

Your Child's DIGITAL Life



Safety Tips for Parents

Dear New Yorkers,

Just like in the real world, there are dangers in cyberspace. Predators and scam artists often rely on the inexperience and innocence of our youth to collect information they can use to exploit others for their own benefit.

The Internet, however, is too valuable a resource to try to keep our children away from it. So, just as we hold their hands as they learn to cross the street, we have to help them learn to safely navigate the information highway.

Here in the Attorney General's office, I have devoted staff to investigating and prosecuting Internet crimes. I am committed to keeping criminals offline through strengthened legislation and vigilant enforcement of safety regulations. But in the anonymous world of the Internet, informed parents are the key to keeping children safe.

Take this booklet home and talk to your kids about how to stay safe while taking advantage of all the Internet has to offer. Together, we can ensure our kids are safe online and off.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eric T. Schneiderman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Eric" being the most prominent.

Eric T. Schneiderman

Be Your Child's Internet Provider

Laptops, desktops, smartphones, gaming devices — your child's access to the World Wide Web is becoming limitless. A scary thought for parents, but there are ways for you to set the boundaries for how your children learn to navigate the digital world.

Establish Your Own Rules:

- ✓ What websites they can browse;
- ✓ Who they can meet or "friend" online;
- ✓ How much time they can spend online, playing games, or using social networks;
- ✓ Where in the house the computers are used;
- ✓ Think about creating a written contract between you and your child that establishes the rules and lists the consequences of breaking them.



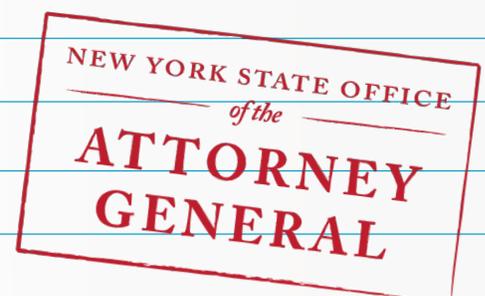
...And The Internet Enforcer

- ✓ Consider “collecting” electronic devices — laptops, cell and smart phones, gaming devices — at bedtime. Teenagers sleep with their phones, etc on, waking up periodically to respond to messages. Bad for sleep habits, bad for monitoring.
- ✓ Periodically check the computer’s browsing history to see what sites have been explored.
- ✓ Check your bills — many wireless phone bills list both the phone numbers and times of calls and texts. Check yours to see if your child is using the phone during school or night time hours.
- ✓ Consider filtering software that limits where your child can browse.

Safeguard Your Home, Your Identity

The Internet is a window into your family's life. Make sure you have the appropriate security measures in place.

- ✓ Gone wireless? Configure your router access to make sure your system is password protected.
- ✓ Password protect or encrypt any important documents on your hard drive.
- ✓ Use antivirus software and make sure it's updated.
- ✓ Use only secure sites when conducting financial transactions. Look for sites starting with https://, where the "s" stands for *secure*; also check for a gold locked padlock at the bottom of the page.
- ✓ Commit all passwords to memory. Do not use easy-to-guess passwords, such as the last four digits of your SSN, DOB, middle name, etc. or the same password for everything.
- ✓ If you receive notice of an information security breach from a company or State agency, contact all credit reporting bureaus and place a fraud alert for 90 days.



Help Your Child Establish Their Online Identity

Facebook, Twitter, Skype, Myspace...by the time a list of social networking and communication sites goes to print, it can be out of date. Take steps to protect children as they connect with friends and family, regardless of what sites are currently popular.

- ✓ Learn the site's safety features. Make sure that the user controls who can see personal information.
- ✓ Check to see if the site is age appropriate for your child.
- ✓ Make your own profile and add your children as friends. Make this a condition of them using a site.
- ✓ Make sure your children only "friend" people they know personally. Predators use the friend of friend feature to gain access to more victims.
- ✓ Have children use privacy settings that limit access to friends only.
- ✓ Examine their lists of friends, and browse those pages.

Don't Reveal Too Much Online, Some Safety "TMI" Includes

- ✓ Age and Birthday (particularly the year, or age and date in combination...this is how identities are stolen)
- ✓ Phone numbers
- ✓ Schedule
- ✓ Locations — Certain "check-in" apps let people know where you are based on GPS ability on smartphones.



What Goes Online, Stays Online. . .

TALK TO YOUR KIDS ABOUT THIS! Reinforce that they should not post or send anything that they wouldn't want the world (or their grandparents) to see.

Sexting

"Sexting" refers to sending nude or explicit photos via a cellphone, but the reality is that it happens on any web enabled device. Here's what you and your children need to know:

- ✓ **It's illegal.** A revealing or explicit photo or video of a minor is child pornography, regardless of who took the picture. Minors taking and sending photos of themselves, or passing on one sent to them, can be (and have been!) charged with producing or distributing child pornography;
- ✓ **It's damaging.** Photos "go viral" quickly and even the most stable child can be emotionally devastated by it. If it ends up on the Internet, it can haunt the child for years to come.

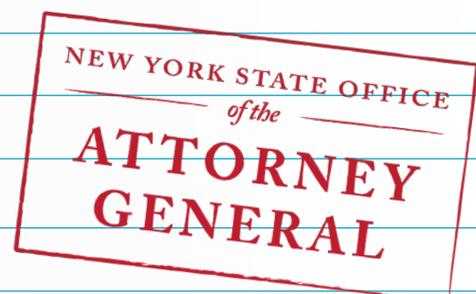
Tell children to NEVER send a sexually revealing image of anyone. Remind them that even photos meant to be seen by just one other person, can quickly be passed on to other phones and posted on the Internet.

