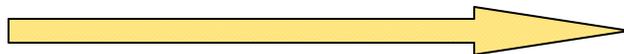A publication of

Needham Youth Services

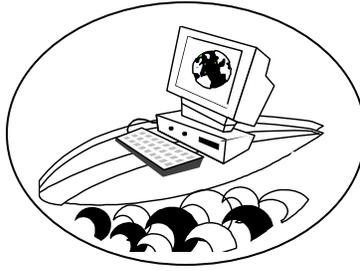## Safe Surf:
An Internet Safety
Resource Guide

PARENT AND YOUTH
INFORMATION

Sponsored by the
Needham Exchange Club

Welcome to the fourth edition of **Safe Surf: An Internet Safety Resource Guide**. This booklet is the last phase of a project that started with a grant from the Needham Education Foundation, Inc. The program provides workshops for middle school students about Internet safety, a presentation for parents regarding youth and the Internet, and this publication.

This online booklet has three sections: one for both parents and youth, one for parents, and one for youth. Some of the information was taken directly from what youth had to say at the workshops, while other information came from research articles and online resources. We encourage parents and youth to read this entire publication…you might learn a thing or two.

We would like to thank the Needham Exchange Club for underwriting this publication. We would also like to extend our sincere gratitude to the High Rock School for their continued support of this program. Finally, we would like to thank the students for their enthusiasm and participation during the workshops.

For more information, or for a hard copy of this booklet, please contact Needham Youth Services at 781-455-7500 or visit us online at www.needhamma.gov/youth.

In 2010, sixth grade students at the High Rock School participated in a workshop that focused on Internet safety. The following is a summary of the survey they were asked to complete. For more information about the survey and its results, please contact Needham Youth Services at 781-455-7500.

- High Rock School students spend the majority of their online time talking to friends, surfing websites, playing games and going on Youtube.com.

- The students surveyed report spending more time web surfing or visiting sites such as Youtube.com or music sites while online than anything else.

- More students believe their parents do not monitor their Internet use than students who think their parents do monitor their Internet usage.

- Sixth graders at High Rock report spending an average of 4 hours and 53 minutes online everyday.

- The most popular response for what kids might do online that they wouldn't do in person was "Break up with someone."

- The sixth graders surveyed report spending an equal amount of time web surfing as doing homework.

- 25% of students surveyed reported knowing someone who has been bullied or harassed online.

- Sixth graders report spending slightly more time instant messaging and going on social networking sites than they spend on homework.

- The majority of sixth grade students have been to Myspace.com or Facebook.com.

- 28% of sixth graders polled believe their parents *do not* monitor their Internet use.

- 52% of sixth graders polled *do not* know if their parents monitor their Internet use.

- On average, 6th graders send 45 text messages a day.

- When asked if they or someone they know have ever done or said anything online that they wouldn't say in person, 17% responded "YES."

- 85% of sixth graders at High Rock feel they can tell their parents all the websites or chat rooms they visit

In 2010, sixth grade students participated in a workshop that focused on Internet safety. Below is a sampling of the students' responses to the following questions:

What is something that goes on online that your parents might not know about?

- Searches
- Amount of time IM'ing
- Having Facebook
- Cyber-bullying/harassment
- Chatting with people I don't know
- Youtube without permission
- Inappropriate: blogs, pop-ups, pictures, messages
- Spreading rumors
- Searching for presents for them
- Anonymous emailing
- Amount of time on Facebook
- Telling people about myself on Facebook
- Not knowing all my Facebook friends
- Rejection on Facebook, Myspace, Twitter because uncool
- Prank calls
- Kids deleting Internet History
- All the distractions of the computer
- A lot of time spent texting
- Relationships online and at school
- Breaking-up and spreading rumors
- Having accounts on other websites that have my email address
- Pictures and swearing
- Playing games
- Facebook wall flirting
- Facebook teasing
- Fake websites
- Bad pictures/videos
- My friends
- Spam emails
- Who I talk to
- Sent or forwarded messages
- Youtube bad words in comments
- Having fake names
- Anonymous threats
- Searching bad websites
- Porn

Name something you have done or said online that you wouldn't do/say in person.

