



# Child Safety Online

**Protect Your Child From Online Predators!**

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## Introduction

As children get older, they'll want to know more. With the emergence of the internet, this is easier than parents think. All it takes is a few keystrokes and they've come to the website of their choice. Even with that, children find ways to get the information they need.

Being online exposes children to a new way of exploring things. Or they will access one of their favorite children's television websites and look at old episodes of their favorite shows. If it doesn't cost them much of anything, they will take advantage of what the internet has available.

Even though a child may land on a child-friendly website, some of them do have chat rooms. Who's to say that they would not try to access one of them? If they get lonely, they can look for new friends online. These are people they have never met before. Down the road, they start to feel comfortable talking to them.

Then once they get to know them, they seek out people who have their same interests. Little do some of these children know that they may be setting themselves up for trouble if they're not careful. The person on the other end seems to be interested in having a "friendship" as well.

This "friendship" gets so intense that the child starts pouring out their heart to them. They start to divulge their innermost thoughts and problems. They think that the person on the other end will be willing to help them.

What the person is really doing is trying to get a hook to take advantage of them. The child is then lured with promises of attention, giving and loving by way of the internet.

Then, once they think the child feels comfortable with them, they start to introduce them to content of a sexual nature. Being that most children are curious by nature, they seek to find out more.

So the person starts sending them sexually provocative images and talks to them in a sexually explicit manner. In essence they're being brainwashed to renounce their normal life as a child and start to grow up faster than they need to.

When the perpetrator feels that they want to move the relationship to another level, they'll trick the child into meeting them in person. Once that happens, the child is lured into staying with this person for an unspecified period of time. After that, the parents become hard pressed to get their child back.

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The age of the sex offender isn't always an older person. Sometimes, the perpetrator can

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be a few years older than the child. No matter how old they are, if they can succeed in luring the child away from their home, then the parents have a problem.

Some of the perpetrators may not necessarily be child molesters per se, but they may still pose a danger to the child their trying to lure into their graces.

## Warning Signs

How do you know if your child is in danger of encountering a perpetrator? Here are some tell-tale signs you should spot:

- If your child starts to detach from the rest of the family. They don't eat at the dinner table or accompany the family on outings. They become detached from school and other activities they used to enjoy.
- The child doesn't talk to their family as much as they used to. When a sex offender or perpetrator tries to lure them away, they'll plant false images in the child's mind. The child in turn, creates a separation between themselves and their families.
- Your child is suddenly getting gifts from someone you've never met or heard of. This is another way the offender tries to separate the child from their family. The offender will send things that the child likes in order to get their attention.
- The offender will make it seem like they are the only ones the like the child and are looking out for their best interests. Some offenders will go as far as sending them a plane ticket to meet them.
- If you happen to come in the room and your child abruptly changes to another website or screen, there's a chance they may be looking at something that they're not supposed to look at. If they're looking at sexually charged content, they do not want you to see it. They don't want to suffer the consequences.
- In order to divert attention from their online account, your child will use someone else's account to access sexually charged content or connect with the sex offender. They'll either go to the library or a friend's place to do this.
- Phone calls for your child will increase and they won't be from their friends, either. It will be from people that parents have never heard of or met. Or, they can be long distance phone numbers that parents don't know about.

Some perpetrators talk with the children to get them sexually aroused. This way, they can get them in the mood to set up a date for a real sexual encounter.

- If parents find that their child spends a lot of time on the internet, this may be a problem. It could definitely surface as a problem if the child is online during the late evening hours when they should be sleeping.
- They'll also stay online during the weekends. They'll spend a lot of time in the chat rooms. If they are home alone after school, this is a perfect set up for the

perpetrator.

They will either have the child call them back or they'll get the child's phone number from the child themselves. Some perpetrators have even gone so far as to get a toll-free number so the parents would think that it might be a company calling. This way, they would be able to throw the parent off as to who is actually calling.

This is not good because there is no guidance or control during this time. While the parents are working, the child has their way and is in free reign of the computer.

If they're not focused on what they're supposed to be doing, they can easily get sidetracked with people trying to lure them for sexual encounters or they could get hooked on pornography at a young age.

In order to get their young victims to open up, sex offenders may send the child pornographic images. They try to instill in the child that those sexual relations between children and adults is natural. Parents should be cognizant of what is on the computer. A child may also copy the sexually explicit pictures on a disk to put away.

