

Nassau Library System

**PARENT'S  
INTERNET  
GUIDE**

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*Searching Wisely  
and Safely*



## *Nassau Library System Parent's Internet Guide*

### *Contents*

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>page 1</b>
<b>When to Surf &amp; When to Stay on Land</b>	<b>page 2</b>
<b>What Makes a Good Web Site?</b>	<b>page 3</b>
<b>Safe Searching</b>	<b>page 4</b>
<b>Tips for Parents</b>	<b>page 5</b>
<b>Discussion Starters</b>	<b>page 6</b>
<b>Kid's Pledge</b>	<b>page 9</b>
<b>Teen's Pledge</b>	<b>page 10</b>
<b>Parent's Pledge</b>	<b>page 11</b>
<b>Web Sites for More Information</b>	<b>page 12</b>
<b>Glossary of Internet Terms</b>	<b>page 13</b>





## *Introduction*

The Internet is a rich resource for information, ideas, and entertainment. Staggering statistics estimate that 200,000 new web sites are added to the Internet each day. The rapid growth of the Internet has also raised concerns about safety for children and teenagers on the Internet. Parents are faced with balancing this amazing resource with concerns for the safety of their children.

The Nassau Library System and your local library have developed this booklet to provide you with tips for using the Internet wisely and safely as well as suggestions for beginning dialogue with your children about Internet use. There is no “one size fits all” answer for keeping kids and teens safe online, but your involvement as a parent is critical. Read and think about the contents of this booklet. Discuss online usage and safety concerns with your children. Consider signing and abiding by the pledges included in this booklet. Visit the suggested web sites listed in this booklet for more information, including the Nassau Library System ParentsPage at [www.nassaulibrary.org/parent](http://www.nassaulibrary.org/parent). Become familiar with the Internet and use the Internet with your children. Enjoy the resources the Internet has to offer by searching wisely and safely.



## *When to Surf and When to Stay on Land*

The Internet is an amazing resource for information and for entertainment, but sometimes printed materials provide better and/or more accurate information. When helping your children with their homework, these suggestions about when to use the Internet and when to use books may be helpful. And, always remember that your local children's or young adult librarian will be pleased to help you find the best resources.

To search the Internet effectively, you must be able to read and to determine how to get to the material you want. Do not expect children younger than ten to tackle more than the simplest uses of the Internet. Preschool children must have an adult to assist them find web sites and elementary aged children usually need adult assistance. For these younger children, it is often more rewarding to find the information they need in a book.

A book is usually the best place to find factual material for a younger child, particularly a book that is aimed at a child's particular reading level. In addition, facts in a book have been checked prior to publication (which is not always the case in a web site). For all ages, books provide more detailed biographical information than the Internet. World religions and beliefs are subjects also better covered in books than on the Internet. Religious sites on the Internet are usually developed by a particular denomination or sect, unlike books written by a neutral author. Books are also the best place to find literature. Electronic books or e-books have grown in popularity, but the selection is still limited.

The Internet is usually the best place to find the most current news and weather as well as the most current entertainment information (TV programs, movies, music, performances). The most recent developments in scientific information are also available on the Internet prior to publication in books. Many businesses have web sites with information about their products and services which is not usually published in book form. The Internet is usually the best place to find information about technology development and computers.

## *What Makes a Good Web Site?*

- ◆ The purpose of the web site is clear. The organization or the person who sponsors the site is clearly identified (often under "About Us").
- ◆ There is a way to contact the sponsor of the web site either through email or a form to complete. You should be able to make suggestions or notify them if something is not working.
- ◆ The content of the web site is accurate and encourages exploration and thinking. If designed for children, the content is written so that a child can read it.
- ◆ The site is updated regularly. Usually a web site will list the last date it was updated on the main page of the site near the bottom of the page.
- ◆ The web site is easy to access. It loads quickly and essential information comes on the screen first.
- ◆ The web site is organized in a logical manner. You can easily find your way around the site to access the information or activity for which you are looking.
- ◆ The design of the web site is visually appealing and not cluttered.
- ◆ The web site is interesting to view and utilizes the technological possibilities of the Internet. It does more than can be done in a printed book or magazine. The site contributes something unique or unusual to the Internet.
- ◆ There should be no biases, such as racial or gender, that you feel are inappropriate for your child.