- Swearing and leaving weird messages
- Telling other friend I was upset with them and why
- Saying bad things about other people
- Saying mean stuff
- Spreading rumors about people liking other people
- Saying I like someone
- Asking someone out
- Threatening to call parents
- Gossiping, rumors, harassing
- Calling friends annoying
- You are spoiled
- You are ugly
- Shut-up
- Lying about my age
- Talking about abortion
- Calling people names
- Breaking-up or making up
- Asking personal questions
- Apologizing
- Faggot
- I hate my brother
- Swear Words
- I like you
- I will beat you up
- Bullying
- Making fun of someone
- Weirdo, idiot
- Threatening to tell guidance counselor
- Asking for gaming tips
- Do you like me

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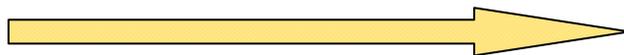
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Parenting in an Online World

Raising today's Internet generation can be challenging, as kids seem to know more about technology and use the Internet differently from adults. The Internet is essential to our children's education, future careers, and lives. Even parents who are knowledgeable about computers might not fully understand how children use the Internet and how to help their own children have a safer and more enjoyable experience online. Although they may be miles ahead of us technically, kids still need adults to help them develop good judgment and critical thinking skills in order to deal with the situations, information and people they encounter online.

Many parents worry that they don't know how to set Internet rules and guidelines because they are unsure of the risks. Think about the parenting messages you have been sending since your children were born:

- ***Don't talk to strangers***
- ***Come home straight after school***
- ***Be nice and don't pick fights***
- ***Don't give out personal information***
- ***Introduce your friends to us***

These are the same messages you can apply to Internet safety. On the following pages you will find ideas, suggestions, and tried and true techniques for helping your children navigate their online world.

Safe surfing!

Where Are The Online Risks?

Where are youth likely to encounter the dangers as they explore web pages, chat with friends, and do schoolwork?

Social Networking
- Rumors and gossip can be passed quickly.
- Many children/teens post pictures and personal information on their pages. Parents should be aware of the images their children post on the web.

Instant Messaging
- Rumors and gossip can be passed quickly by "IM"ing.
- Some IM sites require users to set up a "personal profile", putting children at risk for revealing personal information.

Personal Profiles
- Pictures and personal information can become public.

Web Sites
- While web surfing it's easy to come across sites containing pornography, hate, violence, illegal, and/or dangerous content and activities.
- The web contains a great deal of inaccurate and misleading information.

Chat Rooms
- These open forum sites can be cruising grounds for predators.
- The anonymity of chat room visitors makes it difficult to monitor who's present and determine if people are being truthful about their age/identity.

File Sharing
- Swapping music and video files may violate the ethics of file-sharing or render a user's information public.
- File sharing can be illegal.

E-mail
- Most electronic mail accounts receive spam, or junk e-mail, and much of it is offensive or obscene.
- Viruses can be spread through e-mail.

Text Messaging, E-mailing, Instant Messaging, & Chat Rooms…

What's the Difference?

Many parents confuse these forums when their kids say they are 'chatting' online. While some technologies involve talking in 'real time,' there are important differences that have safety implications.

Text Messaging

This is an electronic form of short message communication used via cell phones. Cryptic conversations make messages difficult to monitor and the instant nature of text messaging presents an avenue for kids to be bullied/harassed.

Chat Room

A place on the Internet where you can talk to anyone in the world. Chat rooms sometimes have a common theme and draw people with common interests. Kids can create private chat rooms that are accessible only to the friends they select.

Instant Messaging

In order to "IM", users create a profile and a contact list of friends to chat with. Messages pop up instantly while users are online. IM users can be visible or invisible to others and they can block people they don't know or don't want to communicate with. IM is a safer environment because it permits users to select the people they want to talk with. Facebook also has instant messaging capabilities, so users can chat with their Facebook "friends."