If parents have a suspicion that their child is headed for danger, there are some things they can do before it gets worse:

- Parents will eventually want to confront the child about their concerns. Let the child know that they care and that if the concerns are true, find way to turn the situation around.
- Parents should check what websites their child has had access to. If the parent finds any kind of sexually explicit information, this should be cause for alarm.

## Parental Monitoring

Parents should not stop monitoring their child's website access after the initial findings. They should continue to monitor access on an ongoing basis. This would include any type of communications such as instant messaging and chat rooms.

Chat rooms have been the main source of where a child gets mixed up with a sexual predator. Parents should also keep a close eye on e-mail correspondence that your child gets. There can be e-mail messages that will hold a clue to what's going on with them.

Most parents have Caller ID with their phone system. Using Caller ID will let parents know who is calling them. If you suspect a sex offender calling there for the child, you can have the phone number blocked by your phone company. This can help to fight off the unwanted advances of a pervert.

If pornographic information is going to a child under 18, the perpetrator could be breaking the law if they know the child is under age. If this happens, parents should report it to your service provider. They can also report it to the perpetrator's service provider.

In addition to that, parents should notify their local and county law enforcement authorities. Some of them have special units that work specifically with these kinds of cases. Even with this, parents should still continue to watch their child's website activity.

When you do contact law enforcement, parents should make sure that the evidence is stored on the computer. They will want to see this to prove the parents' claim. Parents should also keep the computer turned off until further notice.

They should not make copies of any of the evidence on the computer. Law enforcement will probably want to take the computer and examine it themselves.

In addition to doing the above to protect their child, parents should also invest in child internet protection software. It can help filter and block out any sites that parents don't want your child to see.

There are certain types that can pick up everything that the child does on the internet, including surfing websites and participating in chat rooms. Parents can also record and make a copy of their child's chat room conversations.

It's unfortunate that children nowadays can't get online without some pervert trying to entice them. There are so many of them on these chat rooms, it's difficult to determine who is who. Parents will definitely want to play a more dominant role in protecting their child from these weirdoes.

There is too much going on with the internet for a parent not to want to take precautions

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and check their child's activities online.

Parents may feel guilty at first, but after they get involved, they start to feel better and more secure about what's going on. Parents want their child to be safe. The last thing they want to hear about is that their child is involved in something illegal or immoral.

Parental control software has helped many parents save their children from potential dangers and catastrophes. There have been reports of parents finding out that their child was involved in drugs or stealing.

Or that their child claimed to have a boyfriend or girlfriend online. Parents finding this out early on get a chance to intervene and prevent further trouble for their child.

There have also been reports that children have engaged in sexual relationships with adults two and three times older than them. Using the parental control software has been a godsend for many parents. This is why so many parents are now getting on the bandwagon and taking care of business with their child.

The parents know that it's their responsibility to keep their child safe. If it means snooping and spying on them, so be it. The child may be annoyed at first, but a while, they'll be grateful.

## Monitoring and Protection Software

When you have something as serious as child internet safety, parents want nothing but the best internet protection software. However, it may not be an easy task to manage. There are many software programs that claim to be the best one for internet protection.

In order to determine the best one, parents may have to try out several different software programs to see which one suits them. They should go through each one carefully, then make a decision which one best suited their needs.

Some software programs offer a trial version from a few weeks to a month. This way, it helps parents to make a decision without having to buy right away. Even if parents are using a trial, it's good to have some type of internet protection software program installed.

There are some computers and some internet service providers that have internet protection software programs preinstalled. It's a matter of the parents activating it when they turn on the computer. These programs are automated to send updates when needed. It's important that the parents download the updates when they're announced.

Even when parents decide on a program, it's imperative that they keep the program updated. Parents can check for updates on their own, but it's usually not necessary as the updates automatically appear.

Regardless of what internet protection program parents use, it should be operating in the computer at all times.

Parents can use filtering software that protects their child from accessing websites that are not age appropriate. When choosing filtering software, parents should choose one that is easy to install and navigate.

A parent will want to weigh out the pros and cons of using filtering software. They would want to make sure that it will be useful enough for the entire family.

Here are the pros for selecting filtering software:

- The child will not be able to access unauthorized websites (i.e. adult-oriented, gambling, etc.)
- Keeps sexual predators and perverts away from the child.
- The child can get on the internet without parents by their side. Even with that, parents should still keep an eye out for suspicious activity.

