

# Using Internet & Cell Phone Technology Safely:

## What Families Need to Know



### The Importance of Technology in the Lives of Children

What a wonderful world we live in! Technology such as the Internet and Cellular (Cell) Phones makes staying in constant contact with family and friends simple. Children, as well as adults can and do develop relationships with people in other cities, states, and even other countries through online communication and gaming (Wii, Xbox, PS2, etc).

- Today's children are "technology natives," which means they have never known a world without technology.
- Families should be aware of who their children are interacting with online, as well as in person.
- Long distance relationships can be formed or strengthened using technology.

Technology is fun, and should remain fun. However, just like other safety issues, families need to be aware of the dangers, as well as the benefits of using technology. It is of equal importance to know how children are using technology and with whom they are interacting.

By following a few simple tips and learning to be involved in a child's online world, as well as in each child's day-to-day life, families can ensure that their children, who are technology natives, stay safe.

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# Internet Harassment: Cyberbullying

## Children who are being bullied online may:

- Suddenly stop using a computer or cell phone.
- Be nervous or jumpy when a text or instant message arrives.
- Appear angry.
- Be withdrawn.
- Avoid discussion about what they're doing online or who they are texting.

## Tips for Families

Here are some tips to help families keep children safe:

- Provide unconditional love and support.
- Show children you are on their side.
- Make sure children see that you are working to solve the problem.
- Educate children about appropriate online behaviors and monitor these behaviors regularly.
- Consider using an Internet Use or Cell Phone Use Contract with children to ensure expectations are understood.



Set up computers in areas that are heavily trafficked by family members.

## Cyber-bullying

Cyberbullying can be defined as using the Internet or a cell phone to tease, humiliate or harass another person. All children are vulnerable to cyberbullying. Documented cases include everything from class leaders, who have been pushed into changing schools, to children struggling with their sexuality who have committed suicide. No child is immune.

Victims of cyberbullying can suffer from:

- Depression
- Sadness
- Anger
- Frustration
- Fear
- Low Self-Esteem

## Cyberbullying is Different Than “Regular” Bullying

- Bullies often feel they can remain “anonymous” behind the technology they are using to bully.
- It can be easier to be cruel using technology because bullies are shielded from a victim’s response.
- Cyberbullying can go viral, that is, content can easily be distributed throughout schools, cities, even the world.
- Adults who are not tech-savvy might miss a victim’s experiences online or through technology.
- Victims may not know why they are being targeted if they are unaware of who is bullying them.

# Internet Safety

## IF YOUR CHILD IS BEING BULLIED, TEACH THEM TO:

- NOT RESPOND!
- SAVE THE EVIDENCE
- REPORT THE ABUSE



## Safety Tips

- Set up the family computer in a public area that has lots of traffic.
- Regularly monitor your child's online activity.
- Learn about and use the Parental Controls and Blocks in your computer's operating system.

## Internet Safety

The best advice for families to protect their children against online predators is to be aware of, and pay attention to, what children are doing online.

- Children that fall prey to online predators may spend large amounts of time online, especially at night. Monitor the amount of time your child spends online.
- Sex offenders who prey on children through the Internet may send your child pornography or try to convince the child that sex between an adult and a child is "normal." Pornography may be stored on an external storage device, such as a disc, CD, flash drive, etc.
- Gifts from unknown people, even plane tickets, can be part of a seduction process.
- Turning the computer monitor on and off quickly or changing screens quickly when you walk into the room should be a cause to investigate further.
- Tell children why information should not be shared and talk to them about what they're doing online. Knowledge is power!
- Use Parental Controls offered in the operating system or by the social networking site or chat room your child is using. If you don't know how to use these controls, your local library professional can help, or can provide contact information to someone who can.
- Be honest about dangers that exist online so that children can identify them when they happen.
- Checking the History of your web browser can give you a clue where your child is visiting. However, this can be deleted or modified and is not foolproof.
- Spyware, which can log all keystrokes on your computer, including online banking information, is often transferred through file sharing programs and music download sites. Be very clear about where your child is allowed to visit online.



# Cell Phone Safety



## Cell Phones, Sexting and Texting

- Cell phones are everywhere today, including the hands of young children.
- If your child is making or receiving phone calls to an unknown number, especially one that is long distance, it can be a sign they are being victimized.
- Remind children that pictures or video on a cell phone which are sexual in nature and contain children under 18 years old is considered child pornography in most states. Make sure pictures and video are things that can be shared with parents.
- Exchanging sexually explicit images or video is called sexting and can be easily distributed via social networking sites by vindictive ex-boy or girl friends.

## Tips for Safer Cell Phone Use

- Review cell phone records for any unknown numbers and late night phone calls and texts.
- Remind your child that texting is viral—anything sent in a text can be easily forwarded and shared.
- Teach your child never to reveal cell phone numbers or passwords online.
- Talk to your child about the possible consequences of sending sexually explicit or provocative images or text messages.
- When shopping for a cell phone for your child, research the security settings that are available.

- All text, photos and video created on a cell phone are saved as digital evidence, even if they've been deleted.
- Schools can take cell phones that they believe are involved in violating school policy or rules.
- Texting and driving kills people.
- Do not respond to text messages or phone calls from unknown numbers.
- Set locks on cell phone keypads to prevent others from using your phone.



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