortable online experiences.
- 5) Discuss the difference between advertising, educational or entertaining content.
- 6) Let Internet Service Providers and webmasters know what you want and expect from them in keeping your child safe online.

Email

Sending and receiving messages by electronic mail helps your child keep in touch with teachers, family and friends. Your child can make world-wide pen pals, get help with homework and practice writing. However, strangers, pretending to be someone else, can also communicate with your child. Your child also may receive unsolicited email ("spam") about web sites with explicit material, products for sale, or moneymaking schemes.

What Parents Can Do:

- 1) Teach your child to NEVER email anyone personal information about themselves or other family members.
- 2) Know your child's password or share an email account.
- 3) Talk to your child about the people he or she contacts online.
- 4) Set a rule that your child never arranges an in-person meeting with an e-mail buddy without you present.
- 5) Complain to your Internet Service Provider about unwanted email. Consider setting the junk mail filter on your computer to the "enhanced" or "exclusive" setting to filter out unwanted mail.
- 6) Instruct your child to never respond to offensive or obtrusive messages. It can only make matters worse.
- 7) Assure your child that he or she is not to blame for getting these kinds of messages.

Chatting

Chatting online means reading messages from others as they are typing them, usually in theme-specific "chat rooms". Your child can communicate instantly with family, friends and teachers. Chatting helps children and adults develop relationships around the world by discussing similar interests. There are risks, however.

Your child may be exposed to offensive language and adult conversation. Because of the interactive nature of chatting, it is the online activity through which children are most likely to encounter people who want to harm them. Finally, too much time chatting limits a child's well rounded development by taking the place of friends, schoolwork and other activities.

What Parents Can Do:

- 1) As with e-mail, teach your child NEVER to give out personal information such as his or her name, address, phone number, school name, or anything else that is personally identifying.
- 2) Explain that people are not always who they say they are.
- 3) Limit your child to specific chat rooms or consider blocking out chat entirely.
- 4) Set a rule that your child never arranges an in-person meeting without you present.



Parental Controls

There are three primary sources for tools that can help you limit your child's Internet access.

1) The best place to start is with the company that provides you with your connection to the Internet. Most offer a range of control features, often for free. These may filter web content, reduce unsolicited email, and restrict chat-room access.

2) At your local computer or retail store you can buy "blocking and filtering" software that includes features similar to the ones provided by an ISP. You'll have to set up these products on your own computer.

3) You also can use certain Web browsers, such as Microsoft Internet Explorer, to enforce parental control rating systems.

Keep an eye out for other tools, such as "safe areas" for kids, new rating systems, and search engines designed to choose sites that have been approved for families. However, no parental control tool is 100% reliable. Not only do tools inadvertently allow access to some inappropriate material, they may also block access to some valuable information. Some savvy children may be able to get around some of the controls.

You are the best "parental control system" that exists! Monitor your child's use of the internet to keep them safe!



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Visit the Attorney General online at:
<http://www.state.de.us/attgen>
Check out the tip sheet on our site
"Helpful Hints for Parents -Cyber Safety"
for additional information

Other Resources:
The Children's Partnership, The Parent's Guide to the Information Superhighway.
Free online at www.childrepartnership.org

Cybersafe Kids: A Parent's Guide from the National Crime Prevention Council
www.weprevent.org and www.mcgruff.org

YOUR CHILD AND THE INTERNET:

What Every Parent Should Know



Rules of the Road for the Information Superhighway



STATE OF DELAWARE
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE