Cyber Safety for Kids Online

The Internet has opened up a world of information for anyone with a computer and a connection. Even if you don't have one at home, your children will learn about computers and have access to them at school, at the library, or at a friend's house. Just as you would not send children near a busy road without some safety rules, you shouldn't send them onto the information superhighway without rules of the road. There are too many dangers, from pedophiles and con artists, and adults through the Internet.

Getting Started

- Explain that although a person may be alone in a room using the computer, once logged on to the Internet, he or she is no longer alone. People skilled in using the Internet can find out who you are and where you are. They can even tap into information in your computer.
- Set aside time to explore the Internet together. If your child has some computer experience, let him or her take the lead. Visit areas of the Internet that have special sites for children.

Controlling Access

- The best tool a child has for screening material found on the Internet is his or her brain. Teach children the dangers of exploitation, pornography, hate literature, excessive violence, and other issues that concern you, so they know how to respond when they see this material.
- Choose a commercial online service that offers parental control features. These features can block contact that is not clearly marked as appropriate for children, such as chat rooms, bulletin boards, news groups, and discussion groups, or access to the Internet entirely.
- Purchase blocking software and design your own safety system. Different packages can block sites by name, search for unacceptable words and block access to sites containing those words, block entire categories of material, and prevent children from giving out personal information.
- Monitor your children and the time they spend online. If a child becomes uneasy or defensive when you walk into the room or when you linger, this could be a sign he or she is up to something unusual or even forbidden.

Tell Your Children

- To always let you know immediately if they find something scary or threatening on the Internet
- Never to give out their name, address, telephone number, password, school name, parents' name, or any other personal information
- Never agree to meet face to face with someone they've met online
- Never respond to messages that have bad words or seem scary or weird
- Never enter an area that charges for services without asking you first
- Never send a picture of themselves to anyone without your permission

Resources

These tips are brought to you by the National Crime Prevention Council.