

**A Publication of the
Needham Youth Commission**

**Safe Surf:
An Internet Safety
Resource Guide**



**INFORMATION FOR
PARENTS AND YOUTH**



**Sponsored by the
Needham Exchange Club**



Welcome to the second 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.

A survey for middle school students was created to learn more about their level of knowledge and their use of the Internet. With the supportive help of Pollard Middle School, we were able to survey the entire sixth grade during the months of January and February 2006. The data we received from the survey was used during the Safe Surf Parent Night in March; some highlights from the survey have been reprinted in this publication.

This booklet has three sections: one for youth, one for parents, and one for both parents and youth. In the middle portion (the color sheets of paper), you will find information of interest to both youth and parents. Then, each of you has your “own side of the booklet” devoted specifically to issues that pertain to parents or to 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 both sides of the publication...you might learn a thing or two.

We would like to thank the Needham Exchange Club for allowing us the opportunity to offer this publication. We would also like to extend our sincere gratitude to Pollard Middle 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, please contact the Needham Youth Commission at 781-455-7518, or visit us online at www.town.needham.ma.us/youth



In the winter of 2006 middle school youth participated in workshops 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?

- How much people swear and ask each other out online.
- Talking to people I don't know.
- People putting their phone numbers in their away messages and profiles.
- That I have talked to strangers.
- Kids being mean to other people through IM.
- How much info is let out about a person on myspace.com.
- People pretending to be someone else on AIM.
- All the websites I look at, they only know half of them.
- Online friendships, fake accounts and others.
- Relationships and harassing.
- Maybe that people have pics on their myspace.
- Personal websites.
- Kid relationships.
- People bullying or rumors going around.
- Who you are writing to on AIM.
- On IM I have some friends that may be harassing people.
- Addictinggames.com
- Some violent games.
- I look at pics and play games while I do homework.
- I enter contests and my parents get the email later (I mean like 3 months later).
- I sometimes do IM instead of homework.
- Disturbing images.
- Myspace.com
- Kids go to inappropriate websites and in away live a double life on IM.
- People give out personal information too much and people can say inappropriate things online.

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

- I asked someone out.
- One boy always harassed me online, so I blocked him.
- Someone was making fun of me and I shoved it back at them.
- I said someone was a very mean person.
- Swearing at people.
- Breaking up or getting dumped.
- I told someone "I hate you."
- Lied about who I was online.
- Spreading rumors about someone else.
- Signed a website saying mean things about another person.
- Made threatening comments.
- Many things...
- I said I was someone that I wasn't.
- Started a fight.
- Call people names or say really rude things.
- Saying something inappropriate to a boy.
- Telling something confidential to someone else.
- I told someone I liked them.
- Made up a screen name to harass someone.
- People talk about the sexual things they have done.
- I've gotten into lots of fights online.
- Excluded someone.
- Breaking into someone else's screen name.
- Talking about how you hate your family.
- Saying bad insults because there is no fear of real confrontation
- I talked about someone behind their back on IM...something I would normally not do



In the winter of 2006, students at Pollard Middle School participated in a workshop that focused on Internet safety. The following is a summary of the survey they were asked to complete:

- Pollard Middle School kids spend the majority of their online time talking to friends, surfing websites, and playing games.
- The students surveyed report spending more time Instant Messaging while online than anything else.
- Twice as many students believe their parents do not monitor their Internet use than students who think their parents do monitor their usage.
- Eighth graders at Pollard report spending an average of 5 hours and 49 minutes online everyday.
- The most popular response for what kids might do online that they wouldn't do in person was "Ask someone out."
- The eighth graders surveyed report spending 28% more time Instant Messaging than doing homework.
- Seventh graders at Pollard reported that they spend an average of five and a half hours online everyday.
- Pollard seventh graders reported that they spend 11% more time Instant Messaging than doing homework.
- 41% of seventh graders polled believe their parents do not monitor their Internet use.
- 55% of seventh graders polled have gone into chat rooms compared to 67% of eighth graders.
- When asked if they or someone they know have ever done or said anything online that they wouldn't say in person, 58% of eighth graders responded "YES."
- 43% of seventh graders at Pollard feel they can tell their parents all the websites or chat rooms they visit compared to 33% of eighth graders.
- On average, seventh graders polled spend 1 hour and 7 minutes per day doing homework compared to 3 hours and 57 minutes per day spent Instant Messaging, e-mailing, web surfing, and playing games.
- Pollard seventh graders spend 8% more time playing games daily than doing homework.

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**PARENT
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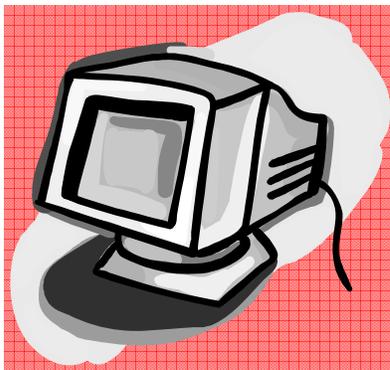
Parenting in an Online World

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 the most knowledgeable about computers might not 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 use for Internet safety. On the following pages you will find ideas, suggestions, and tried and true techniques for helping your children navigate their online world.



