The DOOR that's not Locked. ™

Safety and the Internet:

A parent's guide for children ages 10–12

The web offers incredible possibilities as long as you are aware of the risks. By understanding what the online world offers, you can empower your child with skills to help her/him engage with technology in a safe and responsible way.

This brochure includes information about the common interests of kids 10 to 12 years of age, considerations around safety, and strategies to build their knowledge and competence online. At this age kids have an increased interest in spending time online for entertainment, socializing and exploring new interests.

The online world is far-reaching and largely uncensored, and you need to know what your kids are facing as they explore it. Below are some strategies you can employ that will help you keep your child safer while online.

- **Talk to your child about what s/he likes to do online.** It's important to keep the lines of communication open and stay involved in her/his online activity. Be aware of your child's online interests so you can provide ongoing guidance as s/he becomes interested in new areas.

- **Learn how to adjust/increase privacy settings.** Most online journals, blogs, and social networking sites have privacy settings that determine who can and can't view a user's profile and information. Learn how to use and increase privacy settings.

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- **Monitor your child's instant messaging (IM) logs (e.g. Windows Live™ Messenger, AIM®, Yahoo!® Messenger).** For example, open Windows Live Messenger, select Tools > Options > Messages, and near the bottom is the Message History setting. Ensure that the box is ticked next to "Automatically keep a history of my conversations." The location of the saved conversations is also shown here. Open the folder where the logs are saved to review your child's IM activity. Find out how to do so on other instant messaging programs by visiting those programs' websites.

- **Ensure that your child's IM program and social networking sites are set up so that no one can speak to her/him without permission.** In Windows Live Messenger, select Tools > Options > Privacy. Ensure the box is ticked next to "Alert me when other people add me to their contact list". On Facebook®, select Account > Privacy to edit privacy settings. Find out how to do so on other instant messaging programs or social networking sites by visiting the services' websites.

- **Check your child's files in "My Pictures"** to see what images are being sent, received, and saved by your child.

- **Stay engaged with how your child is using her/his cell phone.** Discuss considerations when sending text messages, updating social networking profiles, sending photos, or downloading online content.

Keeping 10- to 12-year-olds Healthy & Safe

As your child gets older, you will notice changes in her/his behaviour and interests. While it's exciting to see your child seek more independence, there are new personal and online safety concerns that you should be aware of. The following section outlines common characteristics of kids 10 to 12 years of age.

The Growing Personality

- Begins to develop a sense of who s/he is by comparing her/himself with others.
- Becomes more sensitive to social judgment.
- Develops an increased interest in role models.
- Body awareness increases — negative feelings about her/his body are common.
- Concern for right and wrong, as well as the treatment of others, increases.
- Capacity for empathy increases.
- Reasoning power matures; more capable of following rules without outside guidance, but more capable of rationalizing breaking rules.
- Wants increased privacy as s/he seeks independence in her/his life.
- Acquires pride and enjoyment from doing something well (academics, sports, music, art, etc.).
- Thinking is less "all or nothing" and more "shades of grey."

Online Activities

- Uses instant messaging (Windows Live Messenger, Yahoo! Messenger, AIM, etc.) and email.
- Chats with others online and collects emoticons.
- Researches topics and interests (using search engines).
- Uses online games, diaries, music websites, sends pictures (webcams, digital), and creates personal websites.
- Posts messages and pictures on social networking sites and blogs (Facebook, MySpace®, Bebo®, etc.).
- Plays video games.
- Watches and creates videos for online video sites (YouTube®).
- Uses cell phone for activities such as web surfing and sending text messages.

As a Parent, What Can You Do?

- Balance the amount of time your child spends online with offline activities.
- Teach them how to use the Internet safely.
- Use filtering software (for more information, visit **thedoorthatsnotlocked.ca**).
- Monitor your child's online activities.

- Explore the games your child plays to determine if they are age-appropriate. Is the game moderated? Is there a chat component? Are avatars used? Does it contain sexual or violent material?
- Know your child's login information and email addresses. What username or character names has your child given her/himself?
- Assist with the creation of online profiles when your child joins social networking or gaming sites. Teach them to fill in only what is necessary, leaving out identifying or revealing information.
- Monitor webcam use and any posting or exchanging of pictures online.
- Don't allow your child to communicate in unregulated chat rooms.
- Communicate openly with your child, encouraging her/him to share feelings.

What Should You Talk to Your Child About?

- Let your child know that you will monitor her/his online activities, as the Internet is a public place.
- Create and post Internet guidelines that are discussed regularly.
- Explain that once sent it is easy to lose control of what happens to pictures. It is important to encourage your child to check with you before sending pictures or posting any pictures online.
- Explain to your child that the Internet is uncensored and s/he may come across sexually inappropriate material while online. This can be very uncomfortable and upsetting. Ensure that s/he understands that s/he can talk to you about anything on the Internet without fear of losing Internet privileges or getting in trouble. Reinforce your child's use of child-safe search engines (e.g. Yahooligans™).
- Reinforce the idea that not everyone is who they say they are online. People can pretend to be older or younger than they actually are or they can misuse information you share.
- Explain that s/he should trust her/his instincts and block someone if someone asks questions online that seem "weird" (questions about puberty, sex, etc.). Explain why it is important to tell an adult if this happens as it is likely this individual is behaving inappropriately with other kids, too.
- Talk about friendship: what it is and isn't. Explain that they need to be careful with who and how they share personal information. Explain the risks of personal information being misused if shared online.
- Explain to your child that it's illegal to threaten someone, and that s/he should tell a safe adult if threatened online.
- Ensure your child knows s/he has safe adults in her/his life who s/he can talk to.

thedoorthatsnotlocked.ca

Instant Messaging (e.g. Windows Live Messenger, Yahoo! Messenger, AIM)

Instant Messaging is electronic communication that involves components of both chat and email. After downloading the IM software, users maintain lists of "buddies" or "friends" and are notified when their contacts are online. Short text messages are sent back and forth and some IM programs also include file transfer, webcam viewing, voice chat and other applications.

