

YOUR KIDS AND THE INTERNET

SURVIVING THE COMBINATION:

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INTRODUCTION:

The world is changing. So many times that statement has been spoken from one generation to the next to explain how to understand, tolerate and survive noted progress. Most people marvel at the mechanical, technological and even social changes that occur from childhood through adulthood in any given generation.

More so than in any other time in history, current changes occurring in the way people interact in everyday life are more drastic than ever with the innovation and increased popularity of the Internet. The Internet offers people relatively hassle-free, cheap and sometimes mind-boggling methods of handling traditional normal activities in extraordinary ways. By virtue of current lifestyle trends, many people welcome the Internet's option of dealing with personal and commercial business in non-traditional fashion.

As the Internet begins to affect every facet of daily activity for many people, the innovation poses particularly unique challenges for parents. While the Internet allows for a wide-open self-regulated marketplace and think tank, the unabashed and uncensored nature of the information may prove unhealthy and detrimental to children if they are irresponsibly exposed to it.

So how are parents to survive in the wide-open free exchange of ideas and information? Many parents feel the need to avoid the subject for as long as possible, hoping that the information will somehow either bypass their children or reach them at a time when they can surely handle it. Unfortunately, too often this is not the case.

After consulting with hundreds of parents on the Internet and how to survive the onslaught of the new technology and information, I have concluded that most parents want to know how the Internet works, but unfortunately do not have the time to begin learning all that they need to know. In the meantime, children are on the cutting edge of the technological revolution and hunger to learn its processes. By way of self-exploration, school direction or peer introduction, many children will have some access to the Internet by age six.

Parents need to know what attracts children to the Internet and what are the most valuable

and popular Internet areas for children. Sometimes the most valuable areas of the Internet are not the most popular and the most popular areas are not the most valuable. Parents need to know how to distinguish between them.

There are some valuable software tools available to parents to help them try to keep the "information superhighway" safe for their kids. Content filtering programs, password protected and encrypted software, etc. will help in this effort, but will not be able to protect and prevent children from being exposed to inappropriate or unhealthy content 100% of the time. These programs have proven to be helpful but not the complete answer to steering children clear of danger and preventing them from accessing information that is not intended for them.

Parents need to view a child's attraction to the Internet similar to a child's attraction to television, video games or other media stimuli. Supervision and encouraging moderation are vital in providing parameters for children for using the Internet. Whether a child uses the World Wide Web for school research or an e-mail program to communicate with others, he/she must be taught that there are limits on time and energy spent on using the Internet.

Parents and children must discuss clear-cut expectations and agree upon certain guidelines to ensure safe and responsible use of the Internet's vast resources. The information in this book will provide tips for parents on how to survive the electronic world of the Internet. The best thing is, parents can learn all of the tips and insider hints in less than one day!

Good Luck!

Why Children Naturally Love the Internet

Children are attracted to the Internet for many reasons. Most information offered by the Internet's World Wide Web is arranged in simple and basic form, containing lots of colors, cool type styles, pictures, graphics and sounds. Children are naturally drawn to the special effects that are now commonplace within Web pages.

The layout and design of Web pages are very simple in nature and the ease of use of a computer mouse while navigating through the pages makes mastering the system easy for children. Kids can master the computer mouse long before they are able to type, and this allows them to be comfortable with accessing the information available on the Internet.

Children enjoy the non-linear approach to absorbing the information. Unlike school textbooks and other traditional educational resources, a child may click through the hot links of an Internet Web page in the order he/she chooses. This user control attracts children to the process and thus allows the intake of the information to remain managed by them.

The textbooks and other learning materials most traditional school systems use are very "linear" in nature, as students are taught lessons in particular order. Children are trained through the schools to problem-solve by using information in a linear sequence. The set-up of the resources offered by the

Internet may follow this pattern, too, but also offers so much more. Users may click through the links of information in any order they choose.

Children also may benefit from setting their own pace when using the Internet as an educational resource. The educational online content is set-up to be used by students with no built-in time limit or deadline (unless the user prefers it that way).

