

Teaching Your Children Safe Surfing Habits

— Tip Sheet

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Kids love going online for learning, socializing and having fun, but there are many things in cyberspace that they may not be ready for. The following tips will help keep your kids from running into trouble online.

TIPS FOR PARENTS

Be a guide

One of the most valuable things you can do, especially when kids are young, is be a guide to the online world. Kids under 10 shouldn't be using Internet-connected devices completely unsupervised; they need adults to help them find appropriate material, avoid things that *aren't* appropriate and understand what they see. While you don't have to be sitting beside them every minute, you should check out any new site or app until you're satisfied there won't be any surprises.

Use bookmarks

Create a "walled garden" for younger kids by finding and bookmarking good sites that can be accessed with a single click. Each browser has a slightly different way of doing this: in Firefox, select "Bookmarks" and then "Bookmark This Page"; in Internet Explorer, click "Favorites" then "Add to Favorites"; in Chrome, click the Star icon; in Safari for Mac, click on one of the Bookmark folders; in Safari for iOS, tap on the Toolbar button to the left of the Address Bar and select "Add Bookmark" and then "Save".

To avoid your child moving to another page by accident, you can hide the Address Bar and the Search field. This can be done in Firefox by right-clicking near the top of the screen (just to the right of "Help") and de

-selecting “Navigation Toolbar”. Hiding the Address Bar and Search fields isn’t possible in other browsers at this time, but most will allow you to go to “Full Screen” by hitting the F11 key.

Use kid-friendly search engines

Once kids start exploring the Internet on their own introduce them to kid-friendly search engines. Fact Monster (<http://www.factmonster.com/>) is a good source for finding information without the risk of finding more than you were looking for. KidsClick! (<http://www.kidsclick.org/>) is another site which catalogues websites that are useful and appropriate for kids between Kindergarten and Grade 7.

Use safe search filters

As kids get older, it’s natural for them to want to start exploring the Web more independently – but that doesn’t mean that you have to open the floodgates. Nearly all search engines have content filters that you can use to block inappropriate content:

- The best known of these is Google’s Safe Search, which you can use by visiting www.google.com/preferences and then checking the box marked “Filter explicit results” and clicking the “Save” button at the bottom of the page. If you have a Google account you can also password-lock your Safe Search settings by clicking “Lock SafeSearch”.
- To set Safe Search in Bing, visit <http://www.bing.com/account/general> and select the “Strict” or “Moderate” button. It’s not currently possible to lock your Safe Search settings in Bing.

It is only possible to set Safe Search settings in Yahoo! if you have a Yahoo! account. If you do, you can log in, go to <http://search.yahoo.com/preferences/preferences> and select Strict or Moderate. It’s also possible to lock your Safe Search settings by changing “SafeSearch Lock” to “On”.

- YouTube also has a Safety Mode that allows you to block some inappropriate content. The bottom of each YouTube page has a “Safety” button. If you click it you will be given the option to turn Safety Mode on or off. Like Google Safe Search, Safety Mode can be locked if you are signed into your Google account.

To spy or not to spy

It’s only natural to want to keep an eye on what your kids are doing online. With younger kids, it’s best to do that in person, by sitting next to them and acting as a guide. With older kids you may wish to periodically check your browser’s History logs (though these can be easily cleared, and browsers have settings to disable the History log) or use commercial monitoring software to see what your kids have been doing. If you choose to do so, here are some tips:

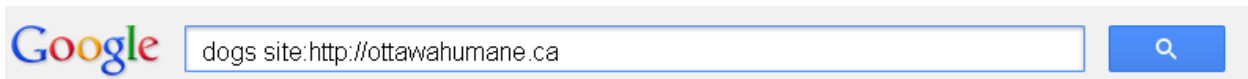
- Be open about it. Explaining why you want to keep tabs on them can help your kids to understand some of the issues they’re likely to encounter online.
- Make it part of your family rules. Research has shown that laying out family rules that explain appropriate online behaviour has a strong effect on what kids do online.
- Reward good behaviour with increased trust; the more kids feel their parents trust them online, the more likely they are to come to their parents when they have problems. Talk with your kids, teach them and let them become more independent as they get older.

