

Subject: Children Online Newsletter

ChildrenOnline

Devoted to the safety of children and teens online

Phone: 413-214-1225

A Division of Web Safe Consulting

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Important Reminders

Sometimes we parents forget the obvious, or need support ourselves, to help us make tough decisions. We would like to remind parents of the following:

1. It is OK to say "no" when we are unsure whether or not our child is ready for technology or we are unsure of the risks or issues associated with using a technology.
2. It is OK to change the rules and our minds once we learn more about a technology, or aren't pleased with how our child is using technology.
3. Children may know how to use technology, but they don't know how to parent

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48th Edition of the Children Online Newsletter.

Sometimes there is such a digital divide between our children's online activities and our own online experiences that we don't know the questions we should be asking our children.



For example, who would think to ask an eleven year old if they have uploaded videos of themselves or friends to YouTube? Yet our fall and winter research shows that nearly one out of every five sixth graders do just that (19%). Or who would think to ask eighth graders if they have ever shared their passwords to online accounts with friends? Our research shows that nearly 47% have shared a password and doing so makes them two and one-half times more likely to have their online account misused by someone without their permission.

This edition helps parents consider some of the questions that are worth asking their children about their life online, as well as offer some guidance. Obviously not all questions apply to all age levels. However, we recently heard from fifth graders at a school that they knew first and third graders with Facebook accounts so it may be worth asking.

We also wish to share some exciting news with our readers... Our first book, "Safe Practices for Life Online" has just been published in Germany and the rights have been purchased for a Spanish language edition. And we are about to send a completely updated edition to our publisher! The updated edition is expected to be out early in 2012 and contains more than a hundred classroom exercises.

Finally, ChildrenOnline.org is now accepting workshop dates for the 2011-2012 academic year. If you are interested in

themselves. That's our job, our most important job!

4. No one is looking out for our children online. That is our job. And if we don't set safe and appropriate boundaries, no one will.

5. Just because "they can" use a technology doesn't mean "they should" or that it is healthy or appropriate for them.

6. It is not OK for our children to lie about their age so they can sign up for online accounts.

7. We know what is best for our child and we parents set our family values.

Recently a parent of an 11-year old said to us that "she feels like a salmon swimming upstream." We often feel that we will damage our children's social lives if we don't let them do what every other child seems to be doing. However, we at ChildrenOnline have learned that many parents feel this way! Speak to other parents. They can be your strongest advocates to raising healthy children in an age-appropriate manner. Try to find common ground. Imagine the power you will feel if a handful of parents of sixth or eighth graders for example, could

having us conduct student, parent or faculty workshops, please contact us via email or our phone (413-214-1225).

As always we welcome your comments and suggestions.
Best wishes,
Marje Monroe and Doug Fodeman

Contact Marje or Doug via email at marjem@childrenonline.org or dougf@childrenonline.org for information about our programs or consulting services.

Questions Parents Should Ask

It can be a daunting task to try to understand our children's world online. Pre-teens and teens often have a life online that is rarely seen by parents. This life can include relationships with hundreds of people, access to gaming and social networking sites, instant messaging accounts, Skype and video chat accounts and multiple email accounts. While much of their time spent online may be fun, and relatively "safe", today's high rate of bullying online, scams and tricks littering popular kids' sites and the lack of privacy, can put our children and teens at risk. As the kids explore and experiment online, they may be facing some serious risks that parents know nothing about.

While our older children may protest and tell us their life online is none of our business, their safety and healthy development is, in fact, our business. We recommend working to better understand and monitor their behavior online. The first step in most cases is sitting down with our kids to begin a conversation. While this may seem a simple task, it can be quite complicated for parents who have little idea about their children's use of technology and limited language for communicating their questions or concerns.

agree upon a common set of rules and boundaries for all their children! It might become a movement!

This recently happened at a school we gave workshops at. One mother decided she was going to collect all cell phones at the door when her 12-year old had friends over and not allow them in the bedroom during sleep-overs, despite the objection of her children and their friends. In just a few days, other mothers heard of this and called to tell her they loved the idea and were going to do the same thing!

What Does the World Know About Our Children?

In late March Doug completed a unit with seventh grade students titled "What the online world knows about you." With guidance, a web browser and specific online tools and methods, the students searched for information about themselves and their family. A discussion about online privacy followed.

