

Safe Surfing: Ten Tips To Protect Your Children Online

(NAPSA)—At home, at school and with friends, children today have more and more access to the Internet—technology with a burgeoning reputation as both educator and corruptor. What can you do to make sure your kids are surfing safely?

Winn Schwartau, a contributor to TechTV, the only cable television channel covering technology news, information and entertainment 24 hours a day, offers these 10 tips designed to help parents make sure their children get the most out of life online, while reducing the risks.

1. Talk to your kids. Ask them about the Internet and their computer habits, but don't be judgmental. Ask, and be ready for answers you might not like but may need to accept. Keep the dialogue open.

2. Keep the computer with an Internet connection in an open family area instead of hidden away in a child's bedroom. For schoolwork, consider a computer without online access.

3. Make sure you use high-quality anti-virus software and a personal firewall on your home computer. Security is an essential part of establishing privacy, protecting your family and developing good, ethical Internet habits.

4. Install monitoring software so you know what they're doing. You can ask your kids to help you! Don't forget to take a look at the software from time to time. It's not spying, nor an invasion of privacy; it's about protection.

5. Learn the technology. You don't have to be a geek, but ignorance is no excuse. Choose to support your children by becoming knowledgeable. Ask your kids to teach you and spend some "together time." Or take a local computer class; it might benefit your own life and career.

6. Know who your children are

talking to online. Help your kids understand the perils of weirdos they may encounter in chat rooms. If they get strange e-mail, feel threatened or receive inappropriate material, call law enforcement immediately.

7. Using various search engines, search the Internet on you and your kids' names. You may find out where they've been surfing, and what people know about you. Don't forget that surfing histories are kept in Internet Explorer and Netscape. Take a look at both regularly.

8. Never, ever give out personal information on the Internet to anyone you don't know or to Web sites that ask for it for no apparent reason. Use common sense. Don't give out your Social Security number, ever. Your kids' real names, addresses and phone numbers are all that is necessary for them to become victims.

9. Encourage your PTA, local schools and your kids' teachers to get involved in cyber-ethics and build it into the teaching curriculum. Encourage courses, guest speakers, reading and exercises. Get the computer-savvy kids involved.

10. Be a parent. Take responsibility. Don't blame anyone else. They're your children.

To find more information and articles about safe surfing, visit the Web sites at www.techtv.com and www.nicekids.net or check out "Internet and Computer Ethics for Kids," a guide for parents and teachers by Winn Schwartau.

