

Make online safety a priority for every member of your family

Kids use computers for homework, fun and socializing, but the convenience has a cost. The digital world can be dangerous, so parents must promote computer and Internet safety. Experts recommend that you:

- Keep the computer in a central spot, such as in the family room, where you can monitor activities.
- Go online together. Let your child show you his computer skills and favorite sites. Guide him to child-friendly resources.
- Keep track of your child's online activities. With whom does he email or chat? What games does he play? What sites does he use? Keep online accounts in your name.
- Consider installing programs that make computer use safer for kids. Also check your Internet service provider's safety features.
- Learn about Internet safety. Then talk with your child about basic rules and post them near the computer. You can find a list of rules at www.netismartz.org/resources/pledge.htm.
- Tell your child not to share personal information online, such as his name, age, address or school. He should never agree to meet online-only "friends" or acquaintances in person.
- Do not respond to inappropriate messages. If your child receives one, he should tell a trusted adult immediately.
- Remember that your child may go online in other locations, such as at a friend's home. Take steps to ensure safety no matter where he uses the Internet.

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