Here are the cons for selecting filtering software:

- Even though filtering software does what it's supposed to do, it can filter out some legitimate sites also. The parents may have to override some of the websites.
- Parents may not feel like it's the real thing.
- If a child is technically inclined, they can find a loophole and go through the filters. Then they'll be able to access sites they have no business accessing.

There are other things about filtering software that parents should know about. All filtering software is created differently. Parents may want to check around before they decide on a final product. Here are some things parents should look for:

- Being able to set time limits. This is especially important for the child. They don't need to be surfing the internet all day and all night. They can be missing out on important stuff, like doing their homework or having dinner with the family.
- The computer and filtering software should be compatible with each other. The best way to find out is to read the requirements on the software package before buying.
- Whether or not they want user profiles. If they do, parents can create one for everybody in the family. Parents can decide how much the child can access.
- The filtering software should provide regular updates to your computer. This helps to keep the computer free of viruses, spyware and similar items.
- The filtering software should be able to provide parents with information they need to find out what they're children have been doing online.

The software will also have to be customized as a child gets older. What's good for a six year old may be out of reach for a twelve year old and vice versa.

Firewall protection is used to block specific websites that you don't want people to get access to. These websites can be in a number of different categories. The most popular ones are adult-oriented and related sites.

Parents that have children who surf the internet need to have some type of firewall

protection on their computer. The thought of a child gaining access to a website that is harmful for them can be frightening.

There are different types of firewall protection. Parents have to choose the one that is best for them and their child. If parents have a computer with Microsoft XP, the firewall protection comes with the operating program.

However, just having this may not be enough for some parents. Some of them may want something that has more features and can do more functions. One of the best kinds to get is one that can block websites on both ends.

This means the firewall should be able to block certain sites trying to get access. It should also check out certain sites that have been accessed.

Whether the parents want firewall protection software that is software-based or hardware-based is up to them. All firewall protection software is made different, and what may work for one parent, may not be suitable for another parent.

If the parents do choose the hardware route, they can get a wireless router that will have a firewall already installed. The parents have to know whether or not this type of hardware with the firewall protection will be adequate enough for them. If the parents find out that it's not enough, they may have to add additional software for extra security.

However, for the most part, firewall protection made from hardware won't be needed. The hardware costs more and if you're not somewhat technically inclined, you may get frustrated trying to install it. When it comes to getting updates for hardware based firewall protection, they're not as easy to access as software based updates.

For parents, software based firewall protection would be their best bet. It only takes a few minutes to install and doesn't cost as much as hardware based firewall protection. It is also easy to install and the computer will receive automatic updates.

Depending on the parents' needs, they may want to go with a single firewall protection product or a combination software product that includes firewall protection.

The parents will have to figure out exactly what they need to monitor their children's access on the internet. Whether or not it is a single product or a combination product, the important thing is to have the firewall protection installed on the computer.

Cybersitter is a great internet filter to use for your children, whether they are pre-teen or teenagers. The software is parent-friendly and has simple installation. It takes less than 60 seconds to install the software.

The software works by limiting internet access to questionable and adult-oriented websites that may pose harm to children. Cybersitter also allows parents to see what sites their children have visited.

In addition to that, the software provides over 35 subjects that can be filtered. The areas that parents filter out can be updated automatically. There may be times where there are sites that are filtered out accidentally. Parents can override websites that they feel don't need to be filtered out by the software.

If your child participates in a chat room, adults are allowed to get copies of the conversations. They can get copies from the child's end and the person to whom they're speaking with. This can be done by using MSN, Yahoo or AOL Messenger.

With Cybersitter, the parents can determine how much time their children spend on the internet. They can also receive reports via e-mail to let them know which sites their children accessed and if they accessed any chat rooms.

Only people who are authorized to use the software will know it's there. They will be the only ones that can change the settings, if need be. Parents can use a remote control to install more than one copy of the software. There is one flat fee and free filter file updates are included.

SnoopStick is software used to monitor your child's internet access. Parents can do this from anywhere they have an internet connection and a computer, whether it's a desktop or laptop.

The device is made like a flash drive, and it works by inserting it into an available USB drive on the computer you want to monitor. There is a setup installation and the process takes about one minute to complete. This installation contains the secret monitoring used to check on the children's computer. The device can be removed after installation.

