

Internet and Mobile Phone Use at Home and School

Whilst the Internet is an extremely useful tool for communication, keeping in contact with friends, finding information and for entertainment, it comes with its fair share of problems. Time wasting, Internet addiction and lack of “in-person” interactions can become problems but cyberbullying, cyber-stalking and pornography is substantial down sides. Many parents have not had the opportunities of their children to explore and develop skills in the use of the various areas of the Internet or mobile technology. Parents need to be more aware how these technologies can impact on family life and how they can affect individual lives. They need to develop strategies to enable them to minimise the problems and maximise the benefits for their children.

Tips for parents

- set clear boundaries for children
- try to prevent children from being harmed
- provide opportunities for children to develop self responsibility
- guide children to act ethically

Using these tips, parents should treat a child’s use of technology in the same way that they would approach any other significant experience in a child’s development.

Try these steps with regard to technology

- Gain a basic understanding of the issues
- Setup correctly and set family guidelines
- Supervise your children’s use of technology
- Set rules for mobile phone use
- Know what actions to take if problems arise

ICT – Information and Communication Technology

Benefits of ICT

- Resources – excellent websites with up-to-date, relevant information
- Constant communication – use of Instant Messaging, Chat sites, personal blogs like MySpace and Facebook, forums on particular topics
- Broad based communities – personal blogs, subscriptions to group sites for people with common interests
- Entertainment – games, music, podcasts, videos, online TV/radio

Risks

- Internet addictions – gambling, pornography, game playing
- Lack of face-to-face contact with people – movement to virtual lives instead of real life
- Illegal activity – hacking, copyright infringement
- Online bullying – writing bullying comments about another person either directly in chat sessions or on websites
- Phone harassment – messages or calls
- Privacy threatened – stealing personal details
- Physical threats – stalking, meeting unknown people from chat rooms

Prevention

Before You Start

- Discuss the benefits and risks of going online
- Talk to your family about the importance of staying safe online
- Have an Internet safety plan for your home – Guard your privacy (see “Personal Information and Privacy” below)
- Teach your children how to use the Internet safely.

Create Family Guidelines

- Reassure them that you are there to help if they get into trouble.
- Set up house rules for use of the Internet. NetAlert has samples to help you.

For very young children

- Set up the computer in a public area of the house
- Install content filtering software. Download free content filter from NetAlert
- Set preferences in search engines and browsers to restrict access

For older children

- **Gradually** allow more independent use – develop responsible use
- At some stage you might allow the computer to be moved to a study area if necessary but develop some agreed rules and beware of late night usage as it disrupts good sleep patterns.
- Some agreed rules for use
 - Computer screen always **facing open doorway**
 - Limit time on the internet – you can turn the modem off
 - Monitoring of web use to be done openly – checking of “History”
 - Personal IM and chat is private unless things go wrong
- Maintain open communication with your children – they need to be able to talk to you if things go wrong
- Savvy users will get around most filters or blocks
- If they resent being watched, they will find other ways to access without your supervision

Supervise when children are online

- Supervise and monitor the use of the Internet
- Address issues quickly and know to whom to report problems
- Encourage and support your family with their use of the Internet
- Teach them to make right decisions
- Increase the levels of responsibility as children get older

Mobile Phone Use

- Set agreed rules
 - Stay within budget plan
 - Turn off at bedtime and better to require mobiles to be left in a set place at night away from the child's bedroom
 - Turn off Bluetooth until required

Personal information and privacy

Just as you would not provide personal information to someone you meet on the street, neither should you do so on the Internet.

