Internet Safety Guide for Parents

How to Talk to Your Kids about Staying Safe Online

Presented by Keith Dunn
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Now I know each and every single one of you is extremely busy. Both parents with jobs and not much time to monitor what your kids are doing right in their own home. You all feel safe that they are home behind lock and key, but are they really? Let's take a look at some of these safety tips that you could use right now to help keep your children safe from sick predators.

Due to the Internet's anonymity, strangers are talking to children all the time. They try to gain the child's trust by having friendly conversation at first, but over time, their true objective of sexually soliciting the child becomes evident. Children and parents alike are unaware of this, yet this is exactly what is going on via the Internet.

Keep your children protected online by preparing an online safety plan that you will share with your kids. Here are some important tips to include in your safety plan.

> *"Predators are online right now lurking for children. I know because I spent years of my life tracking down these sexual predators and putting them in jail."*
>
> **Keith Dunn,
> TV Interview**

Online Safety Tips for Your Children

1. Tell your child to NEVER EVER reveal their name, address, phone number or any other personal information to ANYONE online. Once you give out this information, it is impossible to retract, thus re-victimizing your child for a lifetime.

2. Communicate regularly (not just once) with your child about WHAT they do online and WHO they talk to online. If you have actually met the friends they are talking to in person, you'll know it is OK for them to chat with them online. Sit back and watch them surf the net sometime.

3. Take computers out of kids' rooms and put them into public areas such as the family room. Many parents think they are helping with homework by giving the kids a computer, but it also opens certain dangers that you may be unaware of.

4. Choose your child's screen name, email address or instant message name wisely - don't' reveal ages, sex, hobbies, and CERTAINLY NOT suggestive or sexy names. Predators are more likely to pursue a child with the screen name "sexyteen5" than "happygirl5.

5. Use technology to help you protect your child.
    Monitoring software gives you the ability to review your
    child's Internet usage. Even if you don't look at each
    and every email or instant message they send, you'll have
    a good idea if they are making smart choices online. With upfront
    and open communication, using a monitoring program can even
    improve your relationship with your child.

> **"BE A PARENT.**
> *Don't use filtering
> software as a babysitter."*
>
> **Keith Dunn,
> Internet Safety Seminar**

Talking to Your Child About Safety/Privacy

Teaching your children to be aware and careful in cyberspace is more important than any software or hardware device you can buy. But for some reason, the moment anyone mentions the word "computer" or the "Internet," everyone panics. Please don't be afraid of technology.

Use the same lectures your parents gave you . . . the same ones their parents gave them. . . . We can use the basic rules and just translate them into cybertalk.

The Same Old Thing in a New and Improved Package

*   Don't talk to or accept anything from strangers.
    * I need to meet your friends.
    * Come straight home.
    * Don't say nasty things about other people.
    * Don't take things that aren't yours.
    * Be polite to and respectful of others.
    * Don't tell people personal things about yourself.
    * Don't tell people personal things about your family

> *"Talking to your child
> is the most common
> effective way they will
> learn. Trust me
> parents…..They will
> listen."*
>
> **Keith Dunn,
> Radio Interview**

Here's the translation in cyberspace terms that your kids will understand:

Don't talk to or accept anything from strangers

Who's a stranger online? Everyone is! Teach your children that anyone they don't know off-line is a stranger. You can chat with them, but never tell them anything that you would tell a friend. This is the hardest thing for our children to remember. It is very easy to find someone who wants to talk to your child online but the most important thing to remember is that the other person talking to your child and listening to them may also be plotting to exploit them.

One of the biggest problems with cyberpredators is that they function in your home. Our kids feel safe with us seated nearby. Cyberpredators need to convince your children that they are not strangers at all. You need to remind your children that these people are strangers and that the standard rules always apply.

I need to meet your friends

You should get to know the people they are frequently talking to online: who is influencing them, is the friendship appropriate, and are they the kind of children you want your child associated with. While you don't have to know everyone they run into in cyberspace, you should find out whom they are chatting with regularly. Monitoring programs are great for this so you can do it even when they don't know about it.

