



BY MIKE HALEY

Squiggout Web Designs, LLC

# Keeping Your Child Safe on the Internet

**Would you leave your child alone and unsupervised in Las Vegas?** Silly question you say but, allowing your child to explore the Internet unsupervised is almost the same thing. Did you know that more than 60% of all Internet Web sites are pornographic and at any given time you are about two clicks away from displaying a porn site? That's one click, two clicks. This is why one in four children who use the Internet regularly will be exposed to unwanted sexual material.

It gets even worse when it comes to chat rooms. The FBI states that your child has a **100% chance of meeting a predator** within thirty to sixty seconds of joining a chat room. This includes the AOL AIM system and others. To help protect them from this make sure there is **NO** personal information in their profile. Know who they are chatting with. Look over their chats and get an acronym chart so you can understand what they are talking about. The best way to keep a child safe, however, is by not allowing them into chat rooms at all.

The most dangerous aspect of the Internet is its use by pedophiles and predators, who pose as youngsters themselves to open lines of communication with your child, then expose them to pornography, eventually arranging to meet them in person. **The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children found that one in five children ages 10-17 who regularly use the Internet have received a sexual solicitation while online.** Chat rooms and instant/private messages are the two main tools pedophiles use to contact children online and it takes an average of two to four weeks for a child to be lured into meeting someone in person. Child molesters often use pornography to seduce their "prey"—it lowers the inhibitions of the victim and serves as an "instructional manual" for when they meet.

Now the shocker... **85% of kids surveyed** said their parents didn't know what they did or have done on the Internet. If you're a caring parent, this may just serve as a wakeup call to how unprotected your child really is. Even with the BEST filters and parental software on your computer, you need to be involved. The Department of Justice stated that, "Never before in the history of telecommunications media in the United States has so much indecent (and obscene) material been so easily accessible by so many minors in so many

American homes with so few restrictions."

## What can you do?

1. Go into the history of your computer to find out where your child has been. If they login to any of these Web sites, go in and delete all personal information in their profile.
2. If the Web site your child wants to visit has no parental controls, do not let them visit it.
3. If the Web site is a social networking site (like MySpace), make sure there is **NO** personal information in their profile.
4. Use filters and parental controls on your family computer and make sure they are on and cannot be turned off by your child. Beware—**NO FILTER IS PERFECT!**
5. Avoid chat rooms! There is a thing called the telephone!
6. Explain to your children the risks of chatting with people on the Internet they do not know in real life.
7. Explain to them that there are Web sites they cannot visit and make sure they are locked out in the computer software.
8. Turn on the safe search options on search engines like Google and Yahoo. Children misspell words and this can land them in the wrong part of the Internet.
9. Monitor your child's online activity and limit the time spent online.
10. Block your child's personal information from being posted or emailed.

Freedom of speech is our right in this country and we are all responsible for protecting it and our children.

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