E-mailing

This is a more formal communication for kids and less popular than Instant Messaging. Electronic messages are time delayed, as the sender and recipient are not communicating "instantly."

With all these forms of instant communication, kids may feel freer to say things electronically that they might never say face-to-face. There are positive and negative implications of such freedom.

Adapted from: www.bewebaware.ca/english/default.aspx

What Are The Online Risks?

Bullies	**Violence**	**Hate**
Predators	**Misinformation**	**Spam**
Pornography	**Internet Addiction**	**Gambling**

The following tips may help you support and protect your child online:

- Become familiar with how your child is using the Internet
- Keep the computer in a common, visible area in your home
- Monitor and supervise your child's Internet use
- Educate your child about the risks online
- Teach your child to be respectful when online
- Limit the amount of time spent online
- Encourage face-to-face friendships

The following technological tools may provide additional protection:

- **Blocking Software** – This is software that uses a "bad site" list and blocks access to chosen sites.
- **Filtering** - Filtering software uses certain keywords to block sites or sections of sites on-the-fly.
- **Outgoing Filtering** – This software ensures that your child won't be able to share certain personal information with others online.
- **Monitoring and Tracking** - Some software allows parents to track where their children go online, how much time they spend online, how much time they spend on the computer.

But remember…
> **"Guard the mind first, then the computer."**

The best thing you can do to keep your child safe on the internet is to educate them about the risks.

Adapted from: wiredkids.org, bewebaware.ca/english, and kidshield.com
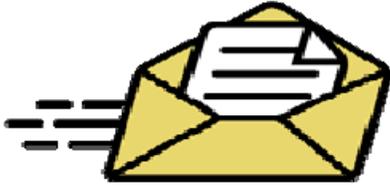
Dear Safe Surf…

My kids immediately minimize the screen or click off whatever they are doing online if I walk into the room. What's going on?

According to the students we spoke with at the High Rock School, the key issues for adolescents are privacy and respect. As one student stated, "It feels like a violation when my parents look at what I'm doing over my shoulder. They would never listen in on a phone conversation, so why do they read my IMs?" Most of the students agreed they would tell their parents about what they do online, but they want to be *asked* rather than *required* to share information.

I'm tempted to check the computer's History to see what websites my child has visited. Is this a good way to track?

Many parents review the History to see what is happening online in their home, but just as many children are deleting the History on a regular basis. The websites visited on your computer are stored in several ways on the hard drive, but tracking software may be a more efficient tool to monitor your children's Internet use. Like the previous situation, teenagers frequently find the checking of History to be invasive. Perhaps asking your child to share the History with you will seem less invasive, and it could be the start of a great discussion.

My kids are on Facebook constantly. I just can't figure out what the appeal is and why it is so important to be on this site practically 24/7.

Facebook and other sites such as MySpace and Xanga offer social networking opportunities for youth --- and the truth is that they are very compelling. On these sites you can list information about yourself, post pictures, connect with old friends, and meet new friends. As you did not grow up in such an electronic age, it may be difficult to fully appreciate why these sites are so important to your children. You might want to ask your children to show you these sites so that you can better understand their world.

Texting and IM - ing Lingo

Ever wonder what all those letters you see your kids typing mean? Here is a list of common acronyms that kids use while texting and IMing online.

bbl - Be back later

bf - Boyfriend

bff - Best friends forever

brb - Be right back

btw - By the way

cul8r / cya l8tr - See you later

fwiw - For what it's worth

ftw - For the win

g2g / gtg - I've got to go

gf - Girlfriend

idk - I don't know

imho - In my humble opinion

jk - Just kidding

lmao - Laughing my a** off

lol - Laughing out loud

nm - Never mind / not much

np - No problem

omg - Oh my God

pos - Parent over shoulder

rofl - Rolling on the floor laughing

thx - Thanks

ttyl - Talk to you later

wtf - What the F***

Overuse of the Internet

Computers and the web are great resources for kids, but sometimes they spend too much time online and lose out on other important things.