We thought parents might be interested to know the kinds of information the students were able to discover about themselves and their families using their beginner skills. Not all students discovered all the information below. However,

Here are some initial questions parents can ask to begin conversations with their children.

- What are your favorite websites?
- What accounts have you signed up for online?
- Have you ever posted photos or videos online?
- What email accounts do you have?
- Have you used video chat online?
- Do you have instant messaging accounts?
- Have you signed up to use Gaming sites? If so, which ones?
- Do you have an account with a social network (Facebook for example)?
- Do you have a Twitter or Formspring account?
- Do you have a YouTube account?
- Do you have friends online whom you don't know in person?
- Have you ever shared your password with friends? (If so, they should change that password.)
- Have you ever filled out survey or quiz online and given real personal information?
- Can you get on the Internet from your iPod or cell phone?
- Have friends ever texted you after you've gone to bed?
- If your child has a Facebook account you may want to ask the following:
 - How many "friends" do you have connected to your account?
 - When was the last time you visited the many privacy and account settings to better protect your privacy? (Answer should be every 2 - 3 months.)

the information most commonly discovered online included:

1. Home address
2. Map to home or photo of home (e.g. Google Earth)
3. Home telephone number (landline)
4. Cell phone number
5. Student name in association with some information about them
6. Parents' name in association with some information about them
7. Actual comment or post made by the student or family member in a social network, forum or other online community
8. Participation in a sports team
9. Age (at the time of the posting)
10. Birthday
11. Photo of student or family member

Other information some students found included his/her weight and height, being right-handed, college a parent attended, awards a parent received when in college, photos and addresses of other relatives, "private" Buzz conversations and more. A few students actually learned something new about their family that they had not previously known.

Using these questions as a starting point, parents can better understand their child's world online and can give the message that they are invested and interested in their online life.

A second step for parents can be creating some clear and simple rules for their home.

Here are a few rules and expectations we recommend for families.

- Purchase and use parental-control software for home computers to help you set boundaries and monitor behavior. (See our website for recommendations or visit GetParentalControls.org)
- Take all smart phones or personal gaming devices over night. (With access to the Internet on most handheld devices, this helps create non-internet time at night to encourage sleep rather than late night web browsing or game-playing)
- Ask for the passwords for your child's accounts online including gaming, social networking, and instant messaging sites. Access the sites regularly to ensure your child is safe and behaving online according to your expectations.
- Take all cell phones at the door when having groups of kids in your home. (Keep in mind that cell phones today have texting, still and video cameras and ability to surf the Internet.) This is especially true at sleep-overs.
- Don't allow any downloading or uploading of photos or videos without your permission.
- Keep all Internet access in a public location such as kitchens, dens, or living rooms rather

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INTERNET SAFETY CURRICULUM

Safe Practices for Life Online



Children Online has a curriculum on Internet Safety that includes nearly 100 student exercises and lots of information on many topics including social networks, instant messaging, cyberbullying, online marketing, scams directed at kids, protecting privacy online, avoiding identity theft and impersonation, creating strong passwords and more.

than behind the closed doors of bedrooms.

- Be clear that you expect kindness and respect shown to others online just as you do in person. Tell them to talk to you if someone is mean or a bully.

It is never too late to parent our children. They may be involved online in ways we don't know or understand, but we can set guidelines and establish a pattern of communicating that helps to monitor their online world.

About Children Online

Children Online offers innovative and comprehensive workshops on Internet safety and online education to students, parents, faculty and administrators. Our approach, unique in the field of Internet safety, combines a thorough understanding of Internet technologies, child development and counseling, to focus on the impact of the internet on the social, emotional and language development of young people.

Doug Fodeman and Marje Monroe, experts in technology, counseling and education, work together to provide invaluable research and tools for parents and schools with practical real-life solutions to the issues faced by young people online. Since 1997, Marje and Doug have spoken to thousands of students, teachers and parents. They have several publications in the area of Internet safety and offer a free online newsletter. More detailed information can be found at ChildrenOnline.org.



There is also a student edition which includes cartoons and "Did you know" sections of interesting facts for students.

To learn more or place an order visit our [publications page at ChildrenOnline.org](#) or go directly to our publisher's pages:

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