

# ***Kids and the Internet***

## ***Safety for Teens***



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## **To the reader:**

**This guide is just that, *a guide*. It is not a catch-all that will get you effortlessly to understand what your children are doing and protect them. It has been compiled from information I have obtained through my years of working in the Millburn Police Department Juvenile Aid Bureau. Some of the information has been learned from working actual investigations or other real life situations I have been involved in. Much of the rest of the information has been acquired from the following sources:**

- **Federal Bureau of Investigation**
- **New Jersey State Police**
- **Morris County Prosecutors Office**
- **Union County Prosecutors Office**
- **National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC)**
- **Other professionals in law enforcement and the private sector (including my own brother) who have added to, critiqued and help me modify this**

**This handout is a work in progress. It changes year to year as technology changes and as I continue to learn. Again, this is a guide to help you navigate your way *with* your children. You may notice some sections that are directed toward children. My intentions are for you to use this guide *with* your children.**

## 1. Chatting

I feel there are many issues around chatting that endanger our children needlessly.

For simplicity, I will group instant messaging (AIM: America Online Instant Messaging, etc.) together with text messaging from cell phones. Instant messaging is a computer conference which allows users to send and receive text messages. Once a message is typed and "Enter" is pressed, the message is sent "instantly." As a parent, you should be aware of what your child is doing on the computer, with whom, and for how long. I take an unstructured survey of my DARE students each year as to how much time they spend using instant messaging each day. A few have indicated they use it for up to ***FIVE HOURS*** each day.

### ***Problems:***

- **Language:** Kids today use language that we, as adults, did not use when we were their age. The influence from music, movies, television, and the Internet is obvious when we listen to young people talk today. When you remove the face-to-face interaction, the language changes even more. Many kids "talk" over the Internet in a way they would never think of face to face and certainly not in front of their parents or teachers. The schoolyard threat of, "I'll get you," changes to "I will come to your house and kill you," when the sender feels the protection of the Internet.
- **Anonymity:** When a child is using instant messaging, he does not really know with whom he is communicating. It could be the account holder, or that person's sibling or other friends. Because there is no face there, the sender may have lesser inhibitions and may be more likely to engage in inappropriate conversations.
- **Emotionless:** Instant messaging lacks what most adults consider to be communication; that is feedback from the other party. Eye contact, facial expression, and body language are just a few of the cues we use to read if our message is being understood. Instant message users often are "multitasking" with television, multiple IM recipients, and homework while they type. They can use emoticons- symbols to represent facial expressions :<), change font type, color, and size to indicate emotions, but the users still do not get much feedback. As a result, disagreements often escalate to anger, fury, and threats because the participants have no idea when they have gone too far.
- **Poor Security:** Many young people display their screen names on profiles and social networks such as Facebook and Myspace. This enables strangers worldwide to know how to make contact with them.

- **Impersonation:** When one child goes online impersonating another, they often insult, harass, or sometimes threaten others, pretending to be another user.
  - **Shared Passwords:** Many young people, especially girls, share their secrets, including passwords, with their closest friends. When friendships fracture, best friends can become worst enemies.
  - **Password Remembered:** When a user signs onto AIM, there may be boxes checked to remember the username and password. After they are done "chatting," they must sign off before closing the program. Otherwise, they are still logged in. When a child signs onto AIM from a friend's home, he must remember to sign off. Often, the username and password are retained, allowing the computer owner to go online impersonating the previous user.
  - **Similar Screen name:** When a child is aware of another child's screen name and friends' screen names, a similar screen name can be created so that it resembles the original one online. Zeros can be replaced with O's, ones can be replaced with lowercase L's. The result is a screen name that looks like the original. Friends often do not recognize that it is a dummy name created to impersonate.

