

Online Safety Rules

Children get hooked on computers at an early age. Parents need to know that just because children have the ability to surf and handle a mouse, does not give them the ability of critical thinking or the capacity to scrutinise content and filter fake from reality.

Here are some basic cyber safety tips

For parents of children aged 5 – 7 years old:

- Always sit with them when they go online and limit access by book-marking some parent-approved sites. Chat rooms, instant messaging and message boards are not age-appropriate.
- Start teaching privacy issues and teach them to never give out personal information.
- Encourage them to tell you about anything that they come across that are disturbing or makes them feel uncomfortable. Remember to stay calm and let them know that they did the right thing in coming to see you.

For parents of children aged 8 – 10 years old:

- Keep the family computer in an area that is easy to monitor. Talk to your children about good values and possible hazards associated with computer use.
- Create “Family Internet Rules” with the input of your children. This should include a list of sites that are approved, permission being granted when any information is given out and perhaps the length of time spent at the computer.
- Do your homework and find some reputable clubs or chat rooms. Help contribute to a computer experience that is free of undesirable cyber intrusions.

For parents of children aged 11 and up:

- Computer-use will mushroom into multiple social networks and countless bookmarked sites, parents must acquire a new vigilance and approach in dealing with cyber hazards.
- Take time to familiarise yourself with your teen’s computer interests. A regular exchange will help keep the lines of communication open.
- The advice to parents is that since computers are here to stay, parents should start young and instil good and safe habits with the Internet. Develop and nurture a relationship of trust and exchange and show interest in your children’s cyber life.

Online Safety Rules:

- I will not give out any personal information online without my parents' permission. This includes my name, phone number, address, e-mail, location of my school, my parents' work address/ telephone numbers and credit card numbers, and my picture. This goes for anywhere on the Internet, including e-mail, chat rooms, newsgroups – even Web sites that promise me free stuff or prizes, or on Web pages that I make myself.
- When using the Internet, I will always use a pretend name or nickname that doesn't reveal whether I'm a boy or a girl.
- When creating a password, I will make one up that is hard to guess but easy for me to remember. To avoid having it stolen, I will never reveal it to anyone (except my parents) – not even my best friend.
- I will not respond to any message that makes me uncomfortable. I will show an adult right away.
- I will arrange to meet a friend I have made on the Internet ONLY if one of my parents has been informed and will be present.
- I will not send an insulting or rude message to anyone online. This is called "flaming" and it is not good Netiquette.
- I will not disable any filtering software my parents have put on the computer.
- I will not open e-mail, files, links, pictures or games from people that I don't know or trust. I will always ask an adult first.
- I will not take words, pictures or sounds from someone else's Web site without their permission.
- I will not believe everything I read on the Internet. I will always check the source of the information and confirm it with my teacher, parent or librarian.

Message from Elmer the Safety Elephant to all children.

I am an elephant and when I use the computer, I never forget the important safety rules to follow,. Do you remember all the important rules when you use the computer?



Let's look at them together again.

- **I do not give out personal information online without my parent's permission.**

This means that I never give my name, phone number, house address, e-mail address or location of my home or school. I don't post photos of myself unless my parents say it is OK to share with a friend or family member by e-mail.

- **I create a personalised nickname.**

This safety rule is fun. I have to choose a name that does not say whether I am a boy or a girl. My friends will know that it is me.

- **I have a password.**

This safety rule is also fun. I have to create a password that is unique and hard to guess, but easy for me to remember. No one except my parents, know what it is... not even my best friend.

- **I will only "chat" with people I know.**

When I am old enough and start to e-mail and use chat messages, I will only communicate with people that I know and that my parents approve of.

- **I will tell my parents when something makes me feel uncomfortable.**

This is not so fun. Sometimes, things are written or shown on the computer that makes me feel uncomfortable. I know to tell my parents right away.

- **I will have good "Netiquette".**

Good "Netiquette" is good etiquette on the Net. This means that I will treat others with respect. I will not send rude or mean messages and I will not post things such as words or photos from someone else.

- **Finally, I will not believe everything that I read or see on the Internet!**

I will know to check it out and ask my parents about it.

If you remember to follow these Internet safety rules, you will be smart and be safe.