The software takes note of all accessed sites, records all conversations, notes all e-mail addresses for correspondence, and it's savvy enough for screenshots. The SnoopStick is then inserted in a computer of the parent's choice. After everything is set up, it will start compiling the reports they need.

SnoopStick allows parents to look at their children's activity in real time. They can also download the activity logs for any specified period. There is a camera icon that will allow parents to take a snapshot of any webpage their children have accessed.

If parents decide to let your children know that they're monitoring their internet access, they can do it in a way that will get their attention. Just like people use pop ups to get people to sign up for their newsletter, parents can use pop ups to let their children know that they're being watched.

If they're not doing what they're supposed to be doing on the computer, parents will let them know with the pop up. This innovative idea would be a good way to let their children know that they're being watched and that they can't get away with sneaking around.

Parents also have the authority to shut off internet access to their children. They can also log off anyone and completely shut down the computer. Their children will think something is wrong with the computer when in reality, the parents have put the access in their control.

With the popular emergence of social networking, SnoopStick is designed to deny access to any social networking sites that parents choose. There are also games that parents may not want their children to play. Those can be blocked as well.

The best child internet protection software should be in line with the child's age and the needs of the parent. Prior to buying, they should discuss their plans with their child. Once their child knows what's going on, they may start to feel comfortable about coming to their parents with any concerns.

Parents hear the horror stories of children that get caught up online with sexual predators. To ensure that they don't go through the same thing, they look to monitor their child's online activity closely. However, is this considered spying on your children? Your children may think so.

In order for them to have the parents' trust, the parents should lay down guidelines to be followed by the child. They should also let them know that they will be monitoring their online access on a consistent basis.

This can help to bridge the communication and trust gap between parents and their child. The child may not be as inclined to surf for an adult-themed website.

If parents want to find out what their child has surfed for online and don't want to spend any money just yet on a software program, there is a simple way where they can snoop on your child with Internet Explorer.

Parents can check the browser to find out what sites their child has visited.

- Go to the View section.
- Then go to Explorer Bar.
- After that choose History and the day you want to look at.
- Then click the page you want to look at.

This is the simplest way to find out what your child has been surfing for online and it doesn't cost you a dime.

Parents can also use Internet Explorer to block access to some websites.

- Using the Tools section on the browser, go to Internet Options.
- Click the Content tab.
- Within the Content Advisor section, go to Enable.

This will open up the Content Advisor. Now parents can make their selections.

- In the Ratings tab section, parents can select the level that they want for language, nudity, sex and violence.
- In the Approved Sites tab, parents can select sites that block sites that they don't want their child to look at.
- In the General tab, you can permit or forbid your child to look at unrated sites.
- A Password should be created. For an older child, if they try to access a site that is blocked, they can get access with the password. The parents have the say-so as to whether or not they will allow their child to access the site.

## **Tips to Avoid Sexual Predators**

There are other things parents can do to lessen the chances of sexual predators targeting their child:

- Parents need to take time to get online with their child. Parents should allow them to show them which websites they access on a regular basis.
- In order to find out what's going on, parents must talk to their child. They should let their child know that monitoring of websites is for their best interests.
- It is not advisable to allow your child to have a computer in their bedroom. The computer should be kept in the living room, where everyone will have access to it.
- If the parents can see it, there is less chance that the child will attempt to access those adult-oriented sites or chat rooms.
- Make sure that your internet service provider has controls in place to block certain websites.



## **The Truth About Online Content**

Parents should activate privacy settings on the computer for restricted access and posting on your child's website. They should check with the individual social networking site. Explain to your child what you're doing and why you're doing it.

The child should be informed that when they post information online for everyone to see, that it can't be retracted. Even if it's not true, the information can be passed around and of course, people will form their own opinions about it.

There are other things that parents need to talk with their child regarding online safety. In addition to warning them about predators and talking about sexually explicit content online, they should also talk to their child about bullying.

Bullying can be festered in different formats online. Other children will spread nasty rumors or send messages to scare the child. They should not want to be an instigator as well as a victim. If this is not handled quickly and properly, the consequences can be devastating for the person being bullied.

If the child has any inkling that something is not right, they need to advise the parents as soon as possible. Anything that is out of place can be reported to local authorities. They will determine if it's something the parents can do or if it's something that needs to be bound over to them.

