



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

# The **DOOR** that's not **Locked.**™

## Safety and the Internet:

A parent's guide for  
children ages 8&9



[thedoorthatsnotlocked.ca](http://thedoorthatsnotlocked.ca)



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 8 to 9 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 playing games, socializing, learning and exploring new interests.



## Online Games

The Internet has changed the nature of games. The interactive components of online games make them appealing to all ages of children. While it is easy for parents to believe their children are safe while playing a game, precautions need to be taken as most online games have a chat component where children can be interactive with others on an ongoing basis.

To keep your child safer:

- ✦ Assist with the creation of online profiles. When signing up for games, provide a family or parental email account rather than your child's email address.
- ✦ Explore games your child plays to determine if they are age-appropriate. Is the game moderated? Does it contain sexually explicit or violent material?
- ✦ When setting up any gaming console for the first time, be sure you are present to activate any parental controls and create passwords for those controls.
- ✦ Learn the features for restricting/blocking access.
- ✦ Be involved and show interest in the games your child plays. If possible, play the games with your child.

## Parent-Focused Video Game Reviews

To find out more about the games your child is playing, visit these sites:

Children's Technology Review — [childrenstech.com](http://childrenstech.com)

GamerDad — [gamingwithchildren.com](http://gamingwithchildren.com)

GamePro Family — [gpfamily.blogfaction.com](http://gpfamily.blogfaction.com)

What They Play — [whattheyplay.com](http://whattheyplay.com)

## Parental Controls and Other System Information

Visit the website of the operating system used on your child's computer (i.e. Microsoft Windows® 7, Vista, or XP, or Mac OS X Snow Leopard® or Leopard®) and the gaming system used by your child (i.e. Microsoft Xbox 360™, Nintendo Wii®, Sony PlayStation® 2, PlayStation® 3, OR PSP®) to find out about the parental controls you can activate to keep your child safer.

ALL WEB.  
NO NET.™

# Keeping 8- to 9-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 8 to 9 years of age.

## The Growing Personality

- ✘ Games are taken very seriously and losing can be taken personally.
- ✘ Fantasy play becomes more realistic. Rather than role-playing their favourite superhero, they may take on the role of a police officer or a veterinarian.
- ✘ Begins to develop a sense of who they are based on how peers treat them (e.g. if a peer says something hurtful, they may conclude they are not liked).
- ✘ Starts to feel embarrassed by their parents. Parental limits are tested through negative behavior.
- ✘ Forms more complex peer relationships; interactions are based on rules, and pecking order becomes apparent.
- ✘ Starts to compare their body image to others; may make incorrect judgments about their appearance.
- ✘ Acquires pride and enjoyment from doing something well (academics, sports, music, art, etc.).
- ✘ Begins to seek privacy (e.g. asks people to knock before entering their room).

## Online Activities

- ✘ Uses online games.
- ✘ Uses instant messaging (Windows Live™ Messenger, Yahoo!® Messenger, etc.).
- ✘ Uses email.
- ✘ Uses the Internet for school work.
- ✘ Uses search engines (Google®, Yahoo!®, Live™ Search, etc.).
- ✘ Uses blogs (Bebo®).
- ✘ Uses online video sites (YouTube®).

## As a Parent, What Can You Do?

- ✘ Balance the amount of time your child spends online with time offline.
- ✘ Teach your child how to use the Internet safely.
- ✘ Use filtering software (for more information, visit [thedoorthatsnotlocked.ca](http://thedoorthatsnotlocked.ca)).

- ✘ Supervise your child's online activities.
- ✘ Restrict your child's use of adult search engines.
- ✘ Know your child's login information and email addresses.  
What username or character names has your child given her/himself?  
It should not provide identifying characteristics about her/him or her/his hobbies (i.e. shygirl, bookworm, etc.).

## 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 and reviewed regularly.
- ✘ Show your child how to use child-safe search engines (e.g. Yahoooligans™).
- ✘ Discuss the difference between public and private information. Personal information is private information, and shouldn't be shared on the Internet without parental permission.
- ✘ Teach your child the safety strategy "If asked to share and your parents aren't aware — SAY NO!" This encourages her/him to practice checking with parents before sharing personal information online. Review with your child where s/he may be asked for personal information online.
- ✘ Teach your child to create passwords that others can't easily guess, and that contain a combination of numbers and letters (both upper- and lower-case).
- ✘ 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.
- ✘ Just as you would explain appropriate behaviour in the offline world, the same should be done for online activities.
- ✘ Ensure your child gets permission before chatting with other online gamers. Explain that the Internet isn't a place to make new friends. Talk about what friendship is and isn't. For more information, visit [kidsintheknow.ca](http://kidsintheknow.ca).
- ✘ Tell your child not to open any email attachments if s/he doesn't know the sender.
- ✘ Explain to your child that there is a lot of really good information on the Internet but there is also inappropriate material. Let her/him know that if s/he comes across something or someone that makes her/him feel uncomfortable, s/he can tell you without fear of getting in trouble.

# Quick Facts – Your Child’s Online Interests

## 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.

## Webcam

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

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

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; some IM programs also include file transfer, webcam viewing, voice chat and other applications.

## Search Engine

Internet search engines (e.g. Google, Yahoo!) assist users in finding websites on any given subject. The search engines maintain databases of websites and use programs to continuously gather information.

## 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, PlayStation 3, Wii, Xbox).

# 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 8- to 9-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 can be exposed to sexually explicit material online. At this age they are not developmentally ready to handle viewing graphic sexual content. To reduce exposure, use filtering software (see the *Impact of Viewing* safety sheet at [kidsintheknow.ca](http://kidsintheknow.ca)).

### Search Engines

Kids use search engines to learn just about anything. While searching, it is easy for them to come across sexually explicit material. In an effort to reduce their exposure, be sure they are using child-appropriate search engines (e.g. Yahoo!igans). The most popular search engines may not be the most effective for filtering adult content. Test a few to decide which one to use.

## Conduct

### Public Nature of the Internet

The Internet is a public place. Once information is sent online, the sender loses control of what happens to it. Teach your child to be careful about what s/he shares online.

### Building Relationships

A large portion of a kid's social world has moved online. The 8- to 9-year-old age group typically begins communication through games and email. Relationships can start quickly, and caution should be taken, as kids can easily be tricked. Monitor your child's Internet use closely, and discuss the qualities of healthy and unhealthy friendships (see the *Friendship* safety sheet at [kidsintheknow.ca](http://kidsintheknow.ca)).

## Contact

### Chat Component of Games

The multi-player capability of online games makes them appealing to kids. While it's easy for you to have a false sense of security because your child is playing a game, adult supervision and guidance is necessary. Most online games have a chat component where children can interact with others in real time.



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**The Canadian Centre for Child Protection** is a registered charity dedicated to the personal safety of all children. It operates [Cybertip.ca](http://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 [thedoorthatnotlocked.ca](http://thedoorthatnotlocked.ca).

To report the online sexual exploitation of children, visit [cybertip.ca](http://cybertip.ca).

### **Founding Partners:**



### **Supported by:**



Government  
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More information on child safety is available at [protectchildren.ca](http://protectchildren.ca)  
or by contacting us at:

615 Academy Road  
Winnipeg, MB R3N 0E7  
204.945.5735  
1.800.532.9135

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