



## **ONLINE SAFETY – what you and your children should know**

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The Internet is undoubtedly an invaluable resource for adults and children alike. The Internet provides an avenue to learn, communicate, and be entertained. However, as more youths spend time online, parents should educate themselves on the possible dangers on the Internet and, in turn, discuss these issues with their children. Educating your children on the 'why' behind your rules and guidelines is the easiest way to encourage them to listen and act accordingly. Keeping your kids safe online requires diligence on the part of the parent as well as the child.

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF ANONYMITY**

Ensuring that your children's identity remains anonymous on the Internet, can help safeguard them from many dangers. Giving out personal information can make your children susceptible to exploitation, harassment or enticement from would-be cyber-criminals.

When discussing anonymity with your children, be sure to communicate that "personal information" is not simply their name, address, phone number, and email address. Revealing details such as the city they live in, the school they attend, and the locations in which they socialize with friends can make them possible targets for online notoriety.

#### **How to help your children stay anonymous:**

1. Help them choose a screen name that does not reveal personal information. Their screen name should never use any part of their real name or give any indication of where they live.
2. Help them adjust the preferences in their instant messaging service or blog so it does not reveal their personal information, for example, their real name and email address should not be listed in local directories or public profiles.

It is also important to explain to your children that, even after taking these precautions, they can never be truly anonymous if they reveal any personal information – especially in forums such as chat rooms, blogs, or MySpace. It's easy to give out personal information without realizing it, so they must always be conscious of what information they provide.

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF SECURITY**

The Internet can seem like a safe venue to make contacts. Instant messaging, blogs, and chat rooms encourage sharing contacts to grow an online community. Friends will 'introduce' their friends, and soon your children have a network of contacts they only know in virtual world, who may or may not be worthy of their trust. Children need to understand that security online goes beyond simply not revealing personal details. For your part, installing and using advanced Internet control software on your computer can help filter out harmful content and adult material that your children should not be exposed to.



### **How to help your children stay secure:**

1. Explain that they should never download files or open links sent from someone they don't personally know and trust – even a friend of a friend. Links and files could contain harmful viruses or intrusive software that can harm your computer or collect personal information.
2. Explain to them that they should never tell their passwords to anyone, even to a friend, since nothing in cyber-space can be guaranteed to be secure.
3. If on a public computer (for example, at a school or a library), instruct them to never check the "save password" or "login automatically" buttons.
4. Explain that under no circumstances should they physically meet up with anyone they have met online – even if they're a friend of a friend.
5. Above all, encourage them to trust their instincts – if they feel unsure about anyone or anything online, they should talk to you or a teacher.

This article has outlined the importance of online safety for you and your children. It has been brought to you by (**WSI My Web Guide**) in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates. To learn more about us please visit our site - [www.wsimywebguide.com](http://www.wsimywebguide.com) or email: [info@wsimywebguide.com](mailto:info@wsimywebguide.com) in Dubai and within the United Arab Emirates (UAE)

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