**Difficulty in Investigation:** Often, Internet Service Providers (ISP's) do not retain any instant messaging content. There are literally millions upon millions of texts sent everyday that would have to be archived. When an investigation is initiated, often there is little, if any, evidence to help. In addition, users may "cut and paste" conversations that they have saved. An original conversation may appear to have been memorialized in a printout, but it is actually very different after it has been altered. Often, police must conduct a forensic examination of a computer, a costly and time-consuming undertaking, to learn the truth.

My recommendation is that children do not use instant messaging or text messaging. Such uses are often the origins of fights and misunderstandings that could have been prevented or addressed had the parties actually spoken to one another.

Some people have differences of opinions and disagree with my recommendations. It has been brought to my attention that instant messaging software is often used in corporate America and it is here to stay. While I agree with that, our kids are not (yet) members of corporate America. In addition, instant messaging software in businesses is often in-house and is recorded. If it is misused, it results in termination. Such technology will eventually be used responsibly by older kids, probably later in their teens. Trying to get a 13 year old

to use such a powerful tool may be as dangerous as trying to teach the same 13 year old to use alcohol responsibly. They need to ***be responsible*** before they can use something ***responsibly***.

That said, I also accept the fact that some will choose to allow chatting anyway. If you feel you must give in, at least try to enforce the following:

If you must chat, chat with only people you know. (Make sure that you have already confirmed it is someone you know). Don't chat or respond to chats or instant messages from strangers. If someone is bothering you, notify the Internet Provider and your parents. Do not engage in arguments or threatening language while chatting. An Internet threat is as serious as one face to face.

### **Propositions**

Many times people with less than sincere intentions will try to poke around seeking a hobby or interest you might have, then bait you with it.

The profile of these people has changed and is changing constantly. These people are smart and can keep records of your responses to their questions to build on, thereby building your trust.

These people network with each other and share information ***about YOU!*** The next "stranger" who contacts you may already have a long background about you and may know exactly what to talk about with you.

### **Anonymity**

Don't give out details about yourself!

Starting with your ID. By calling yourself [SEXYGIRL@haha.com](mailto:SEXYGIRL@haha.com), [HotGirl@haha.net](mailto:HotGirl@haha.net), [Sexy69r@haha.net](mailto:Sexy69r@haha.net) you open yourself up to problems.

I have seen similar screen ID's used by *young teen girls* in my investigations.

Also using your name in a screen ID is a bad idea. [CarlyT@haha.com](mailto:CarlyT@haha.com), [SamanthaJones@haha.com](mailto:SamanthaJones@haha.com), etc.

- ***DO NOT HAVE A PROFILE!!!***

***Your friends already know who you like and what you like to do. A profile shares that private information with the REST OF THE WORLD!***

***NEVER give out any personal information. If it is supposedly someone you know, they would already know this information and never need to request it again.***

Profiles alone are not the only thing that is dangerous. Many kids with AIM have profiles there too. Also websites allow people to figure out who you are and where you live (**Facebook, Myspace, Formspring, Xanga.**)

AIM – Away messages are not a good idea, just log off. Putting that you “Went to Bonzai for Dinner” or “Gone to Mike’s House”, tells strangers what you like and that you are not home.

Chatting with someone you do not know can put you in a vulnerable situation

**Watch for questions like these:**

*"Where is your school?"*

*"What time do you get home from school? Is your brother or sister home too? "*

*"What hobbies do you like to do in your spare time?"*

*"Where do you shop, eat, go to movies?"*

*"Do you have brothers or sisters? How old are they? Do they give you grief?"*

*"You seem upset. Did you have a fight with your Mom or Dad?"*

*"Where do your parents work? Do they both work?"*

*"Got a nice pic of yourself to send me?"*

All of these give away clues about you and your family.

\*\* Predators will often exaggerate a dispute between kids and parents to cause a teen to withdraw from the normal support network of a family. The predator convinces the teen that he is the only one who cares and can be trusted.

## **2. Something Doesn't Feel Right**

Don't be afraid to tell someone that something weird has taken place on your computer through chat, e-mail or instant messaging. Some on-line providers have a button to hit to flag a company representative that you are having a problem. Also let your parents know. They can contact some other authorities (so can you) to help you. Save your work by printing out the screen on paper and saving the logs to disk.