Most of the predators who are out to meet your child off-line and who have something other than friendship on their minds pretend to be children to get past their stranger danger radar screen. Sometimes parents can tell an adult online better than a child can, and might be able to spot an adult who is posing as a teenager or young child to fool your kids. I have found in my law enforcement career that most predators will tell you their real age and slowly begin to court your young child into a friendship at first, then with gifts, and so on. Until they feel your child is comfortable enough to meet.

Come straight home

Wandering aimlessly online isn't any different from my wandering around after school. Allowing your children to spend unlimited time online, surfing aimlessly, is asking for trouble. Make sure there's a reason they're surfing. If they are just surfing randomly set a time limit. You want them to come home after they're done, to human interaction and family activities (and homework). NEVER EVER EVER travel alone. Always remain in larger groups when walking.

Don't say nasty things about other people

Saying nasty things about other people in cyberspace is called "flaming." It often violates the terms of service of your online service provider and will certainly get a reaction from other people online. Flaming matches can be long and extended battles, moving from a chatroom or discussion group to e-mail quickly. If your child feels that someone is flaming them, they should tell you and the sysop (system operator, pronounced sis-op) or moderator in charge right away. Not only could you get arrested for flaming but also the school and your parents can get into huge trouble. If it offends you that bad let a grown up know or tell them to go see one of my seminars, I'll get it out to them☺

Be polite and respectful of others

There are rules for proper behavior everywhere. The online world is no exception. Many online areas have there own rules of correct behavior— sometimes called terms of service or codes of conduct. Learn the rules first. Chatrooms each have their own rules, too. If your child is responsible enough to go into chatrooms, tell them to not barge in and start talking until they've had a chance to see what everyone's discussing. Don't post the same message over and over. Other people's time is valuable, and they don't want to have to weed through the same messages you posted in tons of places. If someone helps you, say "thank you." Courtesy goes a long way in cyberspace. It all comes down to respecting others. If you don't you will see how fast you get logged off of your ISP and your parents get a call.

Don't tell people personal things about yourself

And don't tell personal things about your family. You never really know whom you're talking to. And even if you think you know whom you are talking to, there could be strangers lurking and reading without letting you know that they are there. I like to share an excersise that I do during my seminars. I

give out a piece of paper to every student in the room and ask them a series of questions. After I collect the papers I ask them "Do you know me. Do you know my name?" It's a big impact that goes a long way. It proves to parents and children, right in front of them, that they never really know who they are talking to.

With children especially, sharing personal information puts them at risk. Make sure your children understand what you consider personal information, and agree to keep it confidential online and everywhere else. Practice asking them questions about themselves they may encounter in a chatroom. A?S?L? (age, sex, location)

So how do we teach them?

We discuss possible online scenarios. Practice he said/you say conversations with them: "If they say this . . . what will you say?" Then practice online with them.

Go online from work or another location when your child is in a chatroom. (Warn them first - trust is an important factor here, remember.) Then chat away, asking them questions when you think they are off guard. See how well they handle themselves.

You can check on them from time to time once you think they have the rules down, but let them know you might. Make it a contest of sorts. See if you can "fool" them, or if they are too savvy to be "fooled." Kids love to beat their parents in games, so make this a game. (This works best with younger kids, twelve and under.) This is a great example. Create an undercover identity for you to talk with your child to see their reactions. Some of you might be surprised. Just don't let them know exactly when it's coming. You can also take the easier, more reliable route and purchase a great monitoring program to really see where they are going and what they are doing online.

Visit our website at http://www.kdcop.com for more resources about online safety for your children.

- Latest News About Cybercrimes Against Children
- Tools and Techniques to Keep your Child Safe
- Resources for Online Safety – Software, Private Consultations, Predator Lists and Seminars

> *"The Internet can open many doors and provide useful information for children. An aware and informed parent can help keep children safe."*
>
> **Keith Dunn,**
> **Internet Safety Seminar**

Thank you for taking the time to review this guide. It is an important step in preparing an online safety plan for your children. We welcome your questions and suggestions about these important safety issues. We can be reached through http://www.kdcop.com.

Sincerely,

Keith P. Dunn
Chairman
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