

How to Keep Your Kids Safe on the Internet

Contributed by Steve Kroening
Saturday, 12 January 2008
Last Updated Thursday, 08 May 2008

You probably already know that the Internet is an awesome tool. It has all sorts of great tools for learning and producing. But it also has all sorts of danger that your kids can fall into without much effort at all. You may have heard some of the horror stories of kids lured by predators into some terrible situations.

So how can you use all the great tools on the Internet and keep your child safe at the same time? Obviously, a good filter will keep your kids from seeing unsavory sites. WE recommends Bsafe. Unfortunately, these filters can't keep your kids out of all the dangerous sites, especially the social networking sites. These sites aren't inherently evil, but do open up dangerous situations your child may not be mature enough to handle (and some can lure even the most mature people into dangerous spots). So what can you do?

Parry Aftab of www.wiredsafety.org gives five ways to help keep your child safe online:

- Google your child's name. Put quotes around the first and last name so it's an exact match. Google their screen names, cell numbers, phone numbers, and addresses. Send an alert to Google so they will notify you any time this information appears. To do this, simply go to Google Alerts (under the More section) and sign up.

If you find anything about a child under 13, by law it has to come down. With older children, you can usually find a rule to get it down as well. WiredSafety might be able to help.

(continued below)

{sidebar id=1}

- Check your child's social network. See if they have a Myspace account or any other social network. Tell them you want to see it tomorrow. That gives them a chance to clean it up. Use it as a teaching moment, not a gotcha moment. They will become an Internet safety expert overnight.

- Tell your child that what goes online, stays online FOREVER. Don't put anything online that they don't want other people seeing. And make sure it's all password protected, so only their real friends can see it.

- Share
passwords carefully and instruct those you give them to not to pass them to anyone else. If you have a falling out with anyone who has your password, change the password and make sure the estranged person doesn't have the new one. Such people often become cyber-bullies and can cause a lot of damage.

- Teach your child
the golden rule – treat others as you want them to treat you. And the Internet golden rule – never do anything online that you wouldn't do offline.

WiredSafety has a lot of other suggestions that can help as well. Check out the website and be vigilant with your children. Don't assume they aren't getting into trouble. Even if your kids are mature enough to handle a lot of situations, there are predators out there who are very sophisticated in their schemes.

One last tip: Make sure you're praying for your kids. Ask the Lord to protect them. And to use you as an agent of protection.

PS. A good book that can help you protect your children from Internet predators is *To Catch a Predator* by Chris Hansen. The description of the book says it all: "*To Catch a Predator* shares the true stories of families who have been targeted by predators, revealing the tactics predators use to manipulate their victims and why even cautious families can be vulnerable to their attacks. He also offers suggestions from police officers, therapists, and child predators on the best approaches for preventing these crimes. Most critically, he provides parents with concrete steps they can take to protect their kids today, including how to initiate meaningful conversations with their children."