If you are uncomfortable with something, GO TO your parents. Let an adult tell you it is something or nothing, especially if you are being threatened, stalked or harassed.

- Harassment and/or threats must be reported

## **Being Comfortable**

If someone asks you to

- *Send them a photo of you.*
- *Send a photo of you minus a few articles of clothing.*
- *Asked you about sex or sexual acts.*
- *Wants to send you photos and if you get them, they are a bit shocking.*

### **TELL YOUR PARENTS!**

The latest annoyance is the Looping Web-Sites (mouse traps). You try to exit and it loops you into another related web site. This is very common with pornography.

## **3. E-Mail**

E-Mails have many hidden problems with them. Some of the most common problems we have encountered are as follows:

### **a. *The Forward Chain***

Many companies get your e-mail address from countless *FORWARDS* that someone has sent you and you have sent someone else. Don't buy into these. The most common is a friend sending you a forwarded e-mail. Some programs are sent in e-mails which record all of the e-mail addresses attached, making you a target for additional e-mails and possible hoaxes. If the message is of no interest to you, then delete it. If the sender is a friend, let him or her know that you are NOT interested in receiving mail like that. If you do not know the sender, delete it, block the sender, and DO NOT RESPOND. Responding lets them know that have found an e-mail with activity. Don't be fooled by superstitious e-mails. Also be cautious of e-mails with helpful security tips that have been forwarded hundreds of times.

I received an e-mail alleging to be from the Make A Wish Foundation, instructing me to forward the e-mail of the cute little girl and each time ten cents would be added to her wish fund. I was skeptical so I called Make A Wish. They confirmed that it was bogus and that they do not designate any fund raising for one specific child.

- **Watch what happens after you forward this to ten people (nothing except lots of unwanted e-mail)**
- **The brother of the King of Saudi Arabia doesn't really need YOU to help him get money into the USA**
- **Bill Gates will NOT send you \$100 if you forward it**

### **b. *Surveys***

Many surveys have a hidden agenda within them. Some are linked to hate groups and others are linked to e-mail address collectors. Collectors are services that gather up as many e-mail addresses as possible to use them in the future for advertising or spamming. Hackers have also been known to use them to hack into your accounts.

### ***c. Viruses***

Viruses can come with e-mail. The downloading of files such as pictures, sound or video can contain viruses. There are Trojan horses that can give anonymous persons control of your PC. This control allows them to view your files and personal information. Many times your friends will send you sound files and or pictures. Always virus scan them. Another problem is companies that give away Term Papers. They also include a virus in the file that wrecks all of your other documents files.

A Good policy is that if you don't recognize the sender of an e-mail or the subject line, then DELETE IT. If you continue to get annoying e-mail, notify the ISP (Internet Service Provider).

In general, tell your friends to always include something specific in the subject such as their pet's name, etc. to indicate the e-mail really came from them, especially when there is an attachment. Never accept or send generic looking e-mails that have attachments and no body.

NEVER click on a link embedded in an e-mail when that link to a website asks you to login. If you need to go to a specific website, go to that site through your normal channels directly. Often scammers will send you bogus links in e-mail that go to their own version of the sign on screen, such as the E-Bay login screen. They are capturing your login information and can use it to gain control of your account.

## **4. School Work & Projects**

When doing web related work for school, such as building a web site or developing some web related materials, always check to see how much information you want to put out on the site. Have your parents review your work before you put it out on the web for others to view.

## **5. Passwords & Identity Theft:**

**Never** give out your password to anyone for any reason.

This can allow them to assume your identity and (if they wanted to) do some pretty nasty things. If you have a primary account this could jeopardize all of the accounts that have been set up.

As an example, say someone gets your sign-on and password, they could harass other people and do illegal things in your name. Then YOU are stuck trying to either defend yourself or prove it was not you.

