

You're receiving this email because you signed up at ChildrenOnline.org. Please [confirm](#) your continued interest in receiving email from us.

You may [unsubscribe](#) if you no longer wish to receive our emails.



[Quick Links](#)

Issue: #9

February 2008

[Register Now](#)
[Resources for Parents](#)
[ChildrenOnline Website](#)

Join Our List

Join Our Mailing List!

ONE MOTHER'S STORY:

I recently talked to a mother of a 9-year old boy and 11-year old girl from an affluent suburb in a southwestern city. "B" is divorced and shares custody of her children with her ex. B's daughter, call her Tina, had been exploring the Internet and, like many children, discovered YouTube. Tina created an account and began to make videos of herself using the built-in video camera on her laptop to post on YouTube. Some of the videos got a lot of attention from visitors. Her mother said that she made a video diary of her life after school (VLog). Occasionally, Tina told her mom that she was making a YouTube video but B had no idea what that meant or that the video was being put on the

9th Edition of the Children Online Newsletter.

Many parents feel limited when it comes to parenting their child's Internet activities because they get flustered about the technology. We feel like immigrants in a virtual world where our children are natives.



However, ChildrenOnline wants parents to understand that technology has little to do with our children's online activities. For children and teens it is primarily about relationships. The Internet is a vehicle to friends. A way of connecting to others. It is also a way for them to seek attention. Their attention-seeking behavior in a world without adult supervision and an "anything goes" attitude however, sometimes leads to very poor choices. One such example of this is the YouTube phenomenon, the focus of this month's newsletter.

As always, we welcome your comments and questions.
Marje Monroe and Doug Fodeman

The YouTube Phenomenon:

Over the last few years we have asked thousands of students to name their favorite web sites. One site in particular is often listed as a favorite regardless of age. YouTube.com. YouTube allows visitors to upload video clips for the world to watch. The very best and worst of human nature can be found on YouTube.

YouTube was created 3 years ago this month and was purchased in 2006 by Google. Estimates are that YouTube holds more than 60 million video clips posted by visitors. In

was being put on the Internet. The videos seemed very innocent but B says "looking at them through a predator's eyes makes them look very different to me now". One showed Tina dressed in a short skirt which would flip up as she moved. This video got a comment from a guy who said that he liked the way her skirt flipped up and said he wanted to "SEE MORE".

Tina sometimes emulated the behavior of others in videos she saw on YouTube. In one she could be seen laying across her bed with her bare legs and feet kicked up behind her. She titled it "here's one for all you foot fetish peeps, so you're in luck." Her parents had no idea until one day her mother came across Tina and friends watching a video of her on the Internet. B had a jaw-dropping, dead-stop reaction when she suddenly realized what it was her daughter had been doing.

There were dozens of videos online of her 11-year old daughter, alongside videos of other girls with user names like "hotsexy." Over the course of a year Tina had uploaded 60 videos to YouTube. B was shocked to see some of the links to other children's pages that were available from Tina's videos as well. Most parents can imagine how B felt. She asked Tina why she had given one the title "here's one for all you foot fetish peeps." Did she know what "foot

2006 viewers began to post comments to videos and today it can be considered a Social Network, similar to MySpace and Facebook. This means it includes "friending", comment "walls" and community groups. There are very few privacy controls and visitors are able to view any video. There is an "18+" section for viewing videos containing "adult" content but it takes only seconds to set up an account and lie about your age to gain access. YouTube has even spawned a pornographic wannabe site called YouPorn.

Millions of children watch video clips on YouTube every week. However, tens of thousands of children, some as young as 8 and 9, post videos of themselves onto YouTube. Would it be OK for your son or daughter to dance in their skimpy pajamas or underwear in front of thousands of people? What if they just sat in their bedrooms and spoke to a crowd of hundreds of strangers about their life, while inviting the strangers to send them "requests?" Tens of thousands of children have been doing just that, and more.

Though YouTube posts a PG-13 warning for parents at the top of their safety tips page, there is no obvious enforcement of it. It is possible to find videos of children who are much younger than 13. YouTube states "The first thing everyone needs to know is that YouTube is NOT for people under the age of 13". [<http://youtube.com/t/safety>]

The difficulty for parents and schools is not just the exposure to inappropriate content for our children, but the fact that children and teens are posting videos of themselves without parental consent or knowledge. While some of these are creative examples of self-expression, many are inappropriate or embarrassing at best and pornographic and documenting criminal behavior at worst. One mother who contacted us recently was surprised to learn that her 11-year old daughter had begun creating VLogs (video logs) of her after-school life and posting them on YouTube. [See sidebar.] We think it is incredulous and reprehensible to find videos in the 18+ section of YouTube containing young teens who can't be more than 15 doing the equivalent of soft-porn pole-dancing from their bedrooms.

On YouTube, children and teens have discovered a world that is alluring because of the attention it brings them. It is a world without parental supervision or rules for behavior. There are no boundaries and they clearly know this. Parents know that kids' behavior is best when they know there are expectations for them and that they are being monitored by adults who care about them. Also, many children are simply too young to understand the negative consequences or implications of their behavior.