Peer to Peer Program (e.g. LimeWire®, BearShare®)

Programs that allow users to establish a connection and have direct access to shared files on each other's computers. This communication network allows the exchange of images, videos, music files, etc. without utilizing a centralized server.

Social Networking (e.g. Facebook, MySpace)

Social networking deals with the relationships between individuals, and the various social areas that connect them. Many websites on the Internet offer this type of communication whereby people are encouraged to post personal information (pictures, thoughts, etc.) and chat with others in real time.

Massive Multiplayer Online Role Playing Game (MMORPG)

A MMORPG is a type of online game where a large number of players interact with one another in a virtual/fantasy world (e.g. RuneScape®, World of Warcraft®).

Video Gaming Consoles

A video gaming console is an interactive computer or electronic device that uses a TV or monitor to display the video game. It hooks up to the Internet so multiple players can interact online. While players can talk to each other through these games, no history of conversations can be easily saved with these devices (e.g. PlayStation® 2 or PlayStation® 3, Nintendo Wii®, Xbox®).

Webcam

A webcam is a video camera that is usually attached directly to a computer.

Cell Phone Text Messages

Short Message Service (SMS), more commonly known as text messaging, allows users to communicate with other users through brief, typed text. These messages can be easily deleted, leaving no trace of the message sent, or saved and distributed by malicious users.

Avatar

An avatar is a digital expression of an individual. It may take the form of an animal, creature or person, and is often used in chat forums, games, and personal profiles.

Common language used by children Online

Do you know what your child is saying?

ABBREVIATION	MEANING
asl	age/sex/location
bf | gf	boyfriend | girlfriend
brb	be right back
cam | kam	webcam
g2g | gtg	got to go
h/o	hang on
jk | jks	just kidding | jokes
kk	ok cool
lol	laugh out loud
noob	new individual
nvm	never mind
omg	oh my god
pic	picture
plz	please
ppl	people
sxy | sexi	sexy
ttyl	talk to you later
ty	thank you
ud	you would
ur	you are

TIP: Sounding out the string of letters may help you understand the word or words. Also try adding letters to a string of text to figure out the word.

Risks to 10- to 12-year-olds on the Internet

It's important to teach your child strategies that will make her/his online experiences safer.

Content

Exposure to Sexually Explicit Material

Kids have never before had such easy access to sexually graphic and harmful material. The information often misrepresents healthy sexual relationships. Teach your child about healthy sexual development and explain that information online is often inaccurate (refer to the *Impact of Viewing* safety sheet at **kidsintheknow.ca**).

Contact

Building Relationships Online

A large portion of a kid's social world has moved online. The Internet is often used as a tool for positioning within peer groups. Boundaries are often tested in this environment, and lines are more readily crossed. Communication should be closely supervised, as children can quickly find themselves in situations they are not ready to handle. Make sure your child knows you are monitoring their online activities. This will help them maintain appropriate behaviour.

Threats and Coercion

Individuals seeking to exploit children may use threats that could result in the child sending a naked image of her/himself. Talk to your child about the use of threats. Explain that s/he should never comply with threats and to always seek a safe adult for help.

Conduct

Public Nature of the Internet

Kids underestimate the public nature of the Internet. They engage in private conversations and share private information, unaware how information shared in confidence may be misused to embarrass them. Teach your child to be mindful of what s/he shares online. Once information is sent, control of it is lost.

Lack of Boundaries

Boundaries are quickly crossed online. Individuals looking to victimize children quickly turn conversations sexual, asking personal questions about puberty and development. Make sure your child knows to stop any conversation that is uncomfortable and to talk to a safe adult if they are worried about it.

CANADIAN CENTRE *for* **CHILD PROTECTION** ™
Helping families. Protecting children.

The Canadian Centre for Child Protection is a registered charity dedicated to the personal safety of all children. It operates Cybertip.ca, Canada's national tipline for reporting the online sexual exploitation of children, the Kids in the Know safety education program, and the Commit to Kids child sexual abuse prevention program.

The Door that's not Locked — All web. No net.

The web is a wonderful place for kids, if you understand the dangers. The Canadian Centre is committed to helping parents, teachers, and anyone else who would like to better understand the good, bad, and ugly about the web. We're here to help keep kids safe while exploring and enjoying **The Door that's not Locked.** To learn more, visit us at **thedoorthatsnotlocked.ca**.

To report the online sexual exploitation of children, visit **cybertip.ca**.

Founding Partners:

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More information on child safety is available at **protectchildren.ca** or by contacting us at:

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