## Safe Searching

- ◆ Search Engines are web sites that use software to search the Internet for a word or phrase that you have specified. Several search engines have been designed for children and include only child friendly sites in their searches.

*The following are web sites designed for children to use when searching the Internet:*

Ask Jeeves Kids	<a href="http://www.ajkids.com">www.ajkids.com</a>
KidsClick!	<a href="http://www.kidsclick.org">www.kidsclick.org</a>
Searchopolis	<a href="http://www.searchopolis.com">www.searchopolis.com</a>
Yahooligans	<a href="http://www.yahooligans.com">www.yahooligans.com</a>

- ◆ You may want to install an Internet filter to your home computer. Internet filters employ software to block access to certain web sites where the content has been deemed objectionable. Remember that filters are not perfect and may sometimes allow a web site that you would consider objectionable, or may block a site you consider worthwhile. A filter is never a substitute for parental involvement but may assist you in overseeing your child's Internet usage. Some Internet service providers offer a type of filtering, an example being AOL's Parental Controls.

*If you decide to use a filter check with your service provider. The filters listed below may be of interest:*

Bess from N2H2	<a href="http://www.n2h2.com">www.n2h2.com</a>
Cyber Patrol	<a href="http://www.cyberpatrol.com">www.cyberpatrol.com</a>
Cybersitter	<a href="http://www.cybersitter.com">www.cybersitter.com</a>
Family Click	<a href="http://www.familyclick.com">www.familyclick.com</a>
Family Connect	<a href="http://www.familyconnect.com">www.familyconnect.com</a>
Net Nanny	<a href="http://www.netnanny.com">www.netnanny.com</a>
We-Blocker	<a href="http://www.we-blocker.com">www.we-blocker.com</a>

- ◆ Internet file-sharing programs (such as Napster) allow people to exchange music and video files. This same technology can be used to exchange files that you may find objectionable. At this time, filters do not block the download of these files to a computer. Be sure to discuss file-sharing programs with your child.



## *Tips for Parents*

1. Think of the Internet as a real place. As your child grows, he or she will go more places and do more things independently. The Internet is another one of those places. It is reasonable for you to know where your child is going on the Internet and who he or she is hanging out with on the Internet.
2. Keep the computer your child uses in a high traffic place in your home; a place where you can easily guide your child as he or she uses the Internet.
3. Set clear rules and reasonable guidelines for Internet use. Make sure everyone in the family knows the rules and keep them written down near the computer.
4. Remind your child not to share personal information or digital pictures of themselves online without your permission.
5. Emphasize your availability when your child is online. Let your child know that you always want to know if something online makes him or her uncomfortable. Also, encourage your child to let you know if he or she is concerned about anything a friend is doing online.
6. Keep a log of the web sites to which you and your child have given personal information. The log should include the site name, the address, the date you gave the information, and the user name and password you used for that web site.
7. Remember the saying "everything you read is not true." Anyone can develop a web site and may include incorrect information on their site. Be very careful about trusting the information you read online—make sure it is from a reliable source.
8. People may pretend to be different than they really are in the anonymous online world. If you decide to arrange a meeting with someone you or your child has had contact with online, take every precaution.



*Tips for Parents continued on the next page*

## *Tips for Parents continued*

9. **Don't open e-mails, files, or web pages sent to you from people you do not know. Often, viruses are transmitted through these attachments and may damage your computer files if opened.**
10. **If you become worried that your child or another child is in danger, don't hesitate to contact the authorities, such as your local police department.**
11. **Use the Internet with your child. Encourage your child to show you what he or she knows how to do online, whether it's surfing sites, downloading music files, entering chat rooms, instant messaging friends, or developing a web site. Share what you know with your child and learn new things together.**

## *Discussion Starters*

The following are some questions you can use to facilitate a discussion with your child about Internet safety. After each question are thoughts that may help direct your conversation with your child.



- ◆ If you are online and you “meet” someone your age in a chat room, is it okay to give them your address or phone number so you can get together?

*As a part of your discussion about this question, make sure your child knows not to give out any personal information, even if he or she thinks the new online friend is trustworthy. Your child should always check with you before arranging any meeting or giving out any personal information.*

- ◆ What should you do if someone says something mean in a chat room?