- **Lost sleep**

It is very tempting to continue playing games or chatting with friends late into the night, and kids need their sleep.

- **Lost homework time**

The computer, while necessary for many school assignments, is a powerful distraction; even if students are not online late into the night, they could still stay up late finishing homework because earlier in the day they were on the computer.

- **Lost time with friends and family**

While the Internet allows kids to connect easily and instantly to their friends, it cannot replace face-to-face interaction. It's important for kids to spend real time with their peers. It's also important for them to spend real time with their family. Parents too are often guilty of spending too much time on the computer. Make sure to move away from electronics and make time to interact as a family.

Websites and Resources

www.bewebaware.ca/english
National, bilingual public education program on Internet safety

www.wiredkids.org & **www.stopcyberbullying.org**
The world's largest Internet safety, help and education organization

www.getnetwise.org
Resources for parents to make informed decisions about their family's use of the Internet

www.fbi.gov
Provides a parent guide publication for web safety

www.childrenspartnership.org
National non-profit advocacy organization for youth

www.safesurf.com
Organization dedicated to making the Internet safe for children

www.cyberangels.org
Cyber-neighborhood watch program promoting online safety education

www.netlingo.com
Online dictionary and listing of Internet definitions

www.kidshield.com
Tools and information for your children's online safety

www.kidshealth.org/index2.html
Provides a variety of information for teens, kids and parents

Town and School

Resources for Parents

Needham Youth Services

Phone: 781-455-7500
Web site: www.needhamma.gov/youth
E-Mail: Needhamyouth@needhamma.gov

- Individual, group and family counseling
- Substance Abuse Awareness Program
- Employment and Volunteer Programs
- A Conversation for Parents of Teens
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- Suicide Prevention workshops
- Information on issues such as drugs/alcohol, bullying, harassment, loss and other mental health issues

Needham Public School Guidance Department

Director of Guidance: 781-455-0800
Tom Denton   extension 2130
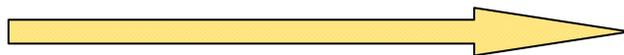Guidance Office   extension 2144

- Individual, group and crisis counseling
- Information and referrals
- Student advocacy
- Peer conflict resolution
- Parent meetings
- Parent information nights
- Process all academic schedule alterations

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YOUTH
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My Parents Don't Understand The Internet!

Do you remember the first time you realized that you knew more about the Internet than your parents? Maybe it was one of these things that gave it away:

- Your Mom or Dad said, "When I was your age we didn't *have* the Internet…"
- Your parents get confused with IM, ISP, P2P, and lol.
- Your parents still use the term "cyber" for anything online.
- They double click *everything*…

Welcome to the technology-generation divide. You probably do know a lot more about how to use the computer and how to navigate online than your parents. However your parents are still doing what they do best, which is making and enforcing the rules to try and keep you safe. This can be frustrating if you think your parents have to be experts to create Internet rules.

They Don't Know What They Are Talking About!

Okay, so they still don't know what "lol" means and they think you only have one screen name, but they do know a thing or two about safety. Whether online or face-to-face, the old safety rules still apply, and those are the ones your parents rely upon as you explore the Internet.

The Internet may be still unfamiliar territory for many parents. Help ease your parent's fears by teaching them about your Internet use.

Safe surfing!

Dear Safe Surf…

My parents want to know everything I do online, and they even check my History to see what sites I've been on! Why are they invading my privacy?

The Internet is a great place to explore, learn, and hang out, and your parents want to make sure you understand the dangers that exist online. When you enter information on a web site or any place on the Internet, you're giving up a bit of your privacy. At best, your name could wind up in some database, probably to be used to sell you something now or later. At worst, it could be used to harm or exploit you.

Some web sites are wonderful, others are not as good, and some contain so-called "adult" images and other material that are not appropriate for teens. Still others are demeaning, racist, sexist, and violent or contain false information. Some of these sites contain material that can be disturbing, even for adults.

