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A PARENT'S GUIDE FOR CHILDREN
ages 10-12

SAFETY and the
INTERNET

kids in the know™

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This brochure is intended to help you improve your child's safety on the Internet. It includes information about children from 10 to 12 years old, common interests at this age, and strategies to help them stay safer online. It's especially important to teach this age group safety strategies as they approach adolescence, which is a very complex period of development.

As the significance of the Internet grows in children's lives, a variety of needs are being met online. This can include developing and maintaining friendships, seeking privacy, and exploring new interests. It's important to explain to children that the Internet is a public place. Establish the expectation that online activities will be supervised.

GET INVOLVED
LEARN WHAT YOUR CHILD IS DOING ONLINE

Talk to your child about what s/he likes to do online. It's important to keep the lines of communication open and stay involved in his/her online activity. Be aware of your child's online interests so you can provide ongoing guidance as s/he becomes interested in new areas.

Learn how to adjust/increase privacy settings. Most online journals, blogs, and social networking sites have privacy settings that determine who can and can't view a user's profile and information. Learn how to use and increase privacy settings.

View your child's instant messaging (IM) logs (e.g. Live Messenger, AIM, Yahoo! Messenger). Open Live Messenger, select *Tools > Options > Messages,* and near the bottom is the Message History setting. Ensure that the box is ticked next to "Automatically keep a history of my conversations". The location of the saved conversations is also shown here. Open the folder where the logs are saved to review your child's IM activity.

Ensure that your child's IM program is set up so that no one can speak to him/her without permission. In Live Messenger, select *Tools > Options > Privacy.* Ensure the box is ticked next to "Alert me when other people add me to their contact list".

Check your child's files in "My Pictures" to see what images are being sent, received, and saved by your child.

As your child gets older, you will notice changes in his/her behaviour and interests. While it's exciting to see your child seek more independence, there are new personal and online safety concerns as well. The following section outlines common characteristics of children 10 to 12 years old.

The Growing Personality

- Starts to develop an internal measure of themselves that strengthens and stabilizes their self-esteem
- Begins to develop a sense of who s/he is by contrasting themselves with others
- Becomes more sensitive to social judgment
- Develops an increased interest in role models
- Body awareness increases—negative feelings about his/her body is common
- Concern for right and wrong, as well as the treatment of others, increases
- Capacity for empathy increases
- Reasoning power matures; more capable of following rules without outside guidance, but more capable of rationalizing breaking rules
- Wants increased privacy as s/he seeks independence in his/her life
- Acquires pride and enjoyment from doing something well (academics, sports, music, art, etc.)

Online Activities

- Uses instant messaging (Live Messenger, Yahoo!, AIM, etc.) and email
- Chats with others online, collects emoticons and finds fun ways to dress up text
- Researches topics (using search engines)
- Uses online games, diaries, music websites, sends pictures (webcams, digital), and creates personal websites
- Posts messages and pictures on social networking sites (Facebook, Myspace)
- Plays video game consoles
- Watches and creates videos for online video sites (Youtube)
- Uses mobile phone for web surfing, text messages, etc.

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As a Parent, What Can You Do?

- Limit the amount of time your child spends online
- Use filtering software (for more information, visit www.cybertip.ca)
- Supervise your child while online and consider putting the computer in a common area (kitchen, family room, etc.) of your home
- Restrict your child's use of adult search engines
- Explore the games your child plays to determine if they are age-appropriate. Is the game moderated? Is there a chat component? Are avatars used? Does it contain sexually explicit or violent material?
- Know your child's login information and email addresses. What username or character names has your child given him/herself? Does it provide identifying characteristics about him/her or his/her hobbies (shygirl, bookworm, etc.)?
- Assist with the creation of online profiles when your child joins social networking or gaming sites. Only fill in what is necessary, leaving out identifying or revealing information
- Monitor webcam use and any posting or exchanging of pictures online
- Don't allow your child to communicate in unregulated chatrooms
- Communicate openly with your child, encouraging him/her to share feelings

What Should You Talk to Your Child About?

