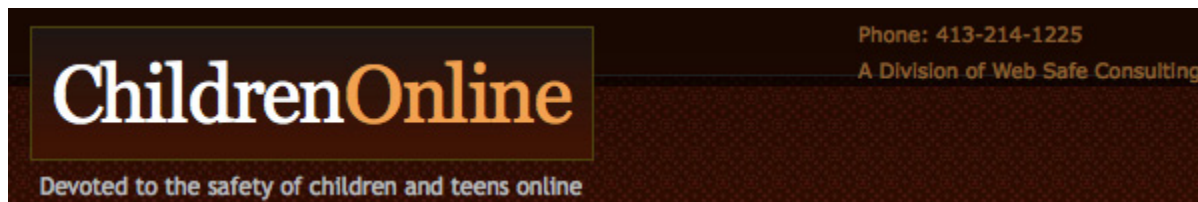


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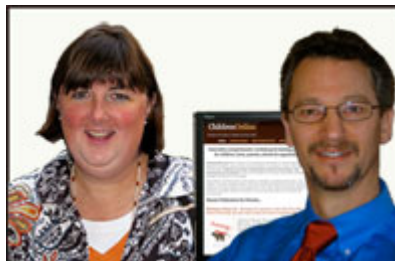
***Related Resources:***

Though there are many arguments for and against using a child's real name for online accounts, most authors recommend using real names for high school age teens but not for younger children.

1. [Internet Safety Rules: Keep Personal Information Off the Internet](#) from [InternetSafetyRules.org](#)
2. [Point/Counterpoint: Should Students Use](#)

**Issue: #56****January 2012****56th Edition of the Children Online Newsletter.**

Not long ago we came across an article in the June/July issue of the trade magazine "Learning and Leading with Technology" that focused on a single question. The article was a debate between two writers on the question "Should Students Use Their Real Names on the Web?"



This seemingly simple question is one that all parents should seriously consider before allowing their child to have online accounts. Below is our input on this debate.

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

If you are interested in having us conduct student, parent or faculty workshops, please contact us via email or phone (413-214-1225).

**Should Students Use Real Names on the Web?**

Our children, and students, are creating online accounts at increasingly younger and younger ages. We have often said that one of the few constants in our years of research on the behavior of children and teens online is that whatever kids are doing on the Internet this year, they will be doing the same thing next year at a younger age.

[Their Real Names on the Web?](#)

by David Wees and Dan Maas

3. [Five Reasons to Publish Student Names and Photos](#) from the High School Journalism Initiative

4. [Student Display Names: I was Wrong](#) by Karl Fisch (June, 2009)

5. Protecting Children Online:  
[From the Office of the Attorney General from New York State](#) and [From the San Diego County District Attorney](#)

6. Protect Your Children: [From "Stay Smart Online" initiative from the Australian Government](#)

[How to Help Your Kids Use Social Websites Safely](#)

[Rules 'N Tools for Social Networking Sites](#)

**Parenting with Marje:**

Check out Marje's latest blog article ["Bad Decisions"](#) at [ChildrenOnline.org](#)

Today, we are hearing of second and third graders with Facebook accounts. Elementary school children routinely create their own email, iChat, Skype, and gaming accounts. If parents have never asked their elementary-aged child about online accounts, they should! They might be surprised by how many accounts their children have. An important question to consider for parents is what information should be shared in these accounts and at what age is it OK to use their real names?

Most adults agree that teenagers should consider using their real name for their online accounts. Using a real name not only helps reduce the anonymity that often gets teens into trouble online, but it can also help them feel a certain sense of responsibility for their online content. Not to mention that it doesn't do a teen any good to have or use an "edgy" or inappropriate screen name that is seen by unintended people who use their screen name to make judgments about the teen.

However, is it appropriate for a younger child to do the same? Our answer is no. Throughout our many years of working with kids and schools we have heard many stories of manipulation and intimidation online that have made children feel fearful and uncomfortable. One of the first, and easiest, ways to conduct that manipulation and intimidation is by knowing the name of the intended victim. Knowing a child's name provides the perpetrator (adult or child) with enough information to sound credible. No doubt readers are thinking about adults who spend months "grooming" a child for sexual exploitation. Though this does happen, it is a rare event. Much more common online for our children are forms of extreme teasing and bullying. Having a child's name makes this behavior more frightening for the victim. We strongly recommend that parents help their children select screen names that do not reveal personal details, location, school or personal preferences that could be used to manipulate a child. This should be part of the same conversation in which children are taught to protect their privacy online and what that means. Make sure your child understands the exact type of information they shouldn't share online. Instruct them that this is simply part of what they should routinely do to be safe online since it is so easy to deceive others in the online

## The Daily Scam:

We invite you to sign up for our newest newsletter called "The Daily Scam." The Daily Scam is a brief email that describes email scams and tricks that flood our inboxes. It teaches us how to recognize scams and avoid the risks.

Sign up for one of our  
free Email Newsletters

GO

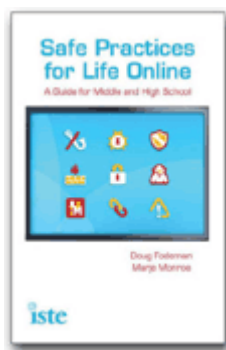
Privacy by  SafeSubscribe<sup>SM</sup>  
For Email Marketing you can trust

world. Even in video chats children (and teens) can be deceived. Students have told us of conversations where other kids are listening just out of camera range.

Defining an appropriate age for an independent online account using real names depends in large part on the maturity of the child and the specifics of the online account. Certainly, email accounts bear less risk than a Facebook or Google Plus account. Keep in mind too, that online bullying is most common in grades seven through nine. We recommend that parents begin to consider the change over at around age fifteen. Let your decision be guided by the feeling that you want to protect your child's identity but also that they will need to represent him or herself in the virtual world and build their own online reputation.

Sometimes protecting our children online can be as simple as having a strong password and not allowing personal information or real names in accounts.

## INTERNET SAFETY CURRICULUM



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,

## 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](http://ChildrenOnline.org).**

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Doug Fodeman & Marje Monroe.**

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:

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