Parents need to make sure they understand the privacy policies of the websites your child is visiting. It should explain in detail what the website will do with the child's submitted information. Parents have the right to know they can review the information and have it removed if they choose to.

## Identity Theft

Once a child starts giving out their personal information, there's a greater chance for identity theft. Identity theft is when someone uses personal information, such as your name, social security number, bank account or credit card number to ruin someone else's credit.

They'll go to different places, such as department stores, banks and either charge items on the credit card or try to withdraw money from your bank account. By the time the victim finds out about it, the thief has already racked up a mountain of debt for which the victim will be blamed for.

There are different ways a person can commit identity theft. Some of them include using spy ware, phishing, and hacking into someone's website. Parents must be vigilant about protecting their child's identity. When it comes to identity theft, the thief doesn't care how old the victim is, as long as they can get away with fraud, they'll do it.

If the parents find out that their child is the victim of identity theft, there are things they can do to lessen the severity, if caught early.

Even though your child may be young, check with one or all of the three credit bureaus about having a fraud alert placed on their credit report. This notice advises creditors to contact the person before anything new is opened in their name. This is to prevent further fraud.

When a fraud alert is placed in the file, the person can get a copy of their credit report. The important thing to look at is any discrepancies or accounts that weren't opened by the parent or the child.

The parents should contact any company for which they or their child has not opened an account with. Explain to them what happened and submit follow-up letters to the companies. If you have any related documents, send those as well.

Parents should file a police report with the local law enforcement agency. The report will assist you when you contact the creditors and let them know what happened. Parents should also report their findings to the FTC (Federal Trade Commission).

## Spyware And Malware

Spyware removal software is another program that should be installed on computers. Not only will it help with children, but it will help parents as well.

Since most children are naturally curious, they will download things like free software, free video and online games. Most of the time, children don't realize that spyware is attached to these free downloads.

Spyware is a program that gets into your computer when you download free stuff. This program is so sneaky it can tell how many keystrokes you're typing, what passwords you're typing and other things that are supposed to be secure.

In addition to viruses and spyware, there is also malware. Malware or malicious software, contains programs that duplicate themselves without you knowing it. Malware has viruses and spyware.

Criminals who want access to a child's information will create different kinds of websites, downloads and other things to lure your child so they would be interested in going to those websites.

What happens is these particular websites have enough security software to make them safe. The malware that is installed can be used to get a child's personal information and spam their e-mail box. They will also use it as a form of identity theft.

- Parents should check the following for signs of malware on their computer:
- If the computer isn't working properly, getting constant error messages or is slowing down.
- The computer won't shut off or restart when commanded to.
- The computer shows web pages that you didn't want.
- Receive lots of pop-up ads; they show up when no one's on the internet.

These may be signs that malware is lurking on their computer. If that is the case, parents should immediately halt any online activity that includes going to a secure site. This would include user names, passwords or other private information. If the malware lingers, your information could be getting in the hands of identity thieves.

Make sure the computer has all the security software needed. If not, parents will need to get something as soon as possible. Some of the internet service providers offer free internet security software when you purchase their monthly service.

The security software you get should at least have an anti-virus and anti-spy ware virus, especially since these elements are what malware are comprised of. Parents should make sure that they download the automatic updates and conduct scans on a regular basis.

Parents should beware of ads that pop up claiming to have found malware, spy ware or viruses on their computers. Those are nothing more than a scam used to spread more malware on your computer. Don't fall for it.

If after you conduct the initial scan you still find malware on the computer, try running a second scan. If that doesn't work, the parents may have to seek assistance from a technician.

Once the computer is repaired and back running again, think about how these problems can be avoided for future use. There are some steps parents can take to minimize the chance of malware coming back on their computer.

If your child is using the computer, make sure they know the precautions regarding getting malware on the computer:

Downloading should only be done from safe and trusted websites. Free stuff on the web is tempting to download, but that's where most if not all of the viruses, spy ware and malware come from. The child should not download free games, file sharing programs or free toolbars. All of these are candidates for having spy ware in them.

If the child receives a link to an e-mail that they're not familiar with, they should not click on it. They should only click on links that they know about. If the child clicks on an unfamiliar link, they could be subject to automatically downloading malware unbeknownst to them. Even attachments sent via e-mail can contain malware.

