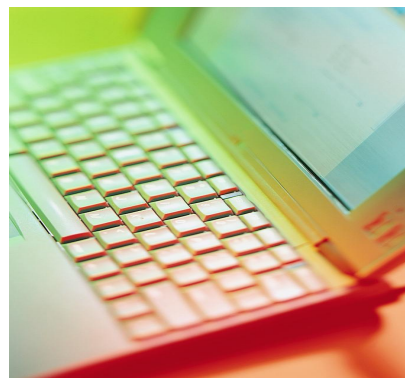


# Internet Safety Tips



Particularly important coming up to the onset of extended school holidays but also throughout the school year, it is of concern to most parents about how vulnerable children may be via use of their family computers. Most of us agree that our children are the future's most valuable asset so their protection is vital. These tips are designed to provide some strategies for parents to allow their children safer use of the internet.

Unfortunately the same advances in computer and telecommunications technology that allow children and adults to reach out to new sources of knowledge and cultural experiences, are also leaving them vulnerable to exploitation and harm by sex-offenders using the internet.

While on-line computer exploration opens a world of possibilities for children, they can be exposed to dangers as they use the internet. There are individuals who attempt to exploit children through the use of on-line services and the internet. Some of these individuals gradually seduce their targets through the use of attention, affection, kindness and even gifts. These individuals will often devote a lot of time and resources in the process. Some offenders immediately engage in sexually explicit conversations, other primarily collect and trade pornographic images while others seek face-to-face meetings with children via on-line contacts and chats. It is important to understand children can be indirectly victimised through conversation as well as transfer of sexually explicit material, and offenders can be any age or sex.

## **STRATEGIES FOR SAFER INTERNET USAGE:**

- Communicate and talk to your child about sexual victimisation and potential on-line dangers.
- Spend time with your child on-line. Have them teach you about the internet, their favourite destinations and sites etc.
- Keep the computer in a place where there is a lot of household "traffic". It is more difficult for computer sex-offenders to communicate with a child when the screen is visible to a parent or another household member.
- Use of any chat room should be closely monitored.

- Teach your child the responsible use of the resources on-line. There is much more to be learned from the on-line experience than via chat-rooms.
- Find out what computer safeguards are utilised by your child's school, public library and friends. These places are outside your normal supervision where your child could also encounter on-line dangers.
- Keep a watch on your child's behaviour. Some changes may indicate a problem (mention of unknown people, secretiveness, inappropriate sexual knowledge and so on).
- Ensure that your children can come to you and talk about any situation or problem they encounter, not only with the computer. The more often you tell a child this, the more likely they will be to believe it and do so if/when they never need to.

### **INSTRUCT CHILDREN:**

- Never arrange a face-to-face meeting with someone they meet on-line.
- Never post pictures of themselves on the internet to people they don't personally know.
- Never give out identifying information such as their name, home address, telephone or the school they attend.
- Never download pictures from an unknown source as there is a chance they could be sexually explicit images.
- Never respond to messages on a bulletin board that are suggestive, obscene or harassing.
- That whatever they may be told on-line may not be truthful.

NETALERT is an independent community advisory group established by the Australian Federal Government to promote safer internet surfing. Net alert offers advise on a wide range of internet issues, including safe surfing, on-line sharks – how to spot and avoid them, stranger danger and how to protect your identity, how to use filters and labels to screen out unwanted sites, safe use of credit cards on-line, dealing with junk e-mail, and protecting your privacy in cyberspace. NetAlert has a toll free helpline on 1800 880 176 or via the web at [www.netalert.net.au](http://www.netalert.net.au)

Happy safe surfing over the holidays.