The DOOR that's not Locked.

Safety and the Internet:

A parent's guide for children ages 8&9

The web is a wonderful place so long as you understand the dangers. We are committed to helping parents, teachers and anyone else who would 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 8 to 9 years of age, common interests, and strategies to help them stay safer online. It's especially important to teach kids safety strategies as they gain an interest in using the Internet. At this age, kids are having fun, developing and maintaining friendships, seeking privacy, and exploring new interests. **It's important to explain to your child that the Internet is a public place.** Let your kids 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 you can learn more about what your child is doing online.

✗ **Ask your child what s/he enjoys doing online.** Be aware of your child's online interests so you can provide ongoing guidance as s/he becomes interested in new areas (games, instant messaging, email, etc.).

✗ **Check the websites your child visits by reviewing his/her history files.** For example, open Internet Explorer (IE) and click on the toolbar button at the top of the page for history files (looks like a clock). In newer versions of IE, simply click on Tools > ToolBars > History. To adjust the number of days that IE keeps the history, go to the Tools button, select Internet Options and then the General tab. At the bottom is the history section.

✗ **View your child's instant messaging (IM) logs (e.g. Live Messenger, AIM, Yahoo! Messenger).** For example, open Live Messenger and log in as the user you want to track, 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.

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

Keeping 8-9 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 8 to 9 years of age.

The Growing Personality

- Games are taken very seriously and losing can be taken personally.
- Fantasy play becomes more realistic (Police vs. Batman).
- Begins to develop a sense of who they are based on how peers treat them (e.g. if a peer says something hurtful, they may conclude they are not liked).
- Starts to feel embarrassed by their parents. Parental limits are tested through negative behavior.
- Forms more complex peer relationships; interactions are based on rules, and pecking order becomes apparent.
- Starts to compare their body image to others; may make incorrect judgments about their appearance.
- Acquires pride and enjoyment from doing something well (academics, sports, music, art, etc.).
- Begins to seek privacy (e.g. asks people to knock before entering their room).

Online Activities

- Uses online games.
- Uses instant messaging (Live Messenger, Yahoo!, Messenger, etc.).
- Uses email.
- Uses the Internet for school work.
- Uses search engines (Google, Yahoo!, Live Search, etc.).

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.

www.thedoorthatsnotlocked.ca

- Explore games your child plays to determine if they are age-appropriate. Is the game moderated? 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? It should not provide identifying characteristics about him/her or his/her hobbies (shygirl, bookworm, etc.).

- Assist with the creation of online profiles. When signing up for games, provide a family or parental email account rather than your child's email address.

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 and reviewed regularly.

- Show your child how to use safe search engines (e.g. Yahooligans).

- Discuss the difference between public and private information. Personal information is private information, and shouldn't be shared on the Internet without parental permission.

- Teach your child the safety strategy "If asked to share and your parents aren't aware – Say No!" This encourages him/her to practice checking with parents before sharing personal information online. Review with your child where s/he may be asked for personal information online.

- Teach your child to create passwords that others can't easily guess, and that contain a combination of numbers and letters (both upper- and lower-case).

- 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.

- Just as you would explain appropriate behaviour in the offline world, the same should be done for online activities.

- Ensure your child gets permission before chatting with other online gamers. Explain that the Internet isn't a place to make new friends. Talk about what friendship is and isn't. For more information, visit www.kidsintheknow.ca.

- Tell your child not to open any email attachments if s/he doesn't know the sender.

- Explain to your child that if s/he comes across something or someone that makes him/her feel uncomfortable, s/ he can tell you without fear of losing computer privileges.

QUICK FACTS – YOUR CHILD'S ONLINE INTERESTS

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.

Webcam

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

Instant Messaging (e.g. Live Messenger,Yahoo! Messenger)

Instant Messaging is electronic communication that involves components of both chat and email. After downloading the IM software, users maintain lists of "buddies"/"friends" and are notified when their contacts are online. Short text messages are sent back and forth; some IM programs also include file transfer, webcam viewing, voice chat and other applications.

Search Engine

Internet search engines (e.g. Google, Yahoo!) assist users in finding websites on any given subject. The search engines maintain databases of websites and use programs to continuously gather information.

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.).

Common language used by children online

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
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 8-9 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 can be exposed to sexually explicit material online. At this age they are not developmentally ready to handle viewing explicit sexual content. To reduce exposure, use filtering software and child-safe search engines (see the *Impact of Viewing* safety sheet at www.kidsintheknow.ca).

2. Search Engines

Kids use search engines to learn just about anything. While searching, it is easy for them to come across sexually explicit material. In an effort to reduce their exposure, be sure they are using child-appropriate search engines (e.g. Yahooligans). The most popular search engines may not be the most effective for filtering adult content. Test a few to decide which one to use.

3. Public nature of the Internet

The Internet is a public place. Once information is sent online, the sender loses control of what happens to it. Teach your child to be careful about what s/he shares online.

4. Building relationships

A large portion of kid's social world has moved online. The 8–9 year-old age group typically begins communication through games and email. Relationships can start quickly, and caution should be taken, as kids can easily be tricked. Monitor your child's Internet use closely, and discuss the qualities of healthy and unhealthy friendships (see the *Friendship* safety sheet at www.kidsintheknow.ca).

5. Chat Component of Games

The multi-player capability of online games makes them appealing to kids. While it's easy for you to have a false sense of security because your child is playing a game, precautions need to be taken. Most online games have a chat component where children can interact with others in real time.

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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