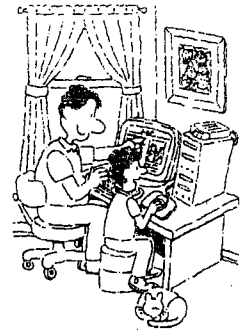


The Internet and Your Family



Not long ago, computers were huge machines that occupied entire rooms. Today's desktop and laptop computers give us our own personal windows to the world. The stunning growth of the Internet has placed knowledge and information at our fingertips. The possibilities for learning and exploring on the Internet are endless. Being able to use technology is fast becoming a requirement for success in today's society. Teaching your child the basic skills of working with computers will provide tools she will need in our changing world.

It is critical that your child have your guidance when learning to use the Internet. Even if your child is an experienced computer user, he needs your involvement, your experience, and your judgment. Although children can use the Internet to tap into the Library of Congress or view pictures of the surface of Mars, not all material on the Internet is appropriate for children. As a parent, you can guide and teach your child in a way that no one else can. Regardless of your technological know-how, you can make sure your child's experience on the Internet is safe, educational, and fun.

What is the information superhighway?

The Internet, sometimes called the information superhighway, is a giant network of computers that connects people and information all over the world. The term *on-line* means being connected to the Internet. The World Wide Web (often shortened to WWW or the Web) is the most popular part of the Internet because it includes pictures and sound as well as text.

What can my child and I find on the Internet?

A computer that is connected to the Internet allows you to turn your home, community center, local library, or school into a place of unlimited information. The Internet can help you and your child do the following:

- **Find educational resources**, including up-to-the-minute news, important documents, photos, and research.
- **Get help with homework** through on-line encyclopedias, reference materials, and access to experts.
- **Improve computer skills** necessary to find information, solve problems, and communicate with others.
- **Connect with places around the world** to exchange e-mail with on-line pen pals and learn about other countries and cultures.
- **Locate parenting information** and swap ideas with other families.
- **Learn and have fun together** by sharing interesting and enjoyable experiences.

Surfing the Net

When you go to the Internet, you may have a specific address in mind or you may browse through the Web, just as you would a library or a catalog. This is often called "surfing the Net." Following are several ways to get around on the Web:

- **Using Web addresses.** Every Web site has its own unique address. By typing the address in the space provided, your Web browser will take you there. Make sure you type the address exactly as specified.
- **Following links.** Many sites include *hyperlinks* to other related sites. By clicking on the highlighted area, you can connect to another Web site without having to type its address.
- **Using search engines.** Search engines are programs that can enable you to search the Internet using keywords or topics. For example, if you or your child are interested in finding information about Abraham Lincoln, simply click on a search engine and enter his name. A list of several Web sites will come up for you to explore.

Other Internet uses

E-mail—Electronic mail is by far the most popular activity on-line. You and your child can exchange notes with friends and family. Most Internet service providers offer e-mail accounts and allow you to choose your own e-mail address.

Listservs—By using e-mail, you can participate in a *listserv* (a discussion group focusing on a topic that interests you). Subscribing to a listserv allows you to read all messages sent by other members of the group. You can also send your own responses that will be read by everyone else. Most listservs are run by an administrator or moderator. A list of listservs and how to subscribe to them can be found at <http://www.liszt.com>.

Usenet newsgroups—Usenet is a system of thousands of special interest groups that allow people to post messages for anyone else to read. Readers can respond by posting a general message or sending e-mail to the author of an earlier message. Unlike listservs, Usenet groups do not require you to subscribe. Your Internet service provider will let you search for newsgroups that interest you by using keywords (for example, try "parenting").

A caution about newsgroups: Most newsgroups are not moderated. No one keeps the discussion focused on the topic or has control over inappropriate behavior. Some topics may not be suitable for children.

Setting rules of the road

Just like you have rules for how your children should deal with strangers and which TV shows, movies, and videos they are allowed to watch, it is important to have a set of rules when they use the Internet. Be wary of people on the Net who can be mean, rude, or even criminal. To keep your child's time on the Internet safe, productive, and fun, follow these guidelines:

- Set limits on the amount of time your child can spend on-line each day or week. Consider using an alarm clock or timer in case you or your child loses track of time.
- Do not let surfing the Net take the place of homework, playing outside or with friends, and pursuing other interests.

Visit us at www.aap.org

The award-winning Web site of the American Academy of Pediatrics provides a wide range of helpful information for parents. The site is updated daily with the latest on children's health and safety. A search engine allows parents to search the site's thousands of pages of information for specific topics. The site includes:

- You and Your Family—a special section dedicated to the needs of parents and children of all ages
- The latest information on immunizations, car seat safety, Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, breastfeeding, and dozens of other topics
- Where We Stand—Presenting the Academy's positions on children's health and safety issues
- Excerpts from AAP child care books and brochures
- The latest research and reports on children's health issues
- Information on new state and federal legislation
- A catalog of AAP publications with on-line ordering

Check out <http://www.aap.org> often for the latest in children's health and safety.

- Make sure your child knows that people on-line are not always who they say they are and that on-line information is not necessarily private.
- Teach your child the following:
 - NEVER give out personal information** (including name, address, phone number, age, race, school name or location, or friends' names) without your permission.
 - NEVER use a credit card on-line** without your permission.
 - NEVER share passwords**, even with friends.
 - NEVER arrange a face-to-face meeting** with someone she meets on-line, unless you approve of the meeting and go with your child to a public place. Teenagers in particular need to be aware of the risks.
 - NEVER respond to messages that make her feel confused or uncomfortable.** Your child should ignore the sender, end the communication, and tell you or another trusted adult right away.
 - NEVER use bad language** or send mean messages on-line.

