

# **Straight Talk - The Internet**

## **Be Safe**

**The following are some guidelines intended for you and your family to stay safe while you're having fun on the Internet.**

### ***Don't invite trouble***

- When choosing a screen name or e-mail address, don't choose one that is sexy or flirtatious. Also, it is wise not to use your last name when creating usernames to be used on sites that open to the public to view.

### ***Stop, Block and Tell***

- If something make you feel uncomfortable when you're on the Internet (for example, a nasty or threatening email from an online "friend" or a bad website that keeps coming up on your computer screen), **STOP** and don't answer back, **BLOCK** the person or message and **TELL** a trusted adult. ([www.stopcyberbullying.org](http://www.stopcyberbullying.org))

### ***Choose your friends wisely***

- When you're on the Internet, it's not easy to tell if people really are who they say they are. Sometimes, people say they are teenagers to trick others into trusting them. So:
  - Be cautious when you're talking to people on-line.
  - Never arrange to meet people from the Internet in person.

### ***Privacy***

- Never give out personal information (such as your name, phone number, home address or school name) to any stranger that will allow someone to find you.
- Never send your picture to people you don't know.
- Assume that everything you post on the Internet is available for the whole world to see—including your parents and teachers
- When available, always set your profile to "private."

### ***Social Networking sites (MySpace, Facebook, etc)***

- Facebook and MySpace are two online websites where kids and adults can create personal web pages, post pictures, chat and interact with others while online. It is important for parents to supervise their children while they are on these sites to ensure that their children are only interacting with people they know and can trust.
- Facebook and MySpace require that you be 13 years old to obtain an account. For specific information on deleting your child's account, scroll to the bottom of the MySpace home page.

***Tips for Teens on Social Networking sites:***

- Put everything behind password protected walls, where only your friends can see it.
- Protect your password and make sure you really know who someone is before you allow them onto your friends list.
- Blur or morph your photos a bit so they won't be abused by cyber bullies or predators
- Don't post anything your parents, principal or a predator couldn't see
- What you post online stays online - forever!!!! **So think before you “Click!”**
- Never say anything online you wouldn't say offline.
- Protect your privacy and your friends' privacy too...get their okay before posting something about them or their pictures online
- Check what your friends are posting/saying about you. Even if you are careful, they may not be and may be putting you at risk.
- That cute 14-year old boy may not be cute, may not be 14 and may not be a boy! You never know!
- And, unless you're prepared to attach your MySpace to your college/job/internship/scholarship or sports team application...don't post it publicly!

***Tips for parents to protect their children on Social Networking sites:***

- Talk to your kids – ask questions (and then confirm to make sure they are telling you the truth!)
- Ask to see their profile page (for the first time)...tomorrow! (It gives them a chance to remove everything that isn't appropriate or safe...and it becomes a way to teach them what not to post instead of being a gotcha moment!
- Don't panic...there are ways of keeping your kids safe online. It's easier than you think!
- Be involved and work with others in your community. (Think about joining WiredSafety.org and help create a local cyber-neighborhood watch program in your community.)
- Remember what you did that your parents would have killed you had they known, when you were thirteen.
- This too will pass! Most kids really do use social networks just to communicate with their friends. Take a breath, gather your thoughts and get help when you need it.
- It's not an invasion of their privacy if strangers can see it. There is a difference between reading their paper diary that is tucked away in their sock drawer...and reading their MySpace postings. One is between them and the paper it's written on; the other between them and 700 million people online!

And, finally .... “You are the parent!” If your child don't listen or follow your rules, unplug the computer...the walk to the library will do them good.

*(Tips from WiredSafety.org)*