

Online/Electronic Safety Tips

- As parents and caregivers, we have a responsibility to be informed and familiar with all technology our kids are using: email, chatting, gaming, texting, IMing, social networking, as well as web and cell phone camera use.
- It's no longer enough to situate computers in high visibility areas of the home, since today's youngsters have internet access from many sources, including laptops, cell phones, ipods, WiFi cafes and friends' equipment.
- If you have installed parental controls on your computer(s), don't be surprised if your child or their friends quickly bypass them.
- **The best tech safety policy between kids and parents is education and trust.** Set clear expectations of responsible digital behavior and clearly communicate these to your teen.
- Supervise and interact with your child online and electronically. Become familiar with chat/texting acronyms. (See Box.)
- The most common online/electronic threats to youngsters are peer-to-peer: cyberbullying, textual harassment and sexting (sending or receiving images or text with suggestive or sexual content.)
- Young people put themselves most at risk online by having sexual conversations with people they don't know, sending images of themselves or agreeing to a face-to-face (F2F) meeting. (Nine percent of 13 year olds and twenty-four percent of 17 year olds are sexting.)
- According to a recent teen survey,* most adolescents go willingly to meet online acquaintances F2F and are expecting a sexual encounter. Over three quarters of the time, there is more than one meeting.
- If your youngster is taking risks online, find out why. Consider obtaining professional help/counseling.
- Via social networking, gaming and webcams, the online offender may expose young people to adult content and even convince them to share intimate images of themselves.
- Online predators become a more serious threat if (1) they succeed in learning a child's full name, address or other personal information or (2) they manage to arrange a private, in-person meeting with the youngster. Young people who have agreed to such meetings have been robbed, beaten, raped – and worse.
- Stress to youngsters the importance of telling you or another trusted adult about any threatening or inappropriate messages or images. Report these immediately to www.cybertipline.com, your ISP and the police if needed.
- Let your child know that, for their own safety, you will be monitoring their cell phone, texting and email use from time to time. Then do so.
- If your teenager abuses any form of technology, consider taking the privilege away for a period of time - like you would with a car. Reward good behavior as well. Education, communication and trust are key to digital safety.
- Periodically review the [Online/Electronic Safety Pact](#) with your child. Consider asking them to sign the pact with you.



Sample Chat/Text Acronyms:

CT = Can't Talk

WYRN = What's Your Real Name?

TDTM = Talk Dirty to Me

LMIRL = Let's Meet in Real Life

9 = Parent is Watching

420 = Marijuana

*Source: Youth Internet Safety Survey by David Finkelhor, Kimberly Mitchell and Janis Wolak; Crimes Against Children Research Center, University of New Hampshire