Therefore, it's important that you and your parents communicate about your online activities, including when you can go online, how long you can stay online, and what activities you can do online. Communicating with your parents doesn't mean that you have to give up your privacy. It just means that you come to an agreement based on mutual trust and understanding. You can also help your parents better understand the Internet and how it is helpful for teens.

My parents are always trying to monitor me on Facebook and it is super frustrating. How can I get them to trust me and what I do online?

Social networking sites like MySpace, Facebook, and Xanga are a great way to express yourself, share media, and maintain connections with friends. On the flip side they may also allow too many people to have

(continued on next page)

access to you and your personal life and some who may have some not so friendly intentions.

For example photos you post of yourself can be copied, manipulated, and posted elsewhere. Remember once you have posted anything online it is stored there even after you erase it. Therefore, your parents have legitimate reasons for being concerned. However, it also seems like you have a solid understanding of some of the ways to keep yourself safe online so your best bet to get them off your back would be to invite them to check out your personal profile. Some of the areas your parents will be interested in are: what security settings you have enabled, what photos you have posted, what personal information is included on your profile, who you allow to access your page, and what applications you have chosen on your page.

My parents have no idea how much bullying goes on online. Kids are constantly lying or saying mean things, pretending to be someone else on IM, or threatening each other. How can my parents possibly help with that?

When you're online, especially while IMing or in chatrooms, there is a chance that you'll get messages that are demeaning, harassing, or just plain mean. Even people who are nice in the "real" world can forget their manners when they go online. Your parents may not know the extent of bullying that goes on online, which is why it's important to tell them. A parent or trusted adult can help you figure out how to handle the bullying, but they can't help you if they don't know what is happening.

Some messages, however, may constitute harassment, which is a crime under federal law. In this case, it's important that you inform your parents, the school, and/or the authorities so they can help you put a stop to it. Massachusetts has just passed a new law that cracks down on bullying both in school and online. No one should have to put up with rude, threatening, or unwanted messages, and we are all responsible for our own behavior online.

Hopefully this has been helpful to understand a little more about why parents worry about the Internet, and what they can do to help you stay safe.

Adapted from: http://www.safeteens.com
Resource: www.mass.gov/legis/laws/seslaw10/sl100092

Safety Tips

Awareness of Internet dangers is the first step towards staying safe online. Here are some important things to consider:

- **Never give out personal information**

  Personal information includes your name, the names of friends or family, your address, phone number, or school name. This also includes pictures of yourself, your IM, or your e-mail address. **REMEMBER:** Nothing posted online is ever truly private. Even if you delete something, it could have been forwarded or re-posted many times; something posted once is essentially there forever.

- **Don't believe everything you read**

  Just because someone online tells you that they are 15 doesn't mean they are telling the truth. Even adults can't tell when a male pretends to be a female or a 50 year-old pretends to be a 15-year old online.

- **Protect yourself**

  Never arrange to meet in person someone you met online unless your parents go with you. Also make sure it is in a public place.

- **Never open email from someone you do not know**

  Just delete strange e-mails. If in doubt about it, ask your parents, guardian, or another adult. Strange e-mails or spam (junk mail) can contain viruses.

- **Use Netiquette**

  Be polite to others online just as you would offline. Be aware of bullying, rumors, and gossip while IMing, texting and e-mailing. Be respectful while using technology.

- **It's okay to tell**

  If you find something online that makes you feel uncomfortable or scares you, tell an adult. Kids and parents are learning this together, and everyone wants the Internet to be a fun, safe place.

Adapted from http://www.cyberangels.org

What Is

Cyberbullying ?