*If someone says something mean or anything that makes your child uncomfortable, it is usually better for your child to ignore it online and talk to you about the incident. Caution*

## *Discussion Starters continued*

*your child that arguments online can easily become arguments in person. Sometimes, people you chat with online can figure out who you are from the conversation.*

- ◆ Have you ever noticed someone entering a chat room, even a private chat room, and not participating in the discussion? Why do you think they enter the chat room if they are not going to participate?

*People may enter a chat room and not participate because they have nothing to say, but they may also enter a chat room and not participate because they are online versions of "Peeping Toms." Everyone needs to be careful in chat rooms and you may want to limit your child's participation in chat rooms.*

- ◆ What screen names do you use when participating in instant message or in a chat room? Do you think your screen names should include anything personal, like your age or where you live?

*Often a person's screen names reveal too much about him or her to stay anonymous and safe. The screen name might include age or interests or hometown. For example, the following fabricated screen name, indysccrgr12, reveals that this person is probably a 12-year-old girl who loves to play soccer and lives in Indianapolis. Instead, be as creative as possible with screen names. Assist your child to develop screen names that give no clues as to his or her identity.*

- ◆ How many people do you think you should have on your instant message buddy list?

*A long buddy list may mean that your child has gotten "buddies" from a friend's buddy list. That friend may have gotten buddy lists from other friends. And so on and so on. Having more people on a buddy list than anyone else may be a contest in your child's peer group. To remain within safe perimeters, it is usually better to make sure that only people your child knows can send him or her an instant message. Knowing everyone on your child's buddy list is an important safety guideline.*

*Discussion Starters continued on the next page*

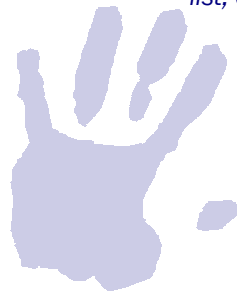
*Discussion Starters continued*

- ◆ What if you are at a web site of a popular company or organization (such as Disney) and they ask for your name and email address to enter a contest. Would you give them the information? What if you are online and you get a message that states it is from your Internet service provider and they need your password to fix a problem. Would you give it to them?

*This is an opportunity to reinforce with your child the importance of never giving out personal information even if the request comes from a seemingly legitimate source. A company must have parental permission before getting personal information from a minor online. This protects the child's privacy as well as safety. An Internet service provider would not ask for a password from someone online. Sometimes, people will pretend to be a provider to try and get passwords. Passwords should never be shared with anyone, even close friends.*

- ◆ What rules should we set for using the Internet? Will these rules apply only when you are at home or do they apply wherever you use the Internet?

*You may want to decide your family's rules of Internet use together in order for everyone to know the rules and to understand them. Your family's rules may cover the length of time your child may be on the Internet, when your child can be on the Internet, who controls the passwords and what web sites are acceptable. Other rules could include checking the history function to see where your child has been on the Internet, how many buddies your child may have on a buddy list, or any other areas of concern. Let your child know that your Internet rules apply wherever he or she is on the Internet, whether it be at school, the library, or a friend's home. Those places may have their own rules which apply as well.*



## *Kid's Pledge*

1. I will not give personal information such as my address, telephone number, parent's work address/telephone number, or the name and location of my school without my parents' permission.
2. I will tell my parents right away if I come across any information that makes me feel uncomfortable.
3. I will not agree to get together with someone I "meet" online without first checking with my parents. If my parents agree to the meeting, I will be sure that it is in a public place and bring my mother or father along.
4. I will not send a person my picture or anything else without first checking with my parents.
5. I will not respond to any messages that are mean or in any way make me feel uncomfortable. If I do receive such messages, I will tell my parents right away.
6. I will talk with my parents so that we can set up rules for going online.
7. I will not give out my Internet password to anyone (even my best friends) other than my parents.
8. I will be a "good online citizen" and not do anything that hurts other people or is against the law.

I agree to the above.

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Child's Signature

I will help my child follow this agreement and will allow reasonable use of the Internet as long as these rules and other family rules are followed.

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Parent's Signature

## *Teen's Pledge*

1. I will keep my identify private by not giving out personal information without my parent's permission.
2. I will not purchase anything over the Internet without my parent's permission.
3. I will get creative with my screen name(s) so that I can not be identified by them and I will only give my screen name(s) to my closest friends.
4. I will not get together with someone I "meet" online unless I have my parent's permission *and* a parent goes with me.
5. I will not respond to e-mail, chat comments, or newsgroup messages that are hostile, belligerent, inappropriate, or in any way make me feel uncomfortable. I will tell a trusted adult right away if I come across any information that makes me feel uncomfortable.
6. I will not do anything online that is against the law or that antagonizes anyone.
7. I will not send a person my picture or post my picture on a web site without my parent's permission.

