

# Keeping it Safe

## *Teaching Children and Teens About Internet Safety*

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The Internet is a great thing. It offers an unimaginable amount of information at the click of a button, it allows people to stay in touch with friends and loved ones thousands of miles away, and it can be an extremely valuable learning tool for children and adults alike. But, as we all know, the Internet can also be a dangerous place. What is a concerned parent to do? Here are some tips on how to make the Internet safer for your children.

**1. Keep the computer in a living room or family room.** It may seem simple, but one of the best things you can do to protect your child online is to keep the computer in a family space, not in your child's room. This move will allow parents to better monitor their child's Internet usage, and it will discourage kids from checking out sites they know they shouldn't.

**2. Look into security software.** There are many security tools out there – it's up to you to find them and use them. Firewalls, antivirus software, and filters can all be implemented to create a safer online atmosphere for your child. To find out more about specific programs, check out the GetNetWise site featured below.

**3. Communicate with your child before she goes online.** Before making or enforcing rules about using the Internet, it's important to sit down with your child and explain why the rules are necessary. Discuss the potential dangers of using the Internet so that your child knows that going online is a privilege and a responsibility.

**4. Make and enforce simple house rules regarding the Internet.** Create a list of house rules and post it by the computer so that everyone can easily see it. For lists of rules to consider, visit the websites discussed below and decide what works best for your family.

**5. Stay informed!** The best defense parents can have is lots of information! Check out these great sites for more tips and facts about Internet safety from professionals in the field.

**GetNetWise ([www.getnetwise.org](http://www.getnetwise.org))** – Public interest groups and Internet industry organizations joined together to create this comprehensive site as a public service to parents and families. A safety guide, parent tools, suggested web sites for children, and directions for reporting trouble make this a fantastic choice for parents looking to get wise about the Internet!

**NetSmartz ([www.netsmartz.org](http://www.netsmartz.org))** – This site, constructed by the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, contains a wealth of information. Divided into sections for parents, teachers, law enforcement, and teens and kids, everyone in the family can take away something valuable from a visit to this site.

**WiredSafety ([www.wiredsafety.org](http://www.wiredsafety.org))** – Touted as “the world’s largest online safety and help group,” this informative site is run entirely by volunteers. Known as a cyber-neighborhood watch program, parents can find information on everything from cyber-bullying to cyber-dating. Can’t find the answer to your particular question? WiredSafety’s Ask Parry service allows parents to contact online safety and privacy expert Parry Aftab for practical and professional advice.

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