Cyberbullying is sending or posting harmful or cruel text or images using the Internet or other digital communication devices, such as texting using a cell phone. This kind of bullying includes:

- **Sending cruel, vicious, and sometimes threatening messages.**
- **Harassing someone by repeatedly sending cruel messages.**
- **Creating web sites that have stories, cartoons, pictures, and jokes ridiculing others.**
- **Posting pictures of classmates online and asking students to rate them, with questions such as "Who is the biggest ___ (add a derogatory term)?"**
- **Breaking into an e-mail or social networking account and sending vicious or embarrassing material to others.**
- **Masquerading and pretending to be someone else online.**
- **Purposefully passing along embarrassing or private information about someone else.**
- **Engaging someone in IM, tricking that person into revealing sensitive personal information, and/or forwarding that information to others.**
- **Excluding someone from an online group.**
- **Taking a picture of a person in the locker room using a digital phone camera and sending that picture to others.**
- **Posting cruel messages or personal information on a public site or profile with the intention of hurting or embarrassing someone.**

Some teens believe they have the right to say whatever they want to online with little regard for privacy or consequences. Others think it's a violation to "tell" adults about what goes on for teens online. Bullying is not okay in any forum, and it does not belong on the Internet. There are even federal laws that criminalize bullying and Massachusetts has just passed a new law that cracks down on bullying both in school and online.

Adapted from: http://www.cyberbully.org
Resource: www.mass.gov/legis/laws/seslaw10/sl100092

Netiquette for Instant Messaging

"Netiquette" is network etiquette, the do's and don'ts of online communication. Netiquette covers both common courtesy online and the informal "rules of the road" of cyberspace. This also applies to text messaging.

Knock Before You Enter
Inquire if the other party can instant message/receive texts.

Be Brief
Think short. Instant messages aren't meant to be long-winded.

Watch What You Write
Don't write anything in an IM or text that you wouldn't write in an e-mail or a typed letter. Don't let your emotions rule your typing: if you're upset or mad, log off for a while.

Keep It Casual
Instant messages are not replacements for serious, face-to-face communications. Also, things can "sound different" online. Without facial expressions and tone of voice, it's hard to tell when someone is joking and some things might seem harsher when read off a screen.

Go Easy on the Jargon
Don't overuse acronyms or abbreviations.

One Step at a Time
Be careful with multi-tasking. Better to do one or two things well than three or four poorly.

Hide-and-Seek
Don't use the instant messaging program to spy on your friends by going online under a secret screen name.

Adapted from: http://www.pcworld.com

Overuse of the Internet

There are so many great things about computers and the web: chatting with friends, playing games, doing research for school, but it's possible to have too much of a good thing. If you spend too much time online, you'll be missing out on other important stuff.

- **Lost sleep**
It is very tempting to continue playing games or chatting with friends late into the night, but sleep is important too.

- **Lost homework time**
How many times have you stayed up late doing homework that you could have finished earlier if you weren't on the computer? A good strategy is trying to finish your work before you even turn on the computer. Or, if you have to use the computer for school work, sign out of Facebook and IM or disconnect from the Internet entirely to avoid distraction. You'll likely get your work done faster and therefore have more free time.

- **Lost time with friends and family**
While the Internet is great for connecting with friends quickly and easily, it cannot replace face-to-face time. It's important to spend real time with your friends. It's also important to spend real time with your family. Parents are also guilty of spending too much time on the computer. Try to pick a time with your parents when everyone signs off of the computer and spends time together talking or playing a game.

Websites and Resources

www.cyberangels.org
World's oldest and largest Internet safety organization.

www.saferchild.org
Provides accurate links to websites regarding health and safety.

www.isafe.org
Teaching kids and teens how to be safe on the Internet.

www.parentingadolescents.com
Gives free and extended responses to questions from parents and teens.

www.cyberbully.org
Information and resources about online bullying.

www.cybertipline.com
Handles leads from individuals reporting the sexual exploitation of children.

www.safeteens.com
A place for parents and teens to learn how to use the Internet safely.

www.kids.yahoo.com
Web guide for kids.

www.kids.getnetwise.org
Information and resources for kids and families.

Town and School

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NEEDHAM YOUTH SERVICES

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