

HOW TO TALK TO YOUR KIDS ABOUT BETTER PROTECTING THEIR ONLINE LIVES

Place the family's computer in a common room where supervision and guidelines are met.

Prepare your children for the online world just as you would for the real world.

- Establish guidelines and rules.
- Know who communicates with your children.

Learn about the Internet.

- Familiarize yourself with the programs your children are using.
- Consider using Internet filters or blocks.
- Acknowledge that predators can find very personal information on you and your children strictly by tracking what websites you visit.

Limiting your children's computer time is not enough to safeguard them on the Internet.

- It is also important to talk about the benefits and dangers of the Internet and make sure your children are making smart decisions while online.

Explain to your children that Instant Messenger (IM) is only for chatting with school and family friends or teammates who they know by face and are approved by you.

- Make sure your child can put a face to every screen name on their IM "buddy list."

An estimated 65% of incidents happen in "chatrooms".

- Reinforce that people are not always who they say they are when online.
- Make sure your children know how dangerous it is to give out personal information such as their name, mailing address or E-mail address.

- Stress the fact that it is not safe to get together with someone they first "meet" online.

Regarding personal webpage services including MySpace, Xanga, live journal, blogspot, and Facebook:

- Teach your kids to check the preferences in the settings menu so that only people they have approved as friends can see their profiles.
- Reinforce that your children should only add people to their friends list if they have established a relationship in real life previous to seeing the person online.

For more information, view and discuss the guidelines and statistics on the following websites with your children:

www.safekids.com, www.getnetwise.org, and www.wiredkids.com.

Source: National Center for Missing and Exploited Children website, www.missingkids.com.