Most fascinating to children, though, is the interactivity of the Internet and the interactive

qualities of the educational resources online. As a choice is being made by a user to click the computer mouse on a Web page "hot link", the user begins an interactive exchange that can be brief or extended. Each time a user logs onto the Internet, the experience can be different and varied. Different users have different experiences while gathering similar information in this type of interactive environment. Learning tools no longer consist of just words and some pictures, but now also include more graphics, animation, video and sound. Children are drawn to the multimedia content.

The Most Educational (and fun!) Web Sites for Children

(Most of the following Web sites are commercial sites and include advertisements.)

Children should always be supervised while "surfing" on the Web!

(click on the Web site name to "link" to that site)

[FunBrain.com - http://www.funbrain.com/](http://www.funbrain.com/)

Educational games and puzzles and parent-kid challenges.

[FunSchool.com - http://www.funschool.com/](http://www.funschool.com/)

Educational games for kids from pre-school up to sixth grade

[Quia.com - http://www.quia.com/](http://www.quia.com/)

Thousands of educational activities in over 40 subject areas

[Kidscom.com - http://www.kidscom.com/](http://www.kidscom.com/)

Play smart, stay safe, have fun!

[Scholastic Books - http://place.scholastic.com/](http://place.scholastic.com/)

Comprehensive educational site from Scholastic Books

[Children's Television Workshop - http://www.ctw.org/](http://www.ctw.org/)

Includes Sesame Street Central and lots more

[Disney Daily Blast - http://www.disneyblast.com/](http://www.disneyblast.com/)

Online playground for fun and adventure

[Learn2.com - http://www.learn2.com/](http://www.learn2.com/)

Learn to do lots of different things

[HowThingsWork.com - http://www.howthingswork.com/](http://www.howthingswork.com/)

Find out the secrets to how lots of things work (in 3-D)!

[Internet Public Library \(Youth Division\) - http://www.ipl.org/youth](http://www.ipl.org/youth)

Lots of valuable resources all from one Web site

[Puzzlemaker.com - http://www.puzzlemaker.com/](http://www.puzzlemaker.com/)

Make all kinds of word searches, crosswords and mazes

[The Whitehouse for Kids - http://www.whitehouse.gov/WH/kids/html/kidshome.html](http://www.whitehouse.gov/WH/kids/html/kidshome.html)

Federal Government information designed for children

[Sports Illustrated for Kids - http://www.sikids.com/](http://www.sikids.com/)

Sports news written for children

Kid-Safe Internet Search Directories

[AJKids.com](http://www.ajkids.com/) - <http://www.ajkids.com/>

[Yahooligans.com](http://www.yahooligans.com/) - <http://www.yahooligans.com/>

[Alfy.com](http://www.alfy.com/) - <http://www.alfy.com/>

[Searchopolis.com](http://www.searchopolis.com/) - <http://www.searchopolis.com/>

[StudyWeb.com](http://www.studyweb.com/) - <http://www.studyweb.com/>

The Best Parenting Web Sites

The best Web sites full of information for parents of children of all ages.

(Most of the following Web sites are commercial sites and include advertisements.)

[A Listening Ear](#) - full of valuable Internet links to lots of parenting information

[ParentSoup](#) - information on children and chat areas for parents

[Parent Time](#) - information based on child's age and interests

[Moms Online](#) - a community of moms

[20ish Parenting](#) - fun and comprehensive site

[Father's World](#) - promoting and celebrating fatherhood

[Kid Solutions](#) - great tips and information for parents

[WeHaveTeens](#) - "...raising teenagers is like trying to nail jell-o to a tree"

[Screen It!](#) - comprehensive movie, video and CD-ROM reviews for parents

Content Filtering Web Sites:



Internet Search Engines and Directories:

(NOT safe for children to use alone)



Internet Search Directories

Knowing how to search the Internet is invaluable to most users. With the vast amount of information available, it becomes quite a task to search through it all to find what is needed. Parents should be able to help children use the resources of the Internet efficiently, so that the time online is spent with higher level thinking and learning rather than bogged down spending time searching through the vast information.

There are basically two types of search functions for the Internet's World Wide Web: search engines and search directories. Both types of Web sites help users sift through the Internet's available resources, but each with a slightly different approach.

Search engines are Web sites that feature software that goes through tens of thousands of other Web sites and pages and finds resources on different topics. Users of search engines input words or phrases (called "keywords") that the search engine will use to find Web sites matching the inputted criteria.