Parents should let their child know about malware and what it can do to the computer. The child should be advised not to download any free programs or games that can contain malware.

They should also let the child know that malware can be costly to repair if it gets that far. The child will probably think twice about downloading free stuff from the internet.

## **The Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA)**

In 1998, the Federal Trade Commission established a law to protect children online. This law is called the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act or COPPA. This Act requires that website operators to ensure a child's privacy while online.

It is the responsibility of the website owners to post notices for the following:

- What kind of personal information they get from children, including name, address, email address and hobbies.
- Explain how their site will use their information, such as will the child be marketed, announce winners of a contest, supply the child's info in a chat room.
- If their personal information will be kept private or forwarded to other parties.
- Contact information at the website.

In addition to the above, the website owner must obtain permission from the parent(s) prior to getting their child's information. However, they do not need to obtain permission if they're getting an e-mail address to:

- Get a request from the child for one time only.
- Notify the parent.
- Guarantee the child's or website's safety.
- Provide a newsletter or similar communication on a regular timeline. This is in tact as long as the website owner contacts the parent to let them decide.

The website owners are supposed to let parents check the information that the child submitted to their website. The parents are also allowed to deny permission for their child to be at that website and for that website to delete their child's information.

Within COPPA, there are things that a parent should also do. It's not all left up to the website owner. They should look to see if there is a privacy policy on the website. This statement advises the website visitor how your information will or will not be shared with third parties.

## **Privacy Policy**

The privacy policy should be available on a link on the website's main page. If the website is for adults and children, there must be a section for the privacy policy listed in the children's section.

It is important that the parents read the privacy policy in its entirety. If for some reason, parents don't find a privacy policy on the website, inquire with the website owner regarding this.

It is up to the parents as to whether or not they wish to give permission for the website to have information on your child. You can still give permission without allowing your child's information to go to a third party.

## Social Networking Safety

Within the past few years, Social Networking has exploded and lots of children and teenagers are using it. Sites like MySpace and Facebook are used to get people to swap personal information about each other.

They can also share pictures, videos and whatever else they may think people want to know about them. Even with social networking, a child can still get trapped into

Believe it or not, there are some social networking sites that look for children as young as 6 years old. Even though some of these sites are not as advanced as MySpace and Facebook, it's still important for parents to be mindful of what their child is doing online at that age.

If parents need more information, they can always refer to COPPA , the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act. This Act spells out how a child's privacy should be protected online. It goes into detail of what website owners are required to do, and what parents are required to do.

Parents can also do other things to keep their children safe with social networking sites:

- Parents should be mindful of how their children are getting online access. Some children will use their cell phone to access the internet. As a parent, you have the right to protect your children as much as possible. So if it means blocking internet access on the cell phone, then so be it.
- If you have children that are just starting school, like 6 or 7 years old, it is imperative that parents protect and watch them online as much as possible. This is the age when they start to become inquisitive and if parents aren't watching, they can and will get into anything. For children this age, the best thing to do is to sit there with them during the entire session.
- Parents should be a shadow for their children online. Let them know that you will be watching them and their social networking encounters. Parents should also be mindful of what "friends" they meet on these social networking sites. They could be predators in disguise.
- Parents should let their children know not to post any private information online. They should not post anything where anyone can access it. Identity theft is running rampant, and people will do anything to get what they want. It is also advisable to be careful of what pictures are posted on these sites.

## **Additional Rules For Child Safety Online**

To ensure that your child has a safe and rewarding experience online, parents should lay down the law with the following rules for their child:

- Emphasize to the child that it is extremely important not to disclose personal information about themselves or anyone in their family. Children who are younger may not comprehend that personal information should be kept confidential. When they're between 6 – 8 years old, adult supervision is needed the entire time that they're on the internet.
- The computer should be in a common area, such as a den or living room. It is not advisable to have the computer in a child's room. They do not need to be secluded when they're online. This is the time when they sneak and do things they shouldn't be doing. If the computer is out in the open, adults have more leeway and will know what their child is surfing for.
- If your child notices anything abnormal while on the internet, they need to contact their parents immediately. Ask your child how they got to that website that made them feel uncomfortable.
- Parents should not allow their children to exchange photographs with strangers on the internet. This will give the online perpetrator an advantage over the child in trying to locate them. The child will be in more danger than ever before.
- Parents should know all of their child's usernames and passwords. This is so they can access their e-mail accounts to find out what other people are sending them.
- The child should not be allowed to meet in person people they've met online by themselves. Only if the parents feel comfortable going should this take place, but it's not advisable. Or, if the parents don't feel comfortable, decline not to meet at all.

