

Common Sense on Internet Safety

for middle school kids

Tips for keeping your child safe online

- 1 Tell your kids:**
 - > Never share names, schools, ages, phone numbers, or addresses
 - > Never send pictures to strangers
 - > Keep passwords private (except to parents)
- 2 Visit age-appropriate sites.** Find sites that promote learning, creativity, and that deepen your kids' interests. Also check out popular Web sites before your kids visit them. Social networks like MySpace or Facebook are not meant for middle school kids.
- 3 Minimize chatting with strangers.** Tell your kids that people aren't always who they say they are on the Internet. Anyone can pose as a "buddy of a buddy." If kids are playing online games, they should be careful not to disclose anything personal.
- 4 Help kids think critically about what they find online.** They need to know everything they see isn't true. Also use safe search settings for young kids or filtering software. Check browser histories to see where they've been.
- 5 If they wouldn't do it in real life, they shouldn't do it online.** Don't say mean things, and no cheating in games or at school.
- 6 Have some rules about time and place.** Set limits on the amount of time kids spend online. Don't let them Instant Message during homework. Restrict time and sites for online gaming.
- 7 Agree on downloads.** What music is okay? Which video sites? Don't give your kids your credit card information. If they need to buy something, you should be involved.
- 8 Talk about privacy.** Show kids where privacy settings are on their favorite sites and make sure they use them. Remind kids that when they post something online, they lose control of it. It can be cut and pasted and sent around the Web.
- 9 Make sure kids know to tell someone** – it doesn't have to be you – if anything suspicious, cruel, or scary happens. They need to know they won't get in trouble.
- 10 Be involved and view your own habits carefully.** Parents are their role models for safe and smart use. Enjoy the good stuff together!