



# Kids Rules for Online Safety

The most important thing to remember is that when you are online in any kind of a public forum, you are out in public, and anyone can read whatever you type. You should never type anything on the Internet that you would not want known to anyone, anywhere in the world. You should also remember that people you meet in cyberspace might not be who they seem to be. Here are some of the potential risks that arise when children access the Internet:

- **Keep Your Identity Private:** If you are in any type of public forum, avoid giving out your full name, your mailing address, your telephone number, the name of your school, or any other information that could help someone determine your actual identity. The same applies to your family and friends. Never reveal anything about other people that could possibly get them into trouble.
- **Never Get Together With Someone You "Meet" Online** The biggest danger to your safety is if you get together with someone you "meet" online. Remember, you never know (for certain) if people you meet online are who they say they are. If you do feel it is appropriate to meet with someone, discuss it with your parents and never go to the meeting by yourself. Arrange to meet in a public place, like a coffee shop or mall that you (not just the other person) are familiar and comfortable with, and never go alone. The safest procedure is to have your parents talk with the parents of the other person and for both of you to bring your parents along on the first meeting.
- **Never Respond to E-mail, Chat Comments, or Newsgroup Messages That Are Hostile, Belligerent, Inappropriate, Or In Any Way Make You Feel Uncomfortable:** It is not your fault if you get a message that is mean or in any way makes you feel uncomfortable. If you get such a message, do not respond. Instead, show it to your parents or a trusted adult to see if there is anything you can do to make it stop. Sending a response just encourages the person.
- **Talk with Your Parents About Their Expectations and Ground Rules for Going Online:** It is important that you and your parents are on the same channel when it comes to your online activities. This includes when you can go online, how long you can stay online, and what activities you can do online. Communicating with your parents does not mean that you have to give up your privacy. It just means that you come to an agreement based on mutual trust and understanding. While you are at it, perhaps you can help your parents had better understand the Internet, what it can be used for, and how it is helpful for teens.

