

Guidelines for Parents

Parents of Teens: [Check out SafeTeens.Com](http://SafeTeens.Com)

By taking responsibility for your children's online computer use, parents can greatly minimize any potential risks of being online. Make it a family rule to:

- Never give out identifying information-- home address, school name, or telephone number-- in a public message such as chat or bulletin boards, and be sure you're dealing with someone that both you and your child know and trust before giving it out via E-mail. Think carefully before revealing any personal information such as age, marital status, or financial information. Consider using a pseudonym or unlisting your child's name if your service allows it.
- Get to know the services your child uses. If you don't know how to log on, get your child to show you. Find out what types of information it offers and whether there are ways for parents to block out objectionable material.
- Never allow a child to arrange a face-to-face meeting with another computer user without parental permission. If a meeting is arranged, make the first one in a public spot, and be sure to accompany your child.
- Never respond to messages or bulletin board items that are suggestive, obscene, belligerent, threatening, or make you feel uncomfortable. Encourage your children to tell you if they encounters such messages. If you or your child receives a message that is harassing, of a sexual nature, or threatening, forward a copy of the message to your service provider and ask for their assistance.
- ***If a meeting is arranged, make the first one in a public spot.***
- Should you become aware of the transmission, use, or viewing of child pornography while online, immediately report this to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children by calling 1-800-843-5678 or visiting the CyberTipLine online. You should also notify your online service.
- Remember that people online may not be who they seem. Because you can't see or even hear the person it would be easy for someone

to misrepresent him- or herself. Thus, someone indicating that "she" is a "12-year-old girl" could in reality be a 40-year-old man.

- Remember that everything you read online may not be true. Any offer that's "too good to be true" probably is. Be very careful about any offers that involve your coming to a meeting or having someone visit your house.
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 - Set reasonable rules and guidelines for computer use by your children (see "[My Rules for Online Safety](#)"). Discuss these rules and post them near the computer as a reminder. Remember to monitor their compliance with these rules, especially when it comes to the amount of time your children spend on the computer. A child or teenager's excessive use of online services or bulletin boards, especially late at night, may be a clue that there is a potential problem. Remember that personal computers and online services should not be used as electronic babysitters.
 - Be sure to make this a family activity. Consider keeping the computer in a family room rather than the child's bedroom. Get to know their "online friends" just as you get to know all of their other friends.
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