I agree to the above.

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Teen's Signature

I will assist my teenager as they follow this agreement and will allow reasonable use of the Internet as long as these rules and other family rules are followed.

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Parent's Signature

## *Parent's Pledge*

1. I will get to know the web sites my child visits. If I don't know how to navigate the sites, I'll get my child to show me.
2. I will set reasonable rules and guidelines for computer use by my child and will discuss these rules with my child. I will post these rules near the computer as a reminder. I'll remember to monitor my child's compliance with these rules, especially when it comes to the amount of time they spend on the computer.
3. I will not overreact if my child tells me about a problem he or she is having on the Internet. Instead, we'll work together to try to solve the problem and prevent it from happening again.
4. I promise not to use a computer or the Internet as an electronic babysitter.
5. I will encourage the use of the Internet as a family activity and ask my child to help plan family events using the Internet.
6. I will try to get to know my child's "online friends" just as I try to get to know his or her other friends.

I agree to the above.

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Parent's Signature

I understand that my parent (s) has agreed to these rules and agree to help my parent (s) explore the Internet with me.

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Child's/Teen's Signature

## *Web Sites for More Information*

**ParentsPage** [www.nassaulibrary.org/parent](http://www.nassaulibrary.org/parent)

*ParentsPage is a web site of the Nassau Library System that provides parents with access to the best resources available on the Internet and at your library on issues concerning today's parents as well as information about Internet safety.*

**Nassau Library System** [www.nassaulibrary.org](http://www.nassaulibrary.org)

*Nassau Library System also has web sites for children (KidsPage) and teens (TeensPage), connections to your local library including online databases, and links to other resources.*

**Get Net Wise** [www.getnetwise.org](http://www.getnetwise.org)

*GetNetWise is a public service by Internet industry corporations and public interest organizations to help ensure that families have safe, constructive, and educational or entertaining online experiences.*

**National Center  
for Missing and Exploited Children** [www.missingkids.com](http://www.missingkids.com)

*At the National Center's web site, click on Education and Resources, for a link to many publications concerning children and safety. Click on Learn About Safety/Net Smartz for fun activities for children and teens to learn about Internet Safety as well as parent & educators resources.*

**SafeKids.Com** [www.safekids.com](http://www.safekids.com)

*Operated by The Online Safety Project, SafeKids.com provides parents with tips, advice and suggestions to make your family's online experience fun and productive.*

**SafeTeens.com** [www.safeteens.com](http://www.safeteens.com)

*SafeTeens.com is The Online Safety Project's site for teen safety on the Internet.*



## *Glossary of Internet Terms*

**Chat** - A feature offered by many online services or Web sites that allows participants to "chat" by typing messages which are displayed almost instantly on the screens of other participants who are using the chat room.

**Chat room** - The name given to a place or page in a Web site or online service where people can "chat" with each other by typing messages which are displayed almost instantly on the screens of others who are in the "chat room."

**Download** - To transfer (copy) files from one computer to another. "Download" can also mean viewing a Web site, or material on a Web server, with a Web browser.

**Filtering software** - Software that screens information on the Internet and classifies its content. Some filtering software allows the user to block access to certain kinds of content.

**IM or Instant Message** - A type of communications service that enables you to create a private chat room with another individual.

**Internet** - A global connection of computer networks, also referred to as the "Net," which share a common addressing scheme.

**Newsgroups** - Discussion groups on the Internet. Newsgroups are classified by subject matter and do not necessarily deal with journalism or "news."

**Screen name** - A nickname used when communicating via chat, instant message, or discussion groups/newsgroups.

**Search engine** - A tool that enables users to locate information on the World Wide Web. Search engines use keywords entered by users to find Web sites that contain the information sought.

**Surf** - To search for information on the Web in a random way.

**URL (Uniform Resource Locator)** - The World Wide Web address of a site on the Internet.

**Web site** - A site (location) on the World Wide Web. Each Web site contains a home page, which is the first document users see when they enter the site.

**World Wide Web** - One service of the Internet that distributes graphics and hyperlinked information.

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