Parents should let the child know that these precautions are for their good. Explain to them about the dangers of sexual predators online. Parents should also make sure these guidelines are adhered to at all times. Any violations and the child's online privileges should be suspended.



## **Warnings For Children Online**

Here are some guidelines a child should adhere to when they're online. This is especially important if they're older and a parent can't be around all the time to monitor them.

- The child should get a release from their parents prior to submitting any personal information. That would include your name, address, phone number or other personal information.
- The child should advise their parents if they notice something abnormal on the website they're visiting. The parents can do a follow up and alert local law enforcement if necessary.
- The child should never distribute information regarding a credit card, bank statement or pertinent information.
- The child should never give out their username or passwords to strangers or others. This is a sure way of getting invaded.
- If a child receives a gift from someone online, they should send it back. That could start an unwanted scenario.
- If a child receives an offer for a visit, they should decline it and let the parent know about it.
- The child and the parents should discuss rules for online safety. The parents should set guidelines as to how long they can be on the internet and how many days a week they should get access.
- The child should take their time to get to know others they've met on the internet. They could be one way online, and another way in person. Besides, they don't know what to expect.
- The child should not download any photos from people they don't know or places they're not familiar with.

## Additional Tips For Parents

- Parents should teach their child to make good use of their time online. The child should be using the time wisely and constructively, and not messing around. They can easily fall prey to some unknown chat rooms or other dangers if they're not focused.
- If your child has internet access at school, find out what precautions the school implements. Also, if you find out your child is accessing the internet elsewhere, like the library or a friends house, find out what precautions they take for using the internet.

These are places where the predators can lurk and make your child an easy target for them

- Parents should instruct their child not to respond to postings that are sexually charged or harassing in nature.
- Parents should instruct their child not to believe everything that is written on the internet. Everything that is written is not gospel and may be a ploy to lure them into danger.
- Parents should be frank with their child regarding sexual predators and provide them with tips and scenarios of what could happen if they're not careful.
- Parents should explain to their child that there's more to surfing and searching the internet than the chat rooms. They could actually be dangerous if a child were to get hooked.

There are kid and teen-friendly sites available on the internet. You would have to do a search for "kid or teen friendly chat rooms or sites" to find out which ones might be suitable for your child. Even then, you and your child should use caution. You just never know what may be lurking in the shadows.

The more parents communicate to them about the dangers of the internet, the more aware they'll become if they see any of the warning signs. Parents should not be afraid to be upfront and frank with their child. They should also be upfront and frank with them about monitoring their computer usage.

If the child is aware that their parents will be watching them, they'll be more cognizant not to make attempts to access websites that are out of their league.

Whether parents use a paid software program or just use Internet Explorer, they have full control and the capability to see what their child is doing.

They will be able to find out what sites they've been to, pictures they've downloaded and if they've tried to access sites that were forbidden to them. Every parent should be diligent to snoop in their child's life when it comes to the internet.

Even though a child may need some type of privacy in their lives, it's imperative that their parents are involved with them on an everyday basis. The parents must provide constant supervision, especially when it comes to being online.

If parents have concerns regarding their online activities at school, it is recommended that they speak with their teacher, librarian, counselor or principal.

They should also keep a point of contact with their children, not allowing the communication process to close up at any time. Once that happens, it may be difficult for them to get it back again.

For parents, keeping up with their child's activities is important. They need to know what websites their child is visiting on a regular basis. Open communication is what will continue to establish trust and a bond between parents and their child.

So when something happens, the child will feel comfortable enough to tell the parent. The parent should respond in a loving, but serious manner. How a parent responds will determine how their child will communicate with them in the future regarding the internet.

There are other things parents should know about their child's participation on the internet. In addition to having chat rooms and forums, some of these places actually have participants that foster inappropriate subjects and ideas.

What if a child comes across this material and starts to get interested? Will the parent know how to handle it? The internet is one of the ways children can get themselves caught up in things like this. It's not hard for them to come across it just by doing research on something else.

The search engines, for the most part are not filtered and can show anything when a child is going to search online.

