

**Subject: Children Online Newsletter**

# ChildrenOnline

Devoted to the safety of children and teens online

Phone: 413-214-1225

A Division of Web Safe Consulting

**Quick Links**

[Previous Newsletters](#)  
[Resources for Parents](#)  
[Children Online Website](#)

**Join Our List**

[Join Our Mailing List!](#)

***Stages of Development and Media Influences:***

Understanding kids developmental stages helps us to understand what motivates kids online, for example the need for intense peer socialization of 14-year-olds. Also, understanding the impact of online media on their lives helps us to better evaluate the risks and hazards, as well as decide what is age-appropriate for our children.

1. [Stages of Adolescent Development](#)

**Issue: #31****December 2009****31st Edition of the Children Online Newsletter.**

Each year we meet with several thousand students in grades four through twelve and we often have the opportunity to survey them about their Internet behavior.



Our surveys and work with students have led us to many interesting insights about what motivates their online behavior and why they often fall prey to certain scams and tricks. This month's newsletter addresses the most common reasons kids are drawn to the Internet. Next month we will follow with a newsletter that details why most kids can't avoid a good scam.

As always, we invite your comments, as well as ideas for future newsletters. Our telephone number for Children Online is 413-214-1225.

Best wishes,  
 Marje Monroe and Doug Fodeman

Contact Marje or Doug via email at [marjem@childrenonline.org](mailto:marjem@childrenonline.org) or [dougf@childrenonline.org](mailto:dougf@childrenonline.org) for information about our programs or consulting services.

**What Drives Kids to the Internet?**

Kids today as young as two or three may know how to use a keyboard before they can use a pencil. Children see the

2. [The Center on Media and Child Health](#) at Children's Hospital Boston, Harvard Medical School, and Harvard School of Public Health is dedicated to understanding and responding to the effects of media on the physical, mental, and social health of children through research, production, and education. Visit their page on [What You Need to Know About Media and Kids' Health](#)

3. [The Importance of Play in Promoting Healthy Child Development and Maintaining Strong Parent-Child Bonds](#) from the American Academy of Pediatrics [pdf file]

4. [Media Influences on Youth](#). (Dated but interesting and relevant.)

5. [Stop Scammers from Targeting Your Teens](#) by Elizabeth Rogers [March, 2009]

**About  
Children Online**

Internet as an integral part of their culture. For kids the Internet is a toy, a TV, a phone, a connection to others and a portal into a world of socialization and adventure. Adults on the other hand generally view the Internet as a tool to help them negotiate tasks in their life (although this is beginning to change!).

Young kids generally begin their life on the Internet through game playing websites. Sites such as PBS, NickJr, Disney and others offer a world of fun and colorful games. For the most part young children simply use these sites for fun and games. As kids grow older game playing begins to intensify and children turn to Webkinz, Club Penguin, AddictingGames, Miniclip and Runescape, among others for their fun. These sites all have exciting, interactive game playing and colorful graphics geared toward young children. These sites may also contain viruses, scams, inappropriate advertising and the ability to chat with others.

As children enter sixth and seventh grade we begin to see a significant switch away from game playing to socializing. These young teens begin using Internet tools such as instant messaging, chatting or texting to communicate with others. Many young teens begin using Facebook chat or MySpace chat for their main source of communication, beating out "voicing" or the traditional use of the phone, and instant messaging. While girls generally switch to socializing a bit earlier than boys, this year we have witnessed significant numbers of boys flocking to Facebook and MySpace around age eleven or twelve. Game playing becomes less important than connecting with others and forming relationships. This, of course, mirrors what we know about age developmental research on children.

As the game playing dwindles and socializing becomes more important most teens make the jump to social networking sites such as Facebook and texting by age thirteen. The age of first use of Facebook, however, gets younger and younger each year. Social networking sites with the ability to have "private" chats become the most popular avenue for teens to reach out to others, play games, form relationships and create a sense of community.

The one site that seems to move seamlessly through the

**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**

stages of childhood to adolescence is YouTube. According to our research, YouTube is the most popular site for children ages ten through eighteen. YouTube with its fun, and often silly, videos and ability to communicate with others offers diverse and exciting alternatives for kids. It can also offer quick exposure to pornography, harassing language or age-inappropriate material. For children YouTube can be a TV, a jukebox or a social networking site much as Facebook or My Space. Many younger kids flock to YouTube to see themselves in school concerts or to watch episodes of the Simpsons, Dora the Explorer or their favorite cartoon. Due to the likely exposure to inappropriate content, we recommend that parents watch YouTube clips with their young children and not allow young children to "wander" around YouTube.

Scammers, marketers and others who wish to take advantage of children also have a great understanding about what motivates kids of different ages to be online. Scams have littered dozens of kids' popular game sites. Malware creators also create fake sites causing computer infections putting everyone using the computer at risk. These sites are designed to turn up in Google searches for things kids commonly search for including "game cheats", Miniclip and NewGrounds (popular game sites), free music and, lyrics sites. Scammers also perpetrate a great many scams in social networks including inside popular Facebook games such as Farmville.

Virtually, every online venue where kids of all ages congregate it is possible to find those who are trying to manipulate them and take advantage of them. And though children and teens today may know an awful lot about how to use technology, they don't always know how to spot a scam or know when they are being manipulated. They still require our oversight, love and guidance as they try to navigate life online, just as they navigate real life.

## INTERNET SAFETY CURRICULUM

### Safe Practices for Life Online

Children Online has a curriculum on



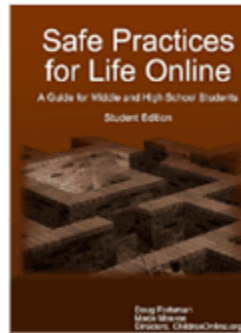
**ChildrenOnline.org.**

**Book for Parents:**

**[Racing to Keep Up: Talking with your kids about technology use and strategies to protect the home computer](#)**



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.



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: [Teacher's Edition at ISTE](#) [Student Edition at Lulu.com](#)

**©½ Children Online 2009  
Doug Fodeman & Marje Monroe.  
For permission to reprint please contact  
[DougF@ChildrenOnline.org](mailto:DougF@ChildrenOnline.org)**

**[Forward email](#)**

ChildrenOnline.org | 19 Everett Paine Blvd. | Marblehead | MA | 01945