

Have a Safe Trip!

A Parent's Guide to Safety on the Internet

The Canadian Library Association acknowledges with thanks the work of Dr. Alvin Schrader and Joanne Griener, authors of the first edition of *Have a Safe Trip!* Revised edition August 2000.

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What is the Internet?

The Internet is a worldwide network of computers that provides a wealth of information and ideas for learning, recreation, and business.

Who Runs the Internet?

No one. Anyone with a computer and software can put information and ideas on the Internet. Some information is accurate. Some is wildly inaccurate.

Parents: Net Surfing is a Family Affair

The Internet is similar to any other communication vehicle, such as television, radio, videos, or books. Your children need your advice and guidance to make the most of the Internet experience.

You have the responsibility to monitor, supervise, and set conditions and boundaries for your children's use of the Internet. All children develop intellectually, emotionally, and physically in a unique way. You, as a parent, can best evaluate your children's readiness to use the Internet, and judge their maturity to surf alone.

If you are not familiar with the Internet yourself, ask your librarian, take a course, consult a friend, or ask your children!

Review sites with your children and bookmark your favourites. When you come across material you disapprove of, make it an opportunity to reinforce your family's values.

Be aware when your children are on-line. Put your computer in a room where your family frequently gathers. If your children are young, remain in the room while they are exploring the Internet and check frequently to see what they are doing.

Develop your own 'Acceptable Use Policy' at home, just as many schools and school libraries are doing for Internet use. See the Resource Guide at the end of this brochure for places where you can find sample policies.

Parents: Teach Your Children Well

With your guidance, children can learn how to search effectively for information, to become discriminating consumers of information, to develop on-line communication skills, and to learn a measure of personal responsibility.

Talking to Strangers

Be aware that your children's journey on the Internet may not be a private one, because Web sites routinely track Internet use including e-mail and chat.

Teach your children that strangers on the Internet are no different from strangers on the street, on the phone, or at the mall.

Emphasize to your children never to release private information, such as credit card numbers, home address, phone number, e-mail address, computer passwords, or other private family information to strangers.

Teach your children to seek your permission before meeting someone in person whom they have met on the Internet.

Teach your children not to perform any unfamiliar computing commands that an on-line contact recommends. These commands may do irreparable harm to your computer.

No Secrets

Teach your children to share 'cyber secrets' and tell you if they see something frightening, offensive, or distasteful on the Internet.

Buyer Beware

Alert your children to Internet marketing practices and gimmicks aimed at young consumers.

Internet Filters: How Do They Work?

Most commercial software filters block words, phrases, subjects, and sites on the World Wide Web.

Some Internet Filters...deny access to sites using certain keywords, but some products allow parents to review and change keywords to create their own customized list. The drawback to keyword blocking is that the technology can't discriminate between genuinely unsuitable sites and innocent ones. Software programmed to avoid the keyword "smoking," for example, could also filter out educational anti-smoking sites, and even sites devoted to geology ("smoking volcanoes") or magic ("smoke and mirrors").

Other products block sites based on the site's rating, or block all sites that are not rated. A rating is assigned either voluntarily by the site owner, or by a third party (normally without the site owner's permission or knowledge.)

Some filters also block or control access to chat rooms, e-mail, newsgroups and instant messaging. Many software programs allow parents to control their children's access to these tools by choosing to block access to all chat rooms, or to restrict access to monitored environments. These programs can control e-mail by deleting suspicious messages or those containing certain key words in the titles or in the text of the message.

And, some products block every site until you identify it as an approved site.

All Internet Filters...use American English and spelling. They require regular updating, since thousands of new sites are added daily. It is important to remember that filters cannot fully distinguish the context in which a word is used. This often filters out useful sites.

Why You Are the Best and Most Reliable Internet Filter for Your Children

- The values and skills of children are the major means to safeguard their well-being.
- Internet filters do not block all content that violates a particular family's values and beliefs.
- Internet filters do not always work as advertised. Testing shows that all Internet filters fail to block some sexually explicit sites or sites with illegal content. Filters cannot adapt to the age and level of maturity of particular children.
- Filters do not help your children learn to make independent judgments and to say no.

- Choices of words, ideas, and topics to be blocked may be driven by the product owner's personal values, ideology, and political agenda. These factors may exclude sites that have information regarding sex education, environmentalism, homosexuality, abortion, or health-related issues such as breast cancer, among others.

Libraries, the Internet and You

Your library provides access to the widest possible variety of resources that meet the needs of all members of society. This may include resources that some may consider controversial or offensive.

Library staff can advise and assist you in selecting information resources. Staff review and recommend good Internet resources, just as they select books and other library materials.

You, as a parent, are responsible for supervising your children's access to all library resources, including the Internet. If you are concerned about your children's use of the Internet at the library, ask to see your school and public library Internet Use Policies. Although the terminals in the children's areas may be filtered, terminals elsewhere in the library may not be. Public libraries are committed to offering a range of choices for the varied needs of their customer.

The Canadian Library Association Encourages Libraries to:

- offer Internet access with the fewest possible restrictions,
- familiarize themselves, their governing bodies and their communities with the legal issues surrounding the provision of Internet access and to integrate such legal reference points into their access policies,
- incorporate Internet use principles into overall policies on access to library

resources, including time, place, and manner of restrictions on Internet use, and user behaviour policies and to publicize these policies widely and post them prominently in library facilities and on electronic media,

- safeguard the long-standing relationship of trust between libraries and children, their parents and guardians, in developing Internet use policies and practices, that acknowledge the rights and responsibilities of parents and guardians,
- create library web pages consistent with resource priorities that point to appropriately reviewed sites both for general use and for use by children,
- educate their publics about intellectual freedom principles and the shared responsibility of public and school libraries, parents, and guardians in facilitating access to resources in various forms of media, including the Internet and,
- assume active leadership in community awareness of, and dialogue on, the issues inherent in the informed use of this essential, yet non-selective and unregulated medium in libraries.

For more Information on the Internet and Cybersafety issues:

Canadian Library Association
<http://www.cla.ca>

Media Awareness Network
<http://www.media-awareness.ca/eng/webaware/home.htm>

American Library Association
<http://www.ala.org/pio/internettoolkit/>

Talk to your librarian!

