The DOOR that's not Locked.

Safety and the Internet:

A parent's guide for children ages 10–12

The web is a wonderful place so long as you understand the dangers. We are committed to helping parents, teachers and anyone else who like to better understand the good, the bad and the ugly about the web.

We are here to keep kids safe while exploring and enjoying the door that's not locked. This brochure will help you improve your child's safety on the Internet. It includes information about kids from 10 to 12 years of age, common interests, and strategies to help them stay safer online. It's especially important to teach kids 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**. Let them know that online activities will be supervised.

All Web, No Net

Far reaching and largely unrestricted, you need to know what your kids are facing as they explore the online world. Below are some ways in which you can learn more about 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.

- ✗ **Stay engaged with how your child is using their cell phone.** Be sure to know if they are sending text messages, updating social networking profiles, sending photos, or downloading online content.

Keep 10-12 year-olds Healthy & Safe

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, if they are on the Internet, there are new personal and online safety concerns that you should be aware of as well. The following section outlines common characteristics of kids 10 to 12 years of age.

The Growing Personality

- 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 are 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 and collects emoticons.
- 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 cell phone for things such as web surfing and sending text messages.

As a Parent, What Can You Do?

- Balance the amount of time your child spends online.
- Use filtering software (for more information, visit www.thedoorthatsnotlocked.ca).
- Supervise your child's online activities.

- 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 sexual or violent material?
- Know your child's login information and email addresses. What username or character names has your child given him/herself?
- 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?

- Let your child know that you will monitor his/her 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 they need to be careful with who and how they share personal information. Explain the risks of personal information being misused if shared online.
- Explain to your child that it's illegal to threaten someone, and that s/he should tell a safe adult if threatened online.
- Explain to your child that s/he may come across sexually inappropriate material while online. Ensure that s/he understands that s/he can talk to you about anything on the Internet without fear of losing Internet privileges.
- Ensure your child has a safe adult in her/his life that s/he can talk to.

www.thedoorthatsnotlocked.ca

Quick Facts – Your Child's Online interests

Instant Messaging (e.g. Live Messenger, AIM)

Instant Messaging is 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, World of Warcraft).

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 easily 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.

Common language used by children online

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
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

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.

Risks to 10–12 year-olds on the Internet

Teaching your child good Internet skills that promote awareness and knowledge will make his/her online experiences safer.

1. Exposure to Sexually Explicit Material

Kids have never before had such easy access to sexually explicit material. At this age, they 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. (Refer to the *Impact of Viewing* sheet at www.kidsintheknow.ca.)

2. Public Nature of the Internet

Kids 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.

3. Building Relationships Online

A large portion of a kid'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.

4. 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 threats, and to always seek a safe adult for help.

5. Lack of Boundaries

Boundaries are quickly crossed online. Individuals looking to victimize children quickly turn conversations sexual, asking personal questions about puberty and development. Make sure your child knows to stop any conversation that is uncomfortable and to tell a safe adult.

CANADIAN CENTRE *for*
CHILD PROTECTION™

The Canadian Centre for Child Protection is a registered charity dedicated to the personal safety of all children. It operates Cybertip.ca, Kids in the Know, and Commit to Kids.

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To report the online sexual exploitation of children, visit **www.cybertip.ca**

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More information on child safety is available at www.protectchildren.ca or by contacting us at:

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