- Set the expectation that you will monitor your child's online activities, as the Internet is a public place
- Create and post Internet guidelines that are discussed regularly
- Explain that pictures should not be sent or posted online without parental permission. Once sent, control of what happens to the picture is lost
- Reinforce your child's use of child safe search engines (e.g. Yahooligans)
- Reinforce the idea that not everyone is who they say they are online. People can pretend to be older or younger than they actually are
- Explain that s/he should trust his/her instincts and block someone if someone asks questions online that seem "weird" (questions about puberty, sex, etc.)
- Talk about friendship: what it is and isn't. Explain that online chatting needs to be adult-supervised
- Explain to your child that it's illegal to threaten someone, and that s/he should tell a trusted adult if threatened online
- Ensure your child has a trusted adult in her/his life that s/he can talk to

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Instant Messaging (e.g. Live Messenger, AIM)
Electronic communication that involves components of both chat and email. After downloading the IM software, users maintain lists of "buddies" and are notified when their contacts are online. Short text messages are sent back and forth and some IM programs also include file transfer, webcam viewing, voice chat and other applications.

Peer to Peer Program (e.g. Limewire, Bearshare)
Programs that allow users to establish a connection and have direct access to shared files on each other's computers. This communication network allows the exchange of images, videos, music files, etc. without utilizing a centralized server.

Social Networking (Facebook, Myspace)
Social networking deals with the relationships between individuals, and the various social areas that connect them. Many websites on the Internet offer this type of communication whereby people are encouraged to post personal information (pictures, thoughts, etc.) and chat with others in real time.

Massive Multiplayer Online Role Playing Game (MMORPG)
A MMORPG is a type of online game where a large number of players interact with one another in a virtual/fantasy world (e.g. Runescape, Second Life).

Video Gaming Consoles
A video gaming console is an interactive computer or electronic device that uses a TV or monitor to display the video game. It hooks up to the Internet so multiple players can interact online. While players can talk to each other through these games, no history of conversations can be saved with these devices (e.g. Playstation 2 or 3, Nintendo Wii, XBox, etc.).

Webcam
A webcam is a video camera that is usually attached directly to a computer.

Cell/Mobile Phone Text Messages
Short Message Service (SMS), more commonly known as text messaging, allows users to communicate with other users through brief, typed text. These messages can be easily deleted, leaving no trace of the message sent, or saved and distributed by malicious users.

Avatar
An avatar is a digital expression of an individual. It may take the form of an animal, creature or person, and is often used in chat forums, games, and personal profiles.

DO YOU KNOW WHAT YOUR CHILD IS SAYING?

ABBREVIATION	MEANING
asl	age/sex/location
bf | gf	boyfriend | girlfriend
brb	be right back
cam | kam	webcam
g2g | gtg	got to go
h/o	hang on
jk | jks	just kidding | jokes
kk	ok cool
lmao | lmfao	laugh my ass off
lol	laugh out loud
noob	new individual
nvm	nevermind
omg	oh my god
pic	picture
plz	please
ppl	people
sxy | sexi	sexy
ttyl	talk to you later
ty	thank you
ud	you would
ur	you are
wtf	what the "f"

TIP: Sounding out the string of letters may help you understand the word or words.
Also try adding letters to a string of text to figure out the word.
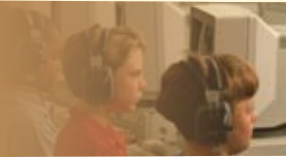
Exposure to Sexually Explicit Material

Children have never before had such easy access to sexually explicit material. Children at this age are not developmentally ready to handle viewing sexually explicit content. The information often misrepresents healthy sexual relationships. Teach your child about healthy sexual development and explain that information online is often inaccurate. (see the *Impact of Viewing* sheet *at* www.kidsintheknow.ca)

Public Nature of the Internet

Children underestimate the public nature of the Internet. They often engage in private conversations and share private information, unaware of the lasting consequences of their behaviour. Teach your child to be mindful of what s/he shares online. Once information is sent, control is lost.

Building Relationships Online

A portion of children's social world has moved online. The Internet is often used as a tool for positioning themselves within their peer group. Boundaries are often tested in this environment, and lines are more readily crossed. Communication should be closely supervised, as children can quickly find themselves in situations they are not ready to handle. Make sure your child has an adult presence to help maintain appropriate behaviour.

Threats and Coersion

Individuals seeking to exploit children may use threats that could result in the child sending a naked image of her/himself. Talk to your child about the use of threats. Explain that s/he should never comply with online threats, and to always seek a trusted adult for help.

Lack of Boundaries

Boundaries are quickly crossed online. Individuals looking to victimize children quickly turn conversations sexual, asking personal questions about puberty and development. Children don't know how to deal with the offender, which can lead to the child's online exploitation. Make sure your child knows to stop any conversation that is uncomfortable and tell a trusted adult.

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Engage, Empower and Educate