Some search engines employ software called "spiders" that "crawl" through the World Wide Web searching for Web sites matching the user's keywords. Other search engines allow you to actually type in a full question in order to execute a Web search. Either way, once a user inputs the keywords, most search engines will return hundreds of Web site addresses that match the criteria.

This large number of matches may be valuable to a user or possibly cumbersome, as it is tedious to then sift through the numerous suggested sites.

Search directories are similar to search engines, except there are live people actually categorizing the information. Rather than relying exclusively on Web search programs to find matching data within the Web sites, search directories list the information grouped into categories. The theory behind these sites is that they are more manageable than simple search engines, but yet many directories do not feature all sites available on a certain topic. Even worse for users, are the search directories that list information based on fees paid to them by the Web sites. This limits available resources as well.

Some of the best Web sites for searching for information on the Internet, feature meta-searches, which combine search engines and directories. A user inputs keywords just once, and the meta-search Web site simultaneously sends the user's criteria through numerous searches. The user may then view the returned search results from the different search engines and directories from one central site, rather than having to go to each individual site and run individual information searches.

Most search engines and directories are NOT safe for children to use. Most search Web sites are concerned with matching keywords and other criteria and not determining whether or not the material is inappropriate for children. There are Web search directories available that are designed to be used by children and are screened and filtered by educators, parents and others.

Here are some invaluable kid-safe search directories:

AJKids.com
 Yahoooligans.com
 Alfy.com
 Searchopolis.com
 StudyWeb.com

Contract for Safe and Responsible Use of the Internet

Many families have used a "contract" between parents and children in an effort to promote safe and responsible use of the Internet. The purpose of the contract is to ensure that children understand what is expected of them when using the Internet, so that there'll be no confusion or ambiguity with safe and responsible online use.

It is suggested that parents re-create and print out a copy of the following "Contract for Safe and Responsible Use of the Internet." (Information may be found at the end of the book on how you can receive a free copy of the contract in the mail, or by e-mail)

Once you print out your copy of the contract, have everyone in the family sign it.

The contract:

As a member of this family, I realize that access to the Internet is a privilege, and it is up to me to make safe and responsible choices while using the Internet. I realize that the consequences of not practicing safe and responsible use of the Internet can be serious and any bad choices made while online may be dangerous for me and cause me trouble.

Therefore, I promise:

To never reveal any personal information about myself online. This includes my real name,

address, telephone number, name or location of my school, name of any of my family members or friends, or any other personal information. If I feel the need to reveal or provide any personal information while online, I will first consult with my parents or teachers.

To never upload or send my picture to anyone online who I don't know in real life, without notifying my parents. I will first check with my parents if I want to send my picture through the Internet to anyone and will tell the other person that my parents know I am sending them a picture.

To understand that everything I see and everyone I meet online may not be telling the truth. I will always be careful to consider all possibilities of the information I receive while being online.

To notify my parents or teachers if I come across anything online that makes me feel uncomfortable. Online information that may make me feel uncomfortable includes inappropriate Web sites that I may have come across accidentally, correspondence with someone who seems to be making me talk about things I do not want to, or anything else confusing or scary.

Never to meet face-to-face with anyone I've met online without first asking my parents. I also agree not to contact anyone I meet online by telephone without first notifying my parents.

Not to sign up for anything online without first asking my parents or teachers. This includes revealing my name or e-mail address to my favorite Web sites, or ordering/purchasing anything online without my parents' permission.

To follow all rules agreed to about being online. This includes the time of day, length of time and reasons for using the Internet. Using the Internet is a privilege that I have earned, and one that I must respect.

Signed _____
(child)

Signed _____
(child)

Signed _____
(parent)

Signed _____

A USEFUL GLOSSARY OF INTERNET TERMS:

Applet - A small software application added to a computer file or Web page to show special effects such as animation or sound.

Bit - The smallest measurement of digital information read by computers.

Bandwidth - The rate/speed information travels from one place to another either inside a computer or between computers. Bandwidth is usually measured in bits per second, kilobits (thousands of bits) per second or megabits (millions of bits) per second. For instance, a 56K modem allows for a connection of 56 kilobits per second.

