

Internet Safety Tips for Parents

Online predators are out there!

They can infect your computer with viruses; they want to steal your personal information and possibly your identity; and they may be out to harm you or the people who use your computer.

i-SAFE Inc. has created this list of tips and reminders to help you recognize potentially hazardous situations and teach you how to respond appropriately.

- **Have the family computer in an open area.**

Never place it in your child's bedroom.

- **Keep the lines of communication open.**

Talk to your children about online predators, identity theft, viruses, and other online dangers. Let them know that they can come to you if they are ever in an uncomfortable situation. Rather than policing your child's online behavior, educate your child about online risks and empower them to communicate to you if they ever feel like they are at risk online.

- **Become a part of your child's online experience.**

It can be a fun journey to explore the wonders of the Internet as a family. As computer-savvy as kids and teens are today, they may even teach you a thing or two!

- **When using e-mail, beware of opening unsolicited attachments.**

Viruses, worms, and Trojan horses can be activated by unsuspecting e-mail users opening infected attachments to e-mail messages. Viruses can "spoof" the sender of the e-mail, making it look like someone you know sent the message. Use updated antivirus scanning software regularly to monitor your computer. Turn on your computer's firewall, keep the operating system up to date, and use up-to-date antivirus and antispyware software.

- **User names and profiles can provide a wealth of personal information.**

Ask your child about his or her online user name, profile, and downloading activities. Having too much information in user names and profiles can attract predators. Examples of dangerous user names are surfergirl15 or hiphopboy14. We suggest creating a family profile, not an individual profile for your child.

- **Know intellectual property and copyright regulations.**

Downloading music and movies is illegal and can result in lawsuits and heavy fines against parents. If your child is using file-sharing programs for downloading music, it can also open up your computer to identity thieves by giving access to your personal information. Talk to your child about the consequences of this type of behavior, and emphasize that intellectual-property theft is a crime, not just an inconvenience.

- **Learn about the Internet.**

The more you know about how the Internet works, the more you can be informed about how online predators and identity thieves work, and what you can do to stop them.

- **Get involved with i-SAFE Inc.**

Make a difference! Talk to other parents about online hazards, and help raise Internet safety awareness by joining an i-PARENT Board.