- Never Give Out Spare Family Accounts to others.
- Change your password at least once per month.
- When over a friend's house, don't share passwords, ASK FOR or EXPECT a moment of privacy to sign on.

## **6. Piracy of Software**

Making copies of software illegally can also get you into trouble. If you become the target of an investigation and it is discovered that you have made copies of programs, games or software that is write protected, you could be facing additional charges.

*Being safe on-line is important!*

*Being stupid on-line is dangerous!*

*Being Set up is possible!*

*Doing something illegal on-line will get you into trouble!*

*Consider your actions at all times!*

## *How to remove America On Line Instant Messenger (AIM)*

Single click on **START** in the lower left hand corner of the screen

Single click on **CONTROL PANEL** to open it

Double click on **ADD OR REMOVE PROGRAMS**

Single click on **INSTANT MESSENGER**

Single click on **CHANGE / REMOVE**

*The Install Wizard will take you through the rest of the process*

\*\*\*\* Even though this will remove the program, AIM is a free program and your child can download it again and still use the same screen names that he/she has been using. Therefore, the computer your child is using should be in a public place in your home, where the activities can be ***actively monitored*** by ***YOU***, a parent.

### **Quick Tips and Suggestions**

- *Keep the family computer in a common area. If it must be in a child's room, the child's back should be toward the door and the door should be open*
- *Limit the amount of computer time per day*
- *Do not have a profile for **any** users*
- Do not share passwords
- Use the computer with the children
- Know how to contact your Internet Provider
- Notify Internet Provider of any inappropriate material
- Avoid E-mail and Instant Messaging Gossip (at all ages) – Just because someone sent you an e-mail does not mean that it is true!
- Do not forward "Good luck," "special friend," "hug," or chain letter e-mails

## CHAT ABBREVIATIONS

121	one to one
AFAIK	as far as I know
AFK	away from keyboard
AKA	also known as
ARE	acronym-rich environment
ASAP	as soon as possible
A/S/L?	age, sex, location
B4	before
B4N	bye for now
BAK	back at the keyboard
BBIAB	be back in a bit
BBL	be back later
BBML	be back much later
BBN	bye bye now
BBS	be back soon
BEG	big evil grin
BF	boyfriend
BFN	bye for now
BG	big grin
BL	belly laughing
BRB	be right back
BTA	but then again
BTW	by the way
BWL	bursting with laughter
BWTHDIK	but what the heck do I know
C&G	chuckle & grin
CID	crying in disgrace
CNP	continued (in my) next post
CP	chat post
CRBT	crying real big tears
CSG	chuckle, snicker, grin
CU	see you
CUL or CUL8ER	see you later
CUZ	because
CYO	see you online
DIKU	do I know you?

DL	dead link
DLTBBB	don't let the bed bugs bite
DQMOT	don't quote me on this
EG	evil grin
EMFBI	excuse me for butting in
EOM	end of message
EOT	end of thread
F2F	face to face
FAQ	frequently asked question(s)
FC	fingers crossed
FISH	first in, still here
FMTYEWTK	far more than you ever wanted to know
FOMCL	falling off my chair laughing
FTBOMH	from the bottom of my heart
FUD	fear, uncertainty, and doubt
FWIW	for what it's worth
FYI	for your information
GA	go ahead
GAL	get a life
GD&R	grinning, ducking, & running
GF	girlfriend
GFN	gone for now
GIWIST	gee, I wish I'd said that
GMBO	giggling my butt off
GMTA	great minds think alike
GOL	giggling out loud
GTRM	going to read mail
GTSY	glad to see you
H&K	hug and kiss
HAGN	have a good night
HHIS	hanging head in shame
HTH	hope this helps
IAC	in any case
IAE	in any event
IANAL	I am not a lawyer (but)
IC	I see
IDK	I don't know
IHA	I hate acronyms