Not too long ago, filtering software was relegated to just blocking inappropriate sites for your child. It was basically used to block adult-content based sites to include pornography and violent content.

Now, with software becoming more advanced all the time, parents can have a hold on What their child is doing in addition to just blocking sites they don't need to view.

They can also play Big Brother with their e-mail and chat rooms. This technology has become a great help for parents who want to keep their child from harm in the

internet world.

When parents actively advise their child of the potential harm and step in to protect them, the child can receive counsel and still have a memorable experience on the internet.

One of the most important things about keeping inline with online safety is to be honest with them and for parents let them know what they are doing is for their own good. Even if they do get caught up with a predator for a brief moment, they should try to move forward and possibly receive counseling if necessary.

There are plenty of temptations for a child to get involved in inappropriate activity with a predator. There are different ways that they will approach the child and entice them to do what they want. All it takes is a few words of encouragement and luring with gifts and other stuff.

The child is especially vulnerable to this if they don't feel loved at home, which is why it is important that parents carve a space in their schedule to spend time with kids. It's nice if the parents are yearning to earn more money for their family, but if that quality parent and child time is ignored, then parents will have the money, but will be using it to rescue them from that entrapment.

Studies have shown that most online relationships of an inappropriate nature have started online with an innocent conversation. Then, it took off from there. The child would post sensitive and personal information online for others to see.

The child would start to feel comfortable talking about adult-oriented subjects with strangers. They would visit websites they know would be out of their reach. A lot of times, the child engaged in this if for nothing else, out of curiosity.

After the initial curiosity, the child started to get more interested and would proceed to get more interested. This behavior would put them in more danger than they ever thought possible. However, by this time, they didn't think much about the danger because they had already been lured into another world.

The more inappropriate behavior and content the child go involved in, the more they got involved in an inappropriate relationship with the predator. Most of these passion relationships were born out of need for the predator and vulnerability for the child.

This is why it is so important for parents to constantly drill in their child the dangers of being online and constantly monitoring them, even if they don't like it.

The internet is changing at a rapid pace, it's even difficult for law enforcement to keep up with what's going on. They are not able to catch every single predator that lurks online, but they try to do what they can. Some law enforcement agencies are set up to where they have a sting operation to where they can nab these jokers in a matter of weeks.

Some law enforcement agencies are able to do this because they have the funds and resources for a support staff. Other places, such as small cities and towns with a limited budget, may not have the resources available to have the luxury of having a staff devoted to catching these types of criminals.

Predators that lurk online to lure children into their world don't care about how anyone else feels, let alone the child. All they think about is how they can get their satisfaction and who their victim will be. This is a very selfish way for them to act, but they really don't care.

Getting satisfaction from a child is a conquest that predators seek to continue on an ongoing basis. They don't think they're doing anything wrong. As long as they can get in a child's good graces, they're on the road to a relationship, no matter how inappropriate it is.

## Conclusion

You can help to make the internet a safe place for your child. Taking action today is better than waiting until tomorrow. The longer you wait, the better chance your child has of connecting with those online predators. That's not something any parent would want to endure.

With the number of children setting themselves up with these strangers on the rise, there's no doubt that the need for parental intervention is greater than ever.

Cyber stalking and cyber abuse by online strangers is no joke. It's no longer surprising to find out that many young children are succumbing to what is turning into a national epidemic. More children, especially girls, are now more than ever getting bolder and taking a chance because they are curious and don't want to wait to grow up.

Of course, some of them don't inform their parents because they know the threat of being grounded is real. So is the threat of being snatched away by someone they don't know. That fact is also very scary for a lot of parents. It's not something they'd want to think about happening to their child.

The reason most predators choose the online route because it's easy and no one will see them in person unless it's the child they're trying to get into their good graces. It's a rarity that they would even think about coming on to a child in person, even though it has happened.

Also, the internet is just an easy medium for people to correspond, even if they've never met before. Once the perpetrator has built up enough trust in the child, then they decide to take action.

If you don't pay attention to this, your child could be in a whirlwind of unknown and dangerous territory before you can blink your eyes. These online strangers are smarter than you think and they always try to stay one step ahead of everyone else.

With parents having all the knowledge and resources about prevention, it's never too late to intervene in their child's online life. In fact, the sooner they start the better chance they have of saving their child from destruction and a downhill spiral.

Consistent intervention from you is the key to keep your child and your family out of harm's way.