Caring about content

Even without trying, your child may come across material on the Internet that is obscene, violent, hate-filled, racist, or offensive in other ways. One type of material, child pornography, is even illegal. If you or your child encounter child pornography, you should report it to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children at 1-800-THE LOST (843-5678) or visit its Web site at <http://www.missingkids.org>.

Though other material is not illegal, you should take the following steps to keep it away from your child:

- Make sure your child understands what you consider appropriate for him and what areas are off limits. Set clear rules and enforce them.
- Look into software or services that can filter or block offensive Web sites and material. Also, many Internet service providers offer site blocking, restrictions on e-mail, and other controls for parents. Be aware, however, that many children are smart enough to find ways around these restrictions. Nothing can replace supervision.
- Make a point to participate in your child's on-line time. Put the computer in the living room or family room. Stay involved and monitor what your child is doing.
- Find out what the Internet use policies are at your child's school or at your local library

Information: the good and the bad

Anyone can put information on the Internet and not all of it is reliable. Some people and organizations are very careful about the accuracy of the information they post, others are not. Some give false information on purpose. Remind your children not to copy on-line information and claim it is their own.

As the Internet grows, so does the trend of on-line advertising. Steer your child to non-commercial sites and other places that do not sell products to children. Teach your child to recognize the advertising and marketing of products and services. Encourage your child to think about who created the ads and why they are there. Discuss questions like the following:

- What is the product being advertised?
- How are they trying to get you to buy the product?
- Is there something about the product they are not telling you?

There is an almost unlimited amount of information, products, and services available on the Internet, and it continues to grow. It is important to be aware of the potential risks involved in going on-line. By setting clear rules and using common sense, you can help your child take advantage of the vast resources the Internet offers, while at the same time having fun and staying safe.

Other great places to visit

Following is just a sampling of interesting, informative sites available to you and your family. This is not a complete list and the American Academy of Pediatrics is not responsible for the content of the sites mentioned here. The addresses are as current as possible, but may change at any time. If an address does not work, use a search engine to find the updated link.

Children with special needs

Computers should be accessible to everyone and special equipment is available to help children with special needs. A joystick, for example, can make operating a computer easier for a child with limited mobility. Special keyboards, screens, and computerized-voice products can allow a child with special needs to enjoy the benefits of using a computer.

For more information, contact:

The ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education
800/328-0272 (TTY 703/264-9449) or
<http://www.cec.sped.org/ericcec.htm>

The Starbright Foundation
310/442-1560 or <http://www.starbright.org>

For parents

Family Education Network

<http://www.familyeducation.com>

Focusing on helping children succeed in school

FedWorld

<http://www.fedworld.gov>

Reference for federal government information on the Web

I Am Your Child

<http://www.lamyourchild.org>

The I Am Your Child campaign stresses the importance of a child's first years, and is sponsored by Rob Reiner's Families and Work Institute

Media Literacy from NCADI

<http://www.health.org/./medlitnew/index.htm>

National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information site providing tools to use media literacy to help youth think for themselves and resist powerful media messages about alcohol and drugs

NetParents

<http://www.netparents.org>

Information on Internet security and blocking software

YouthInfo

<http://youth.os.dhhs.gov>

Focuses mainly on adolescents. Sponsored by the US Department of Health and Human Services

For children

50+ Great Sites for Kids and Parents

<http://www.ala.org/parentspage/greatsites/50.html>

Sponsored by the American Library Association. Directory of many sites for children of all ages.

Exploratorium

<http://www.exploratorium.edu>

Puzzles, games, and experiments

The Internet Public Library: Reference Center

<http://www.ipl.org/ref>

Includes an "Ask a Question" feature and a teen collection

Jean Armour Polly's 100 Extraordinary Experiences for Internet Kids

<http://www.well.com/user/polly/ikyp.exp.html>

Fun, interesting, and educational adventures on the Internet

The Library of Congress

<http://www.loc.gov>

Includes historical collections, databases, and access to other government information systems

My Virtual Reference Desk

<http://www.refdesk.com>

Dozens of links to dictionaries, encyclopedias, and other reference materials.

Public Broadcasting System

<http://www.pbs.org>

Information and activities related to PBS children's programming

Steve Savitsky's Interesting Places for Kids

<http://www.starport.com/places/forKids/>

Unusual links for kids

Health and medical sites

Note: On-line advice should never replace your pediatrician.

Centers for Disease Control

<http://www.cdc.gov/cdc.html>

Information on preventing and controlling disease, injury, and disability

Healthfinder

<http://www.healthfinder.gov>

US Government sponsored site that can help you search for health information, resources, and services

Mayo Clinic

<http://www.mayohealth.org>

Health information and advice from one of the world's most renowned medical research institutions

Medsite

<http://www.medsite.com>

A medical search engine that reviews medical Web sites and helps make medical information more accessible

National Institutes of Health

<http://www.nih.gov>

Extensive information on preventing, detecting, diagnosing, and treating disease and disability

National Organization for Rare Disorders (NORD)

<http://www.rarediseases.org>

Dedicated to helping people with rare "orphan" diseases and assisting the organizations that serve them

US Department of Health and Human Services

<http://www.dhhs.gov>

Information on more than 250 programs protecting the health of Americans

Adapted from the US Department of Education booklet

"Parents Guide to the Internet." For the complete publication, see

<http://www.ed.gov/pubs/parents/internet/>

The information contained in this publication should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.

American Academy
of Pediatrics



The American Academy of Pediatrics is an organization of 55,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists, and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety, and well-being of infants, children, adolescents, and young adults.

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