. . . Forever.

Webcams - The Window Into Your Child's Life

Webcams allow your children to keep in touch visually with far-flung family and friends. It can also be the portal through which strangers get a closer look at your child. Teach your kids to:

- ✓ Check their surroundings for revealing information.
- ✓ Remember that videos can be saved, accessed and altered;
- ✓ Remember that a funny photo/video today may be a permanent part of their digital resume tomorrow;
- ✓ Parents may want to be sure that webcams are only used in public areas of the house, and may be disabled in a parent's absence;
- ✓ Again, NEVER stream nude or explicit photos or videos over the Internet.



Stop Cyberbullying

More than 25% of children report being bullied. That likely means there are at least that many children doing the bullying. Talk to your kids about what it means to bully or be bullied. Teach them to:

- ✓ Come to you, a teacher or other adult if they or someone else is being bullied;
- ✓ Keep private information offline. Rumors spread very quickly online and the most common form of bullying is the publication of private communications;
- ✓ Walk away from the computer cell phone or gaming device if conversation gets heated and to tell you immediately if they are being bullied;
- ✓ Respect other people's privacy and feelings both on line and off;
- ✓ Don't text, email, post or blog anything about another person that they wouldn't want said about themselves.

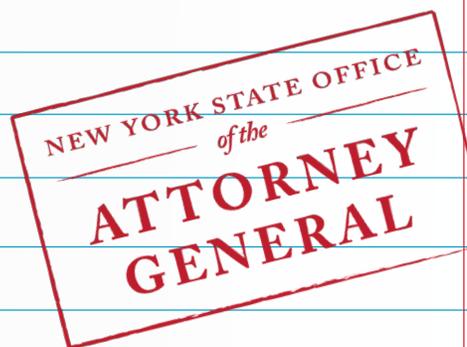
Look for Signs of Problems

These may be signs your child is being bullied:

- ✓ Signs of emotional distress during or after using the Internet;
- ✓ Withdrawal from friends and activities;
- ✓ Avoidance of school or group gatherings;
- ✓ Slipping grades and "acting out" in anger at home;
- ✓ Changes in mood, behavior, sleep, or appetite.

Or that maybe your child is being the bully, if he or she:

- ✓ Quickly switches screens or closes programs when you walk by;
- ✓ Laughs excessively while using the computer;
- ✓ Avoids discussions about what they are doing on the computer;
- ✓ Uses multiple online accounts or an account that is not their own.



Keep Downloading Legal

Music, movies, games, TV shows...it's all available on the net. It's also illegal to download outside of authorized sources. Downloading "pirated" media is a serious crime. It is regularly prosecuted and can result in jail time and fines in excess of \$150,000. It can also expose your computer to viruses and threats like spyware and Trojan Horses.

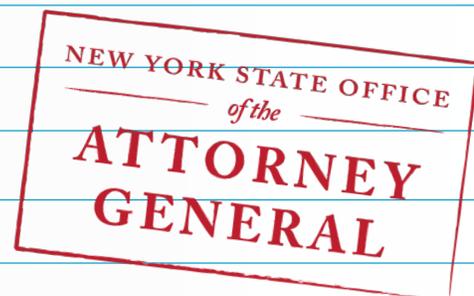
- ✓ Set rules about purchasing and downloading music and other media files together.
- ✓ Check your computer for file-sharing programs to make sure that your child is not downloading or sharing material illegally.
- ✓ Consider monitoring or filtering software.

Look for Signs of Predators

One in seven children using the Internet has received an unwanted sexual solicitation.

As in the real world, we can't always monitor everything our children do or with whom they come into contact. Despite all our efforts, sometimes the "bad guys" break in. Look for signs that your child has encountered someone who may be "grooming" them for a meeting or inappropriate relationship.

- ✓ Obsessive about being online and angry if not able to get online.
- ✓ Minimizes the screen/turns off the computer when adults are nearby.
- ✓ Visits inappropriate websites, chat rooms.
- ✓ Receives gifts from someone you do not know.
- ✓ Has a lot of phone calls to and from numbers that you do not know.



Additional Resources

NYS Office of the Attorney General

If you want to report suspicious Internet activity or lodge a complaint, please let us know. More information and complaint forms on this and many other topics is available on our website. You can also call, write or email us.

Office of the Attorney General

Internet Bureau

120 Broadway
New York, NY 10271

Website: ag.ny.gov

Email: **ifraud@ag.ny.gov**

Phone: (212) 416-8433

Fax: (212) 416-8369

If your group would like a presentation on this or other issues, please contact our Bureau of Intergovernmental Affairs at:

Phone: (212) 416-8175

Email: **communityaffairs@ag.ny.gov**

These organizations also accept and investigate complaints:

The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC)

(www.cybertipline.com)

NYS Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force — **www.nysicac.org**

Good Resources for Parents

NetSmartz Workshop

(**www.netsmartz.org**)

NetSmartz411

(**www.netsmartz411.org**) Ask an expert

GetNetWise

(**www.getnetwise.org**)

OnGuardOnline

(**www.onguardonline.gov**)

GetParentalControls.org

ConnectSafely.org

GetGameSmart

(**www.getgamesmart.com**)

WebWiseKids

www.webwisekids.org

iKeepSafe

(**www.ikeepsafe.org**)

WiredSafety

(**www.wiredsafety.org**)

Resources for Teachers and Schools

NetSmartz Workshop

(**www.netsmartz.org**)

CyberSmart

(**www.cybersmartcurriculum.org**)

iSafe

(**www.isafe.org**)

