

For Web Browsers

### **General Safety Tips**

We all know that the Internet is a cool place to hang with friends and check out new things. But don't forget about the Internet's risks and dangers. If you're going to use the Web, do it safely! Here are some suggestions on what you should and shouldn't be doing online to help protect you against the bad stuff.

#### **Be careful online.**

Never reveal personally – identifiable information online. A lot of crooks use the Internet to take advantage of other people, especially kids and teens. Never reveal any personally-identifiable information online, whether it's on your profile page or in a blog, chatroom, instant messenger chat or email.

- Always use a screen name instead of your real name.
- Never give out your address, telephone number, hangout spots or links to other websites or pages where this information is available.
- Be careful about sending pictures to people you do not know very well.
- Never tell people personal or private information about your friends or family.
- Never assume you're completely anonymous online. Even if you don't put personal information online, there are different ways that people can still figure out who you are and where you live.

Never share your password with other people

Your passwords to websites, email accounts and instant messenger services should not be shared with friends or strangers. Your friends may not be as safe as you are and may unknowingly subject you to danger.

#### **Never arrange meetings with strangers.**

Just because you've seen a person's picture and read his or her profile, does not mean you know them. Many people online lie about who they are and what their intentions are. Just because someone seems nice online, does not mean they really are. They could be trying to hurt you.

Never arrange a meeting with a stranger you've met online. Even meeting a stranger in a crowded place could be dangerous as he could follow you home. If you wish to meet an online friend in person, talk to your parents and arrange a time and place where your friend can meet your parents first, just in case. If you are worried about your parents meeting one of your online friends, you probably shouldn't be friends with them in the first place.

#### **Don't believe everything you read or see online.**

Be wary of everything you see online unless it is from a trusted source. People lie about their age, who they are, what they look like, where they live, how they know you and what their interests are. Also, a lot of websites and emails contain information that is misleading or just plain untrue. If a person or deal sounds too good to be true, it probably is. Ask your parents to help you figure out what information is really true.

#### **Don't download files or software without your parents' permission.**

There are a lot of files on the Internet that are unsafe to download to a computer. Some files will

bombard you with pop-up ads all day long. Some files will actually track everything you and your family does on your computer, including your logins, passwords and credit card information, which criminals then use to steal money from you and do other harm. There is no easy way to tell which files are bad and which are ok to download. That free desktop wallpaper you want to download might also steal your parents' credit card information. Ask your parents before you download any files or software from the Internet.

**Don't respond to inappropriate messages or emails.**

Some people send inappropriate messages just to see if you will respond. If you do, you are simply encouraging them to send more inappropriate material to you. Don't respond to inappropriate messages. Instead, talk to your parents about how to report them to the right place.

**Don't post inappropriate content.**

. If you post information about tennis, you will attract people who are interested in tennis. If you post inappropriate content or pictures, you will attract people who have inappropriate interests. If you post jokes, photos or other content that contain sexual references you will probably attract people who are only interested in talking about sex. Be mindful of what you are communicating to the rest of the online world through the content you put onto the Internet.

**Be leery of personal questions from strangers.**

People you don't know who ask personal questions are often up to no good. Don't continue communicating with strangers who ask you personal questions. Talk to your parents about how to block them from communicating with you and report them to the right place.

**Don't be bullied into fights.**

People tend to say things online that they would never say in person. Some people even say rude and malicious things, sometimes just to see if you will respond. Don't respond to these people. Instead, talk to your parents about how to block them from communicating with you and report them to the right place.

**Don't use adult sites.**

There are some websites that kids just should not use. Don't use websites that contain adult content or that facilitate communication with older adults. No matter how much you think you know about the Internet, there are some people and places you just aren't ready to deal with. Enjoy websites that are designed for people your own age.

**Understand what you put online will be there forever.**

Assume that everything you put online— every email you write, every picture you post, every blog or journal entry you post— will be accessible on the Internet forever. Many search engines copy Internet pages and save them for viewing even after the pages are no longer online. Think about that before you post anything online. Do you really want pictures or blog entries to be seen 10 years from now?