

Internet Safety Tips for Parents

1. **Talk to your children.** Keep open lines and communication. Initiate discussion about the dangers that students may face online. Ask them if they have ever encountered inappropriate content or had a stranger proposition them. Discuss what they would/did do in those cases. Make it clear to your child that they should let you know if someone says or does something that makes them uncomfortable. Many children think they may be punished or lose computer privileges if they do so.
2. **Set clear guidelines for internet use.** Establish an agreement with your child concerning internet use. Develop specific guidelines for how the internet will be used both at home and away from home. This may include amount and hours of use, appropriate sites, the use of chats or instant messaging, the use of webcams and photos, along with what to do if something happens online that makes the child uncomfortable.
3. **Monitor your child's internet use.** Place computer in a common area where the screen is visible. Monitor all other internet-enabled devices, such as cell phones, and gaming devices. Take advantage of parental controls that are available through your internet service provider or install software that filters or monitors. Make sure your child understands that you are monitoring their use.
4. **Know the online groups that your child belongs to.** Ask if they have a Myspace or Facebook page. Search those sites and do a general internet search of your child's name. If your child belongs to a social forum, check their privacy settings and any postings to make sure they do not contain personal contact information or inappropriate content. Check the pages that are linked as these pages may contain inappropriate content or information that would identify your child. Make sure that your child understands how to protect their personal information.
5. **Enable safe searching options on your search engine.** See article for instructions. Use kid-friendly search engines, such as Yahoo!igans or KidsClick. See: *"How to Turn on "Safe Search" features on Internet Search Engines"*
http://www.children-online.org/articles/Safe_Search.html
6. **Consider carefully the use of chat rooms, instant messaging, and webcams.** All of these can provide unwanted access to your child.
7. **Make sure that you child understands that they should not agree to a face-to-face meetings with an online friend.**

Special thanks to Karen Campbell-Harrisonburg City Schools. Visit safety links at:

HCPS Internet Safety <http://staff.harrisonburg.k12.va.us/~kkcampbell/safety>
RCPS Internet Safety <http://www.rockingham.k12.va.us/netsafety/netsafety.htm>