

S1/2 ITEC – Safety on the Internet

ClickThinking as a Family

A Parent's Guide



ClickThinking as a Family: Personal Safety on the Internet

Homes and schools are getting on the Internet because it's fun and helps you to learn. There are libraries, universities, museums, shops, places to have fun and chances to meet people from all walks of life. But, like any community, there are also some people and areas that you will want to avoid and others that you should approach only with caution.

Before covering these dangers, let's put this into perspective. Millions of people go online every day, and most are safe. The way to stay safe is the same as it is in everyday life. Understand the dangers and follow some simple guidelines to help you to stay out of trouble.

ClickThinking as a Family: The Risks

Personal Safety

- Feeling uncomfortable

There are websites, newsgroups, chat rooms, and other places online that contain material that could make you or your family upset or embarrassed. It could be sexual or violent, encouraging offensive attitudes or discussing activities that you find repulsive or unpleasant.

- Physical harm or exploitation

The most serious risk involves the possibility of someone hurting or exploiting you or your family through collecting personal information like a picture, name, address, or age that has been posted online. These could be used to trace, contact and meet you or one of your family with the intention of causing harm. An unpleasant relationship may develop, either online or in person.

Legal Issues

- Harassment

There is a chance of receiving upsetting or unpleasant messages on the Internet.

Those who annoy other users, or send messages with lies about people, are at risk of being in trouble with other users, the Internet Service Provider or ultimately the police.

Your Money

- Responsibility

Whoever pays for an Internet account may be held responsible for anyone else who uses it.

- Credit cards

Credit card abuse is a potential problem, since using an adult's credit card details could give young people access to adult websites.

ClickThinking as a Family: Suggested Guidelines

Find out about the Internet as a family

All schools in Scotland had a ClickThinking pack about the Internet delivered. It covers the issues from teachers' and pupils' viewpoints. The pack contains a range of handouts for pupils and their families, some of which may be distributed by the school.

This document is an update of on the one for parents, and gives some basic advice:

- Share Internet time together. Gaining experience is the best basis for offering advice.
- Keep the computer in a room that everyone uses.
- Treat your family's new online friends as you do offline friends.
- Consider signing up for an Internet course.

Set some limits

You know your family and what concerns them. Keep a watchful eye on how they are reacting to what they are seeing on the Internet.

- You may feel you need to know the user ID and password of a young family member's email account but prefer to give an older member more privacy.
- Take their needs, interests and curiosity into account when setting guidelines.
- Make sure that everyone knows not to give out personal or financial information over the Internet.
- Keep credit card details private.
- Remember what you were like at their age!

Be careful about meetings with someone they've met on the Internet

Most other Internet users are as honest and reliable as you are, but some may not be.

A young child should never meet up with a stranger, while a mature young person needs to know the risks involved and how to keep them to a minimum.

- Make sure that young people don't give out information that can be used to trace them.
- Deal with meetings according to the age and stage of the young person involved.
- Suggest the same precautions as you would for any other meeting with a stranger.
- Remember that these risks still exist even after months of communicating over the Internet.

Know about covering your tracks

The History feature in the web browser (click on Help in your browser and ask for History if you've not used this yet) shows the sites visited most recently and can be used to follow the trail of a previous user.

There is no reason to delete History files, except to hide which sites have been visited. A young person may stumble on unpleasant material, and not wish to be associated with it, but still be worried that it will show up in History.

If you find that the History file has been deleted,

- Encourage your family to talk to you if/when this happens.
- Remember they are not to blame.

Offensive material, behaviour and messages can be traced, and good Internet Service Providers will respond to complaints about their users.

- Check that your family doesn't get involved in these illegal activities.
- Work with the school.
- Help keep the school safe by making sure no-one takes inappropriate material from the Internet into school.
- Ask the school what policies they have about putting information about pupils on the school website.
- Find out how your child's school covers safe use of the Internet within the curriculum.

Consider using software that restricts Internet access

Internet technology can be used to monitor itself. Browsers can be set up to access only sites considered suitable, and programs can be bought to filter or bar sites or activities that are considered unsuitable.

No blocking or filtering software can protect your child totally; there is no substitute for an informed young person who knows how to look after him or herself.

- Consider whether this technology is appropriate for your family.
- Regardless of whether or not you use a filtering program, be sure that your family knows all of the basic rules listed in this document.

Take action

Find out

- Ask your Internet Service Provider about their policies for filtering newsgroups.
- Check out any services to protect children and young people.

Speak to others

- Join discussion groups that focus on Internet safe issues. You can find one supplied by The Centre for Europe's Children at:

<http://eurochild.gla.ac.uk/>

Complain

- If e-mail is inappropriate or you think it may be illegal, forward it to your Internet Service Provider, or make a complaint to a body such as the Internet Watch Foundation.
- If you use a search engine (a website that helps you find what you're looking for) for an innocent search and are shocked by what you find, tell them. It is in their commercial interest to meet your needs.

Report

- If you come across material that you think is illegal, report it to the Internet Watch Foundation in the UK. They can offer advice and liaison with the police if necessary. You can find them at:

<http://www.iwf.org.uk/>

or telephone 01223 236077

Find out more

There is a copy of this document, and the ones that have been circulated to schools for pupils, on the SEED website.

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/clickthinking/>

There are easy instructions to the Internet online. You might want to look at:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/education/webwise/>

Use the web to read what other organisations advise

DfES (Department for Education & Skills - England/Wales): Superhighway safety

<http://safety.ngfl.gov.uk/parents/>

Parents Information Network: A Parent's guide to computers & the Internet

<http://www.pin.org.uk/>

NCH Action for Children: A Parent's Guide to the Internet

<http://www.nchafc.org.uk/internet/>

Parental Control of the Internet

<http://www.worldvillage.com/family/parental.html>

Comparison of features of Internet filtering and blocking software

<http://microweb.com/pepsite/Software/filters.html>

ClickThinking as a Family: Jargonbuster

Jargon	Explanation
Browser	Software that allows you to view the world wide web.
Chat rooms	Text message discussion areas for members, where copies are only available during the life of the session.
E-mail	Electronic messages typed at your computer and sent, via your Internet Service Provider, to any other Internet user in the world.
Internet Service Provider	The company that provides your Internet access
Newsgroups	Text message discussion areas, open to all Internet users, where message copies are available for some time.
Search engine	A signposting website that helps you find information.
Websites	Part of the world wide web, supplying information and pictures.

Editor's Note

Due to the transient nature of the World Wide Web, although the links provided within this document were correct at the time of printing (December 2001), some may not function at a later date. Please use a reliable search engine like GOOGLE (<http://www.google.co.uk>) to help you find what is required in these cases.

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