TIPS TO TEACH YOUR KIDS

How to find the right stuff

One of the best ways to help kids avoid finding inappropriate material is to teach them to find just what they're looking for when they're searching for things online. Here are a few tips to help with that:

- Use online encyclopedias and research sources: If you're looking for general information, you'll get better results looking through an online encyclopedia like Britannica Kids (<http://kids.britannica.com/>) than a search engine. If you're looking for information on a particular topic, there are research sources on everything from Star Wars (Wookieepedia) to hockey (Internet Hockey Database).
- Use several good keywords: When you use a search engine, try to think of all the keywords that fit with what you're looking for. The more words you use the fewer unwanted results you're going to get. Think about what it is that makes your subject unique: like using *Lego Star Wars* instead of just *Star Wars*.
- Put phrases in quotation marks: You can also search for a specific phrase by putting it in quotes, so that "official bird" Ontario will only get results where the words "official bird" appear together in that order.
- Search within a site: Sometimes you know there's something you want on a website but you can't find it. Most sites have their own search boxes that let you search just within that website. You can also do this by putting **Site:** followed by the Web address after your search term in a search engine like Google.



How to avoid the wrong stuff

These tips will help kids filter out unwanted and inappropriate results:

- Putting the word NOT (all capital letters, as in **dog NOT poodle**) or a minus sign before a word (without a space, as in **dog -poodle**) will keep you from seeing any search results that include that word.
- In most browsers, hovering the pointer over a link in the search results without clicking it lets you see the Web address it will send you to. It's a good idea to always check on a link before you click it to make sure that it will send you where you think it will.

How to know if it's legitimate

There's lots of fun stuff online – music, games, videos – but not all of it was put there by the people who made it or with their permission. There are several good reasons to make sure that your kids are getting their content from a legitimate source. For starters, many of the sites that have pirated content also have bad content such as ads for adult material and malware and viruses. Another important reason is that when you use legitimate sites, the money goes to the people who made what you're watching, playing or listening to.

While some illegal sites are pretty obvious, others are quite sophisticated and professional-looking, so there's no easy way to tell just from looking at a site if it's legit. The safest thing to do is stick to sites and services you know are trustworthy. Here are some lists of legitimate Canadian streaming and download services:

Music

- Music Canada has a list of places where you can legally stream and download music : <http://musiccanada.com/>
- Pro-music has a list of legal places to stream and download music around the world, organized by country. Here's their list for Canada: <http://www.pro-music.org/>

Movies and television

- The Motion Picture Association – Canada has a list of legal places to stream and download movies and TV shows: <http://www.mpa-canada.org/>

If you're not sure if something's legit, here are some things to watch out for:

- Does the site belong to the people who made the content? If you're downloading tracks from a band's own official website, or watching TV from the network website, you can be pretty sure it's legit.
- Does it seem too good to be true? Sometimes there are great finds on the Internet; bands have released whole albums online, either for free or asking fans just to pay what they want. But if something is being offered for free in one place and you're being asked to pay for it somewhere else, it's a good bet that the free site isn't legit.
- Is it something that's not yet available through other legitimate sources? You're never going to find movies that are still in theatres from a legitimate source.
- Does it *look* copied? Some movies or TV shows that are sold or distributed illegally are actually filmed in the theatre with a camcorder or copied in other ways that hurt the quality of the picture or the sound. If what you're watching doesn't look right, that's a sign that it's not legitimate.

You can also check out the video "What is Copyright and How Do P2P Networks Work": http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=y306vJ-TAAo

What to do when you find something by mistake

The most important thing you can teach your kids is to come to you or another trusted adult if they come across anything inappropriate or upsetting online. Make sure they know that you won't blame them or get mad at them. Keep the conversation non-judgemental and reassuring so they know you support them and trust them.