Where Are The Online Risks?

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

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.

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.

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.

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.

File Sharing

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

Personal Profiles

- Pictures and personal information can become public.

Chat Rooms, E-mailing, Instant Messaging, and Text Messaging ...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.

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.

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.”

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.

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

What Are The Online Risks?

Bullies
Predators
Pornography

Violence
Misinformation
Internet Addiction

Hate
Spam
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.

Adapted from: www.wiredkids.org and www.bewebaware.ca/english

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 kids we spoke with at Pollard Middle 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.



Email & 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 IMing and chatting online.

afk	Away from keyboard
bbt	Be back later
bfu	Bye for now
bg	Big grin
brb	Be right back
cul8r	See you later
eg	Evil grin
fiioh	Forget it. I'm out of here
g	Grin
g2g	I've got to go
imho	In my humble opinion
jk	Just kidding
l8r	Later
lol	I'm laughing out loud
ne1	Anyone
nm	Never mind
pos	Parent over shoulder
rofl	Rolling on the floor laughing
ttyl	Talk to you later
wb	Welcome back
wtf	What the F***

Websites

Please refer to the following websites for further information:

www.bewebaware.org

National, bilingual public education program on Internet safety

www.wiredkids.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 kids, youth, and parents



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- Substance Abuse Awareness Program
- Employment and Volunteer Programs
- Active Parenting of Teens
- Parent Dialogue Meetings
- Needham Unplugged
- Books & Bridges
- Information on issues such as drugs/alcohol, bullying, harassment, loss and other mental health issues

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6 th grade Guidance Office	extension 295
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- Individual, group and crisis counseling
- Information and referrals
- Student advocacy
- Peer conflict resolution
- Parent meetings
- Parent information nights
- Process all academic schedule alterations

You have reached the end of the “Parent Section.” We invite you to read the “Youth Section” to learn more about things a youth should be aware of when using the Internet.

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Help! 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:

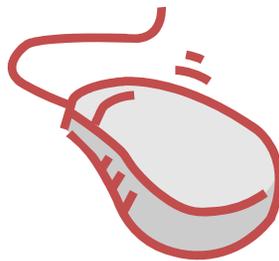
- **Your Mom or Dad said, “When I was your age we didn’t have the Internet...”**
- **Your parents get confused with IM, ISP, P2P, and lol.**
- **Your parents still use the term “cyber” for anything online.**
- **They double click everything...**

Welcome to the technology-generation gap. 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.

Your parents understand that adolescence is a time of change, growth, angst, exploration, and independence. The Internet is still unfamiliar territory for many parents. Help ease your parent's fears as they help you ease into adulthood. Safe surfing!



Questions, Frustrations, and Parents' Explanations

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 Mom thinks Instant Messaging is dangerous. I keep explaining that it's only my friends that have permission to IM with me, but she doesn't get it. How can I tell her that IM is safe?

Believe it or not, IM can be a dangerous way to interact with people. As with chatrooms, you need to be extremely careful about whom you are "IMing" with and what you are saying.

Some IM services encourage you to post a "profile" with personal information such as your age, gender, hobbies, and interests. While such profiles can be great to meet people with similar interests, they can also make you a target for harassment or worse.

Your parents want to know that you understand there is no guaranteed safe place online. The Internet is a public place, and anything you type cannot be "taken back". The best protection is to make sure you don't fill out profiles and screen your IM friends carefully.

More.... Questions, Frustrations, and Parents' Explanations

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 chat rooms, 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. 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>



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. It also includes pictures of yourself, your IM, or your e-mail address.

- **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 and e-mailing. Be respectful online.

- **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.

What Is Cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying is sending or posting harmful or cruel text or images using the Internet or other digital communication devices. 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 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 violations or harmful 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.

Adapted from: <http://www.cyberbully.org>

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.

Knock Before You Enter

Inquire if the other party can instant message.

Be Brief

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

Watch What You Write

Don't write anything in an IM that you wouldn't write in an e-mail or a typed letter.

Keep It Casual

Instant messages are not replacements for serious, face-to-face communications.

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.

Websites

Please refer to the following websites for further information:

www.cyberangels.org

World's oldest and largest Internet safety organization

www.saferchild.org

Safer Child, Inc. provides accurate links to websites regarding health and safety

www.teenadviceonline.org

Online peer support for teens

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

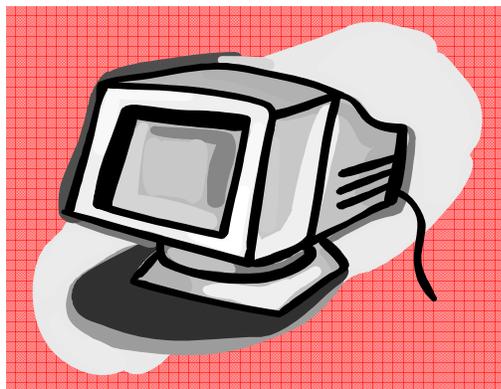
A place for parents and teens to learn how to use the Internet safely

www.netsafe.org

Internet safety group

www.yahooligans.yahoo.com

Web guide for kids



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