

Note to Parents:

The Internet is truly one of today's most invaluable technological tools for education and research. The Internet is a gateway to a wealth of knowledge, literally at the fingertips of millions of people worldwide. Despite its usefulness, this global network poses many risks for its users, especially youth.

What is the Internet?

A global network that connects computers through telephone lines and/or fibre networks whereby people can communicate and share information all over the world.

Some Terms You Should Know*:

The Web - short for the World Wide Web, it is the most popular way to visit the Internet.

Email - A function which allows individuals to transmit messages and files between computers through a network in a private forum.

Instant messaging - A means of sending messages instantly or having a realtime conversation through specific software or in a chatroom.

Chat rooms - a public or private space on the Internet where one can engage in realtime conversation.

File sharing - a means of sharing downloaded files between users' computers.

Some Internet risks for your kids are as follows:

Addictions - Online gaming and gambling
Online strangers/predators
Cyber Bullying
Frauds and Scams
Misinformation

* You are encouraged to familiarize yourself with these and other important Internet terminologies.

Online Predators

As with the real world, your kids can meet anyone online and develop a relationship. The anonymity of the Internet makes the process easier and more comfortable.

Online predators are people who are online solely for the purpose of attracting young victims. They often disguise their identity sometimes claiming to be the same age.

Tactics:

- Establish contact with kids through conversations in chat rooms, IM, email or discussion boards
- Use attention or affection to create interest
- Equip themselves with current youth trends, fashion and music

Who's at risk?

People who are...

- ... young
- ... new to the Internet
- ... rebellious
- ... isolated or lonely
- ... confused regarding sexual identity

Signs that your child is a victim:

- You find pornography on the family computer
- They receive phone calls from people you do not know
- They receive mail, gifts, or packages from people you don't know
- They withdraw from family or friends
- They quickly close windows when you approach
- They use someone else's online account

How to help:

- Do not allow your children to complete online profiles
- Talk to them about not giving out ANY personal information
- Have them choose a gender-neutral screen name
- Encourage them to tell you immediately if someone makes them feel uncomfortable

Cyber Bullying

"Cyberbullying involves the use of information and communication technologies such as email, cell phone and pager text messages, instant messaging, defamatory person Web sites, and defamatory online personal polling Web sites, to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behaviour by an individual or group, that is intended to harm others."

- Bill Belsey

Fact: 25% of youth who use the Internet report having received an email with hateful messages about others.

Fact: It is against the law to repeatedly communicate with someone if it is perceived as harmful or makes them feel concern for their safety and/or others' safety.

Signs that your child may be a victim:

- Long hours on computer
- Closes windows when you enter room
- Crying for no apparent reason
- Acting out / aggression at home
- Behavioural Changes
- Physiological Changes

How to help:

- Educate yourself on all types of bullying
- Have open, candid conversations with your kids
- Solicit the assistance of support groups and community partners
- Report it to the police

Misinformation

The truth is that because the Internet is a global unregulated network, anyone can post information on a website. Using information gathered online without caution can put your child at risk.

Misinformation appears in many forms:

- Sites spreading malicious and hateful information
- Sites selling false products and/or services
- Emails and pop-ups that promise wealth and fame
- Sites that promote and sell bogus or false products
- Personal opinion sites meant to sway the reader presenting information as fact

Tips:

- Teach your kids from a young age how to look up information
- Ask your kids about the information they find online and always verify it with them
- Never allow your kids to purchase anything online without your approval

Online Gambling

Fact: One study reports that 30% of grade 7 students gamble at least once a week.

Grooming: The gambling industry now targets young kids through online games. The process is referred to as “grooming” whereby the industry prepares kids to ‘gamble’ without the use of money eventually making gambling a familiar and enjoyable activity.

Tips:

Discuss with your kids the risks of gambling ...
...they can lose money
...they can ruin their credit rating
...it can be addictive
...it is illegal for kids

Resources

Kids Help Phone

1.800.668.6868

www.kidshelpphone.ca

Offers counselling services for youth

www.bewebaware.ca

Offers a list of safe websites and safety tips and information for parents and kids

www.cyberbullying.ca

Provides information and support for cyber bullying

Parent Help Line

1-888-603-9100

www.parentsinfo.sympatico.ca

Offers parents a place to turn for counselling and parenting concerns
24 hours a day

Toronto Police Non-Emergency

416.808.2222

Attends to non-emergency situations of concern to the police



(formerly Crime Concern)

CPAT is a non profit organization mandated to educate and mobilize communities to create safer neighbourhoods through crime prevention initiatives.

For more information or to make a donation, contact our office.



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Internet Safety

A Resource for Parents



Let's talk "Internet Safety"

The Internet is an important research tool, but if misused can be very detrimental.



(formerly Crime Concern)