For websites like MySpace, Facebook, Blogs, etc

CONTROL ACCESS

- Only allow genuine “friends” access to your site
- Control “friends” ability to post comments on your site
- Make the site PRIVATE rather than PUBLIC

DO NOT POST

- Full name – use only first name or cyber-name
- home address
- email address
- personal details that could be used against you

LIMIT

Think carefully before posting

- Photographs – especially if they send a wrong message
- Personal information or descriptions about yourself

CONTROL ACCESS

- Only allow genuine “friends” access to your IM chat

In Chat Rooms (especially with unknown others)

DO NOT DIVULGE

- Full name – use only first name or cyber-name
- home address
- email address
- details THAT COULD IDENTIFY **YOU** or **YOUR FAMILY** or **FRIENDS**

LIMIT

Think carefully before posting

- Photographs – especially if they send a wrong message
- Personal information or descriptions about yourself

Actions to take if problems arise

Internet Use

If a child accesses inappropriate material on the Internet or uses the computer in appropriate ways

- Check filter settings are set correctly – adjust if necessary
- Check “History” in the browser – discuss if inappropriate use is evident
- Discuss issues with the child
- Impose penalties if appropriate – removal of privileges, movement of computer to a public area of the house, etc
- Gradually reinstate responsibilities

Cyberbullying

- *Cyberbullying* occurs when a person is
 - tormented, threatened, harassed, humiliated, embarrassed or otherwise targeted by another person
 - using the Internet, interactive and digital technologies or mobile phones
- Cyberbullies harass their victims at any time of the day using
 - chat rooms, email, instant messaging, websites and mobile phones
 - cyberbullies can
 - make threats, share gossip, spread lies or distribute embarrassing pictures to a wide audience while maintaining some anonymity

Adapted from: <http://www.stopcyberbullying.org/>

If you are targeted by a cyberbully:

Adapted from: <http://www.stopcyberbullying.org/parents/guide.html>

STOP! Don't do anything. Calm down.

BLOCK! Block the cyberbully or limit all communications to those on your "buddy list".

SAVE!

Keep all electronic evidence

TELL! Tell a trusted adult, you don't have to face this alone.

A quick guide on the escalating levels of response to a cyberbullying incident

- Talk to your child
- Ignore it
- Block the sender
- Restrict others from being able to add your child to their buddy list
- Google your child
- Report to ISP
- Report to School
- Report to Police
- Take Legal Action

Talk to your child

- Caution them about responding "in kind."
- See if they think they know the identity of the cyberbully or cyberbullies.
- See if this is related to an offline bullying situation, and deal with that quickly..

Ignore it

- Needs judgment here – sometime ignoring the behaviour stops it from escalating
- Consider using some preventive measures

Save evidence

- Keep all **electronic** evidence of cyberbullying

Block sender

- Might have to remove sender from the buddy list

Restrict others from being able to add your child to their buddy list

- This feature is usually found in the privacy settings or parental controls of a communications program.

Google your child

- Make sure that the cyberbully isn't posting attacks online.

Report to ISP

- Most cyberbullying and harassment incidents violate the ISP's terms of service.

Report to School

- They can keep any eye on the situation in school
- The school may have limited authority over disciplining the cyberbully
- School can try and mediate the situation.

Report to Police

- Facilitate the investigation and any eventual prosecution by collecting and preserving electronic evidence. .
- If you feel like your child, you or someone you know is in danger, contact the police immediately
- Do not install any programs, or remove any programs or take other remedial action on your computer or communication device during this process. It may adversely affect the investigation and any eventual prosecution.

Take Legal Action.

- Think carefully before you decide to take this kind of action.

Cyber Safety Website Links

www.netalert.net.au/ - Australian Government site

www.cybernetrix.com.au/ - Commonwealth Gov't site - interactive

www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/toolkit/protect/technology.htm - Victorian Education Dept

www.netsafe.org.nz/kits/kits_default.aspx - New Zealand based information

www.stopcyberbullying.org – Canadian based information

www.bullyingnoway.com.au/ - Australian educational groups

www.cybersmartkids.com.au/ - Australian Gov't for younger Primary students

www.netsmarz.org/ - links to many sites but watch out for the pop-up ads.

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Adapted from: http://www.sjc.vic.edu.au/app/cmslib/media/lib/0710/m4689_v1_internetandmobilephoneuseathomeandschool.pdf