The video samples listed to below are likely to make parents feel uncomfortable. As difficult as it may be to watch some of these, there are many videos that are far more inappropriate because of their nudity, sexual content, embarrassing consequences, violent or denigrating behavior. We have

She know what "OOT fetish" meant? Tina replied that she didn't know but had seen others saying things like that online. Tina admitted that she liked the instantaneous attention she got. She felt as though she was someone special, a celebrity, as if she were seeing herself on TV. "My little girl is no longer a little girl" says B, considering the discussions this experience has generated with her daughter. "I asked her if she ever read the comments that some people posted." She said "she read some." Given how much she liked the attention it's more likely she read most. Some viewers posted terribly inappropriate comments to Tina. B asked her why she kept making videos and she said "they" keep pressuring me to do things from their comments.

Incidentally, B discovered that her 9-year old had recently created a YouTube account as well.

Email questions or comments to:
DFodeman@Brookwood.edu

© ChildrenOnline 2008
Doug Fodeman &
Marje Monroe.
For permission to
reprint please contact
ChildrenOnline.org.

chosen not to use these more extreme videos as examples. As you review the videos, please notice the number of times some of the videos have been watched (e.g. "Barbie Girl #1" was viewed more than 33,000 times when this article was drafted in early February) and read some of the comments people have posted underneath the children's videos.

Pretending to be a parent whose child had posted a video that I wanted removed, I searched YouTube's web site looking for any directions for parents to request that a video of their child be taken off. Unfortunately I could not find any method to request the removal of videos posted by children. Once a video is put on Youtube, all ownership of the video is granted to YouTube and videos may be copied, archived or used on other sites. Here are three useful resources that were available to visitors:

Privacy complaint guidelines:

<http://www.google.com/support/youtube/bin/answer.py?answer=78346&query=remove+a+video&topic=&type=>

Abuse and Policy Center:

<http://www.google.com/support/youtube/bin/topic.py?topic=13044>

To submit a privacy complaint:

http://www.google.com/support/youtube/bin/request.py?page=&contact_type=privacy

ChildrenOnline.org knows that the Internet changes every day as does the way children are using it. In fact, "Change" is one of the few constants to describe the Internet. Two types of change at YouTube that are beginning to take "Children Gone Wild" even further out of control are "Streams" and "Tagging". Though still in Beta at the moment, YouTube "Streams" make it possible to chat in real time with other people who are watching the same video as you. Tagging is a new game that is quickly spreading amongst kids on YouTube as young as 10 and 11. The rules are simple. If a YouTube member "tags" you in a comment to your vid (video), you must post a video that reveals five facts about yourself and then tag five other YouTube members to do the same. Some children are longing to be tagged. It is, after all, another form of attention.

What can you do to protect your child? What can you tell other parents?

1. Spread the word amongst parents about YouTube. Raise awareness that it is a site that requires supervision.
2. Talk to your children. Ask them if they have watched YouTube videos. If they have, ask them what they have seen and speak to them about your concerns.
3. Ask them if they have posted any videos on YouTube, or any website. Ask them if they are a YouTube member with a login account. Ask them if

they have posted any photos of themselves or friends onto any website.

4. Check the history of their web browser to see if you find evidence that they are spending time on YouTube.

What you hear from them, and your family's values and rules, will dictate how you respond to what you learn. Your responses might include:

1. Restricting access to YouTube. (Web filtering software can help you do that.)
2. Prohibiting membership to YouTube.
3. Prohibiting them ever to upload any photos or video of themselves to the Internet without your permission.
4. A discussion about their behavior in the virtual world.

Sample YouTube Videos:

[Elika and Izzy #2](#)

The lip sync phenomenon:

[Barbie Girl #1](#)

[Tarzan and Jane](#) (Watch it all)

[Barbie girl #2](#)

[Barbie girl #3](#)

[Barbie girl #4](#)

Kids first vlogs (probably 5th or 6th graders)

[Our first VLog #1](#)

[Our first VLog #2](#)

[VLog 1](#)

Random stuff

[Free Ringtone](#)

[Body shot](#)

Example a YouTube User's page

[StupidKidStudios](#)

Related to issues of privacy we discussed in a previous newsletter, Maria Aspan of the New York Times just published (Monday, Feb. 11) an article titled "[How Sticky is Membership on Facebook? Just Try Breaking Free](#)". The article speaks to the tremendous difficulty of getting one's Facebook account closed and all of the content removed so it is no longer retrievable. The article caused an immediate response from Facebook. Two days later they announced new methods for removing one's account. Keep in mind that there are no guarantees that your Facebook data can't be archived or copied elsewhere.

Sites such as Facebook are beginning to listen to the outcry of users. Perhaps if more parents contacted YouTube and its parent company, Google, to complain, they would begin to adhere to their own posted policies (no users under 13) and pay closer attention to the videos young users post and the horrific comments viewers post in response.

[Forward email](#)

✉ **SafeUnsubscribe®**

This email was sent to dfodeman@brookwood.edu, by dfodeman@brookwood.edu
[Update Profile/Email Address](#) | Instant removal with [SafeUnsubscribe™](#) | [Privacy Policy](#).

Email Marketing by



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