



Did You Know...?

38

About Our Children and the Internet

Parents Reaching Out connects with families, schools and communities in New Mexico. We offer information from many reliable sources. We thank the Parent Education Network, a project of Parents Helping Parents of Wyoming, Inc. for permitting us to share their PEN Notes publications in this information series.

Internet: Worldwide network of computers that connect people from homes, schools, businesses, and organizations to give information about any topic from health to history, and entertainment to sports, travel, government and many more topics.

The Internet offers:

1. Search engines—programs we can use to search the Internet for topics
2. Web sites—places on the Internet dedicated to certain ideas
3. E-mail—a way to send and receive written messages by phone line on the computer
4. Chat rooms—areas visited by people with common interests. One types a message and can receive an answer instantly from another. This can be private or public.

Safe, sensible use of the Internet can help your child:

- Receive tutoring services
- Get help with homework
- Gain information for projects and reports
- “Tour” places studied in school
- Explore interests
- Meet others and share information across hundreds of miles without being face to face



The Internet is an amazing tool but as parents we must:

- Learn more about the Internet—its potentials and pitfalls
- Supervise our children on the Internet by being there with them, sharing our values and having discussions about the Internet, and building “critical” thinking skills about the information on the Internet
- Support community and school efforts to keep the Internet safe for our children

Parents should learn about the Internet because it is a big part of many children's lives, but parents should offer guidance and set limits.

Dangers of the Internet

- Anyone can create Web pages and post information, making it easy for children to mistakenly stumble across sites devoted to:
- Sexual material—pornography and sexually-oriented sites even by mistake
- Alcohol and other drugs—advertising alcoholic beverages and glorifying drug use
- Violence—bomb making or other violent activities
- Hate and intolerance—promoting hatred of different races, religions and sexual orientations
- Gambling-on line--using their computers
- Information offered on legitimate topics is not always reliable or accurate



The best protection is to:

1. Personally supervise our children.
2. Block access to certain Web sites or use software programs that block or filter offensive material.
3. Set up “bookmarks” that guide our children to safe sites.
4. Review “use histories” or logs that show Internet activity.
5. Use public computers such as libraries, shopping malls, and community centers together with our children, because access to the Internet may be unrestricted.
6. Spell carefully; a misspelled word or other typing errors can lead to an inappropriate site.

Establish family rules:

- Keep computers in high traffic areas (family rooms, not in bedrooms unsupervised)
- Put time limits on the computer allowing time for physical activity, homework, friends and rest
- Decide what services are useful and affordable-- Internet costs money

Sources: Prevent Child Abuse-Wyoming

Personal security is a must!

Teach children “netiquette” (etiquette on the Internet) so they will know how to behave on the Internet and will be able to recognize inappropriate behavior of others. Let them know they can come to us if they feel uncomfortable.

Never give out personal information over the Internet i.e. names, telephone, addresses, school functions etc. and never reveal if she is home alone.

Never respond to offensive messages—it only makes matters worse (assure children that they are not to blame for these messages and that they should report such messages).

Never arrange face-to face meetings alone—people often aren’t who they claim to be.

Contact local law enforcement and your Internet service provider if you or your child gets a message that is harassing, threatening or of a sexual nature. Do not delete the message until they tell you it's OK to delete the message.

“Did You Know...?” fact sheets are developed by Parents Reaching Out in collaboration with the New Mexico Public Education Department under a grant from the US Department of Education Office of Innovation and Improvement. Views expressed do not necessarily represent the policy of the US Department of Education and should not be assumed to be an endorsement by the Federal Government.