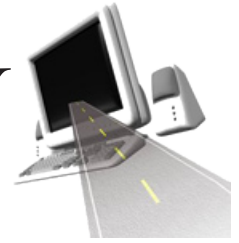


OFFICE OF
CATECHETICAL SERVICES

INTERNET SAFETY



SIMPLE GUIDELINES FOR INTERNET SAFETY

One of the most important rules is to TALK. Parents talk to your children about what they do online (just like you would when they go outside) Children/Teens talk to your parents, especially when something occurs online that makes you uncomfortable.

The Internet is perceived as a safe place because it is accessed in secure places (i.e. the home, school, library), but the Internet allows us to travel all over the world from any one of these places. Users must constantly be aware of where they are online and who they are talking to. Don't drop your guard just because you are at home!

Computers with Internet access should be kept in a common room of the house where parents and other family members can keep an eye on Internet use.

Sit down and make a list of your child's/teen's email addresses, screennames, login names and their passwords. Check email **together** periodically.

Don't talk to strangers. Good rule for the playground, great rule while online. This includes opening email from unknown sources. Children/teens should report suspicious and inappropriate contact, communications and emails to their parents.

Do not submit personal information (screen-names, passwords, credit card info...) via email, chat or other means. If someone forgets their password, most sites provide a "forgot password or username option." In addition do not share passwords with other people.

**DO NOT POST PERSONAL INFORMATION ONLINE
(i.e. pictures, personal event descriptions, etc...)
ESPECIALLY WHEN IT IS ASSOCIATED WITH
YOUR NAME OR SCREENNAME.**

**Jeff Stutzman, Catechetical Media Consultant
1404 East 9th Street, 2nd Floor
Cleveland, OH 44114
Phone: (216) 696-6525 x 4330
(Toll Free 1-800-869-6525)
Email: jstutzman@dioceseofcleveland.org**

Other Resources at:

<http://www.oce-ocs.org/ocs>

Click on *Media* and the on *Internet Safety Links*

IN THE BEGINNING, GOD CREATED THE INTERNET

Where did the Internet come from? Did it magically appear in 1991? Did Al Gore really create it? What about Bill Gates?

Notwithstanding any technological or theological debates, the Internet was created by God. From humans and plants to computers and fiber-optic cable all things are created by God. While humans physically build computers, God provides the talent and the know-how in order to make these things realities. Simply stated, God creates all things including the Internet.

One learns in the book of Genesis that when God creates something it is "good." Therefore, the Internet, being a creation of God, is good. There are many good reasons to use the Internet. Among them are research, news, information, games, shopping, entertainment, prayer and spiritual enrichment.

However, while the Internet is a good thing with many good uses, humans sometimes use God's creations to do not-so-good things. For example, fire is a good thing. It cooks food and keeps houses warm, but it also can be very destructive when not used appropriately. We must encourage good use of the Internet.

In addition, the Internet allows for predators and pedophiles have access to children and teenagers. With the ease of access, the need for Internet Safety has become increasingly necessary.

PARENTAL CONTROLS

Most Internet Service Providers (ISP) provide some type of parental controls. It is important that parents are familiar with what they are and how they operate. It is not enough to say that one has them, but it is important to know how to use them as well. In addition, parents may want to purchase additional safety software.

Questions to think about:

- Can I alter the settings to fit my needs?
- Can I specifically include sites that I do not want my child to see?
- Do I need to monitor chatting (i.e. Instant Messenger)?
- Do I want a log of every site that has been used?
- Do I want software to alert me via email when an illegal site has been viewed?
- Do I want to know when my child or teenager fills out a form with their email address?

Top 10 Internet Filter Reviews

<http://internet-filter-review.toptenreviews.com/>

SOCIAL NETWORKING



It seems that one cannot turn on the news anymore without seeing a story for MySpace.com or Facebook.com. These web sites are commonly referred to as “social networking web sites.” While they are not the only sites around, they are the most popular. And as quickly as their popularity is spreading so too is the need to caution inexperienced users as to the possible dangers of such sites. Below are some general cautions about social networking.



MATURITY

At 16 one can drive, at 18 vote and 21 drink. However not every 16 year-old drives, 18 year-old votes and there are many who are over 21 who cannot handle responsible drinking. The same holds true for social networking on the Internet. Most sites require the user to be 14 years or older, however this is not a “magic” age that automatically makes the user mature enough to handle it. Parents are usually the best judge of their child’s maturity. While the Internet is a great creation that everyone should be able to use, it does not mean that everyone can handle the responsibility.



WEB PLANNING

An unsuspecting blog entry reveals that a group of friends will be going to this movie at this theatre at this time. While this helps coordinate friends going out, it also provides information to a would-be predator with a time, place and date where a group of teens will be together in a dark movie theatre. Scary? Just because we can communicate more efficiently, doesn’t mean that it is always the best. Some details should always be left to a phone call or a short meeting after school. Remember that even though one intends it for just their friends, the Internet is open to everyone who has a connection.

PERSONAL INFORMATION

As with pictures, just because a site asks for name, address, city, school and phone number doesn’t mean that we have to provide it. Social networking sites that require private information (address, phone, pictures, etc...) should be avoided. Parents should be alerted any time a child or teenager provides any information to any web site.



PICTURES

Just because a site allows one to post pictures, doesn’t mean one should. While sharing pictures with friends and family members is fun, pictures in the wrong hands can be dangerous. Pictures posted on social networking sites might be available to cut and paste onto anyone’s hard- drive. With a picture, city and/or school of a child or teenager strangers can gain a lot of information that one would normally not give out. With a picture and enough personal information they could appear at the school or library and convince a child and others that they are to be trusted. Pictures of children and teenagers should be removed from the Internet (especially from social networking sites).



WHAT IF I LIE?

One common tactic in keeping yourself safe is lying about one’s real name and where one actually lives. However, pictures don’t lie. You can list yourself as a 20 year-old, but odds are you still look like a 13 year-old. One issue with social networking sites is that they assume that the user is telling the truth. Even if you lie about your age, your profile, the way you write, other pictures that are posted may reveal your true age. People who are looking to meet up with children and teenagers are just as smart and might be able to see through your made-up profile.



KEEP YOUR PROFILES PRIVATE

While this is not fool-proof, making your profile private adds a simple layer of security between you and most of the web-surfing world. Although visitors can not see your entire profile, they can sometimes see your name and picture.

**ALSO, DO NOT ACCEPT FRIEND REQUESTS
IN ORDER TO BOOST YOUR FRIEND COUNT!**