

A Parent's Guide to Internet Safety

Federal Bureau of Investigations-Publications

While online computer exploration opens a world of possibilities for children, expanding their horizons and exposing them to different cultures and ways of life, they can be exposed to dangers as they hit the road exploring the information highway. There are individuals who attempt to sexually exploit children through the use of online services and the Internet. Children, especially adolescents, are sometimes interested in and curious about sexuality explicit material.

What are the signs that your child might be at risk online?

- Your child spends large amounts of time online, especially at night.
- You find pornography on your child's computer.
- Your child receives phone calls from men you don't know or is making calls, sometimes long-distance, to numbers you don't recognize.
- Your child receives mail, gifts, or packages from someone you don't know.
- Your child turns the computer monitor off or quickly changes the screen on the monitor when you come into the room.
- Your child becomes withdrawn from the family.
- Your child is using an online account belonging to someone else.

What should you do if you suspect your child is communicating with a sexual predator online?

- Consider talking openly with your child about your suspicions. Tell them about the dangers of computer-sex offenders.
- Review what is on your child's computer. If you don't know how, ask a friend, coworker, relative, other person who is familiar with computers. Pornography or any kind of sexual communication can be a warning sign.
- Use the Caller ID service to determine who is calling your child. Also use the call rejection feature; which prevents computer-sex offenders or anyone else from calling your home anonymously.
- Monitor your child's access to all types of live electronic communications, including cell phones. Computer-sex offenders almost always meet potential victims via chat rooms.

What can you do to minimize the chances of an online exploiter victimizing your child?

- Communicate, and talk with your child about sexual victimization and potential online danger.
- Spend time with your children on line. Have them teach you about their favorite online destination.
- Keep the computer in a common room in the house, not in your child's bedroom. It is much harder for a sex-offender to communicate with a child when the computer screen is visible to a parent or other member of the household.
- Utilize parental controls provided by your service provider.
- Always maintain access to your child's online account and randomly check his or her email.
- Teach your child the responsible use of the resources online.
- Find out what computer safeguards are utilized by your child's school, and other resources outside of your supervision.

- Understand that even if your child was a willing participant in any form of sexual exploitation, that he or she is the victim, and not at fault.
- Instruct your children:
 - to never arrange a face to face meeting with someone they met online.
 - to never upload (post) pictures of themselves onto the internet to people they do not know.
 - to never give identifying information such as name, phone number, home address, or school name.
 - to never download picture from an unknown source, as there is a good chance there could be sexually explicit images.
 - to never respond to messages or posts that are suggestive, obscene, belligerent, or harassing.
 - that whatever they are told online may or may not be true.

Should any of the following situations arise in your household, via the Internet or online service, you should immediately contact your local or state law enforcement agency, the FBI, and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

- Your child or anyone in the household has received child pornography
- Your child has been sexually solicited by someone who knows that your child is under 18 years of age
- Your child has received sexually explicit images from someone that knows your child is under the age of 18.

If one of these scenarios occurs, keep the computer/device turned off in order to preserve any evidence for future law enforcement use. Unless directed to do so by the law enforcement agency, you should not attempt to copy any of the images and/or text found on the computer/device.

Adapted from:

Federal Bureau of Investigation

Cyber Division, Innocent Images National Initiative

<http://www.fbi.gov/stats-services/publications/parent-guide>