



## Keeping Kids Safe on the Internet

It is difficult to find any child over the age of eight who does not spend an enormous amount of time on the internet. They love to play games, stay in touch with friends through social networking sites, go to chat rooms, share music and post pictures.

Many parents find themselves in the position of knowing far less about the internet than their children and feel ill equipped to keep their children safe in cyberspace. Other parents believe that they have a clear understanding with their children about internet use and trust them to follow the rules.

But, children tend to push boundaries and have a tendency to defy rules. If it has been awhile since you spoke to your children about the internet, they may have conveniently forgotten your guidelines for internet use. It is the responsibility of the parents or guardians to set limitations and monitor their children's internet use. Now, more than ever, children are being victimized by sexual predators that lure them into an online relationship with the ultimate goal of meeting them for sexual contact. Many predators are adept at getting into your children's heads and making it seem that they are your child's closest and most understanding friend.

**Why are sexual predators using the internet?** The internet is a much safer tool for finding victims because it can be done with less fear of detection. It is also much more

efficient to find victims on the internet than looking for a likely victim on a playground.

**Warning Signs** – There are many signs that your child may be getting into risky behavior on the internet. If they are spending an excessive amount of time on the internet or seem anxious when they cannot use the computer, there may be a problem. If they are sneaking to the computer in the middle of the night, this can also be a sign of trouble. If they are receiving unexplained gifts, are withdrawing from you and their closest friends, or hide the window they have open on the computer when you walk by, it could be they are being manipulated by someone unknown to you.

**Other Risks** – Don't forget that cell phones are a mini-computer with just as much access to the internet as a laptop. Cyberbullying is becoming a significant problem – send a clear message that this behavior is not tolerated. Encourage your child to tell you if they are victims of cyberbullying.

**Filtering and Monitoring** – Take advantage of filtering programs available to you. If you are unsure how to implement them, contact your service provider. Consider installing monitoring software like Spector Pro or Net Nanny. These programs will allow you to review your child's computer use.

**\*\*A parent/child computer contract next pg**

# Family internet safety rules and usage contract

*Kids, before you get started read these 3 statements out loud and initial them.*

1. Nothing on the internet is private. \_\_\_\_\_
2. People online are not always who they say they are. \_\_\_\_\_
3. People are not always truthful online. \_\_\_\_\_

I \_\_\_\_\_ agree on this date \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_ to:

- Never give out our last name, address, phone number, or any personal information without parental consent. This includes the name of my school, where I play sports, the names of my family members and anything else included below:
- Additional "Never give out rules": \_\_\_\_\_
- Never give out my password to anyone other than my parents.
- Always let my parents review existing and new screen names, email addresses, user logins and all passwords.
- Get my parents' permission before I signup for anything on the Internet.
- Never upload or download pictures without parental consent.
- Never download games, music or videos without parental consent (Many viruses infect your computer this way)
- When asked where we live, we all agree to say this online: \_\_\_\_\_

Examples: (can't give out this info, the moon, state, OZ, N/A.)

- Never order anything online, even if it says "free", without parental consent. (Remember, nothing is free, some places just want your e-mail address so they can bombard you with spam, i.e. garbage email)
- Stop what I am doing and immediately get my parents or an adult, I trust, if someone asks to meet me in person. (\*This is a very serious matter and is NOT to be taken lightly.)

- Stop communicating with someone if the conversation gets uncomfortable, or if crude or inappropriate language is used.
- Never give out my age or any of my family or friends ages online.
- Never use inappropriate language online.
- Never click on a popup banner or sign. (always click on the X on the top right corner to close them)
- Report a bully immediately to my parents and never bully someone else.
- Never enter a site that states "you must be 18 to enter"
- Limit my time on the Internet to: \_\_\_\_\_ a day, homework is excluded here.

### ***The Adults Agree:***

If my child comes and tells me that they saw something online that was inappropriate, I will discuss this openly with them.

If my child reports a violation, I will discuss the matter with them first before calling the contract broken.

If this contract is broken the consequences will be:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I agree to abide by this contract.

Parents' signature:

\_\_\_\_\_

Kids' signature:

\_\_\_\_\_

Signed on \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_