IIRC	if I remember correctly
ILU	I love you
IM	instant message
IMHO	in my humble opinion
Iming	chatting with someone online
IMNSHO	in my not so humble opinion
IMO	in my opinion
IOW	in other words
IPN	I'm posting naked
IRL	in real life
IWALU	I will always love you
IYSWIM	if you see what I mean
JBOD	just a bunch of disks
JIC	just in case
JK	just kidding
JMO	just my opinion
JTLYK	just to let you know
JW	just wondering
K	okay
KIT	keep in touch
KOC	kiss on cheek
KOL	kiss on lips
KWIM	know what I mean?
L2M	listening to music
L8R	later
LD	later, dude
LDR	long distance relationship
LHM	lord help me
LHU	lord help us
LLTA	lots and lots of thunderous applause
LMIRL	let's meet in real life
LMSO	laughing my socks off
LOL	laughing out loud
LRF	little rubber feet
LSHMBB	laughing so hard my belly is bouncing
LSHMBH	laughing so hard my belly hurts
LSHTTARDML	laughing so hard the tears are running down my leg
LTM	laugh to myself

LTNS	long time, no see
LTR	long term relationship
LTS	laughing to self
LULAB	love you like a brother
LULAS	love you like a sister
LUWAMH	love you with all my heart
LY	love you
M/F	male or female
MOSS	member of same sex
MOTOS	member of the opposite sex
MSG	message
MTF	more to follow
MUSM	miss you so much
NADT	not a darn thing
NIFOC	naked in front of computer
NP	nosy parents
N/P	no problem
NRN	no reply necessary
OIC	oh I see
OL	old lady
OLL	online love
OM	old man
OMG	oh my god
OTF	off the floor
OTOH	on the other hand
OTTOMH	off the top of my head
P2P	peer to peer
P911	my parents are coming!
PA	parent alert
PAL	parents are listening
PANB	parents are nearby
PANS	pretty awesome new stuff
PDA	public display of affection
PDS	please don't shoot
PLZ	please
PM	private message
PMFJIB	pardon me for jumping in but....

PMP	peed my pants
POAHF	put on a happy face
POS	parent over shoulder
POTS	plain old telephone service
PU	that stinks
QSL	reply
QSO	conversation
QT	cutie
RL	real life
ROL	raffing out loud
ROTFL	rolling on the floor laughing
RPG	role playing games
RSN	real soon now
RYO	roll your own
S4L	spam for life
SETE	smiling ear to ear
SF	surfer friendly
SHCOON	shoot hot coffee out of nose
SHID	slaps head in disgust
SNERT	snot nosed egotistical rude teenager
SO	significant other
SOMY	sick of me yet?
SOT	short of time
SOTMG	short of time, must go
STW	search the web
SUP or WU	what's up
SWAK	sealed with a kiss
SWL	screaming with laughter
SYS	see you soon
TA	thanks again
TAFN	that's all for now
TAW	teachers are watching
TCOB	taking care of business
TCOY	take care of yourself
TFH	thread from hell
TGIF	thank God it's Friday
THX	thanks
TIA	thanks in advance

TILII	tell it like it is
TLK2UL8R	talk to you later
TMI	too much information
TNT	'till next time
TOPCA	'til our paths cross again
TOY	thinking of you
TPTB	the powers that be
TTFN	ta ta for now
TTT	thought that too
TTYL	talk to you later
TU	thank you
UW	you're welcome
VBG	very big grin
WB	welcome back
WDALYIC	who died and left you in charge?
W/E	whatever
WFM	works for me
WIBNI	wouldn't it be nice if
WTG	way to go
WTGP	want to go private?
WTH	what/who the heck
WUF	where are you from?
WYSIWYG	what you see is what you get
YBS	you'll be sorry
YG	young gentleman
YL	young lady
YM	young man

**\*\*\*\*\* Suggested Viewing \*\*\*\*\***

***I strongly urge parent to watch the following, which can be viewed free on the internet. It is very applicable to the activity in our community.***

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/kidsonline/>