

Internet Safety Tips

Just as parents teach their children about dealing with strangers, parents need to provide guidance for communicating online. The best way to ensure safety on the Internet is to supervise your children's computer time. Here are a few guidelines to help keep kids safe.

1. Have your kids ask your permission before giving out their full name and address, phone number or other personal information.
2. Ask your children to come to you or a trusted adult if they see something scary or that they don't understand.
3. Never respond to messages that make you uncomfortable.
4. Never give out a credit card or password.
5. Never arrange to meet a person you've spoken with online unless you've cleared it with your parents, and an adult goes with you.

When communicating online, remember that some sites may be trying to sell something, and everything they see and hear is not true. Most Internet sites are safe, but just like the real world; some sites may contain sexual, violent or other content inappropriate for children. Different families have different standards, so it is important to establish clear guidelines for your child's Internet use upfront.

A number of software filtering programs are available to block Web sites that you don't want your children to see, but these are no substitute for parental guidance. The best way to deal with this issue is to talk to your children and teach them to make informed decisions based on your supervision regarding Internet usage at home and at the library.