



**A Message From
Illinois Attorney General
Lisa Madigan**

According to the U.S. Department of Education, 81% of children as young as 3 years old are now using the Internet.

With the majority of today's kids online, parents and guardians are understandably concerned about Internet safety, but they may not know what steps they should take to protect their children.

Fortunately, the answer is not as difficult as you might think. You cannot watch your kids every minute, but you can use strategies to help them benefit from the Internet and avoid its potential risks. Perhaps the most important thing you can do to promote online safety is to talk with your kids about the rewards and potential risks of Internet use.

By providing guidance for your children, you can expand their online skills and confidence, and you can help them learn to avoid potential risks. And you might be surprised by what they teach you at the same time!

Lisa Madigan
Attorney General

Additional online safety resources are available from NetSmartz411® at www.NetSmartz411.org or 1-888-NETS411 (638-7411).

For more information, please contact our office:

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Keeping Kids Safer Online

Minimizing Risks While Developing Online Skills



Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force

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LISA MADIGAN
Illinois Attorney General

Keeping Kids Safer on the Internet: Tips for Parents and Guardians

Allowing kids to go online without supervision or ground rules is like allowing them to explore a major metropolitan area by themselves. The Internet, like a city, offers an enormous array of entertainment and educational resources, but also presents some risks. Kids need help navigating this world. Here's how parents and guardians can help:

Where Do Kids Connect?

In general, kids:

- Connect to the Internet from a computer at home, at school, or at a library or a friend's home.
- Connect from anywhere using laptops, cell phones, handheld devices and other wireless devices.
- Compete against and chat with players around the world using Internet-enabled gaming systems.
- Exchange messages, photos and videos via the Internet at any time.

Ways to Enhance Kids' Online Skills

- Begin a dialogue with your kids about Internet use.
- Consider rating, blocking, monitoring and filtering applications.
- Make Internet use a family activity while encouraging critical thinking.
- Set reasonable rules including time limits.
- Encourage your kids to go to you when they encounter problems online.

More Tips to Minimize Risks

- Instruct your kids to use privacy settings to restrict access to profiles so only the individuals on their contact lists are able to view their profiles.
- Remind kids only to add people they know in real life to their contact lists.
- Encourage kids to choose appropriate screen names or nicknames.
- Talk to your kids about creating strong passwords, such as those that use the first letter of each word of a phrase or an easy-to-remember acronym.
- Visit social networking sites with your kids, and exchange ideas about which sites pose potential risks.
- Ask your kids about the people they communicate with online. Help them learn how to make choices about who is appropriate to friend.
- Make it a rule with your kids that they can never give out personal information or meet anyone in person without your prior knowledge and consent. Define "personal information" with your child.
- Encourage your kids to think, "Is this message harmful, dangerous, hurtful or rude?" before posting or sending anything online.
- Teach your kids not to respond to any rude or harassing remarks or messages that make them feel scared, uncomfortable or confused and to show you these messages instead.

You can't take it back ... Think before you type!

- ✓ Is my online content hurtful, rude, dangerous or harmful?
- ✓ Would I want a parent, guardian, grandparent or trusted adult to see my post?
- ✓ Would I want someone to treat me this way?
- ✓ What are the consequences of what I post?
- ✓ How will online content affect my future education, employment, military involvement or relationships?
- ✓ How do I know this person? Family, friend, acquaintance or stranger?
- ✓ How do the qualities of my real-life friends compare to my online friends?
- ✓ What is the difference between writing secrets in a journal versus online?

