



e-Safety Tips

- As parents and caregivers, we have a responsibility to be informed and familiar with all technology our teens are using: texting, chatting, gaming, IMing, social networking, as well as cell phone and other digital camera use.
- Today's youngsters have Internet access from many sources, including cell phones, gaming systems, friends' electronic devices and free public Wifi. Regularly discuss how much information he/she shares, how often and what messages they are conveying about themselves.
- **The best tech safety policy between kids and parents is education, communication, supervision and trust.** Set clear expectations of responsible digital behavior and clearly communicate these to your teen.
- If you choose to install parental controls on your teen's electronics, do so openly and remind your teen that it is an act of love and caring.
- Supervise and interact with your teen online and electronically. Become familiar with chat/texting acronyms. (See Box.)
- The most common online/electronic threats to youngsters are peer-to-peer: cyberbullying, textual harassment and sexting (sending or receiving images or text with suggestive or sexual content.)
- Young people put themselves most at risk online by having inappropriate conversations with people they don't know, sending images of themselves or agreeing to an in-person meeting.
- According to a teen survey,* most adolescents go willingly to meet online acquaintances in-person and are expecting a sexual encounter. Over three quarters of the time, there is more than one meeting.
- If your youngster is taking risks online, find out why. What is happening in their life to cause such behavior? Consider obtaining professional help/counseling, if needed.
- Via social networking sites, gaming systems and webcams, the online offender may expose teens to adult content and even convince them to share intimate images of themselves.
- Online predators become a more serious threat if (1) they succeed in learning a teen's full name, address or other personal information or (2) they manage to arrange a private, in-person meeting with the teenager. Young people who have agreed to such meetings have been abused and harmed.
- Stress to teenagers the importance of telling you or another trusted adult about any threatening or inappropriate messages or images. Save all evidence and report these immediately to www.cybertipline.com and your local police.
- Let your child know that, for their own safety, you will be monitoring their cell phone and Internet use from time to time. Then do so.
- If your teenager abuses any form of technology, consider taking the privilege away for a period of time - like you would with a car. Reward good behavior as well. Education, communication, supervision and trust are key to digital safety.



Sample Text Acronyms:

NAZ = Name, address, zip code

RU/18 = Are you over 18?

Zerg = To gang up on someone

LMIRL = Let's Meet in Real Life

1174 = U r invited to a wild party

420 = Marijuana

*Source: Youth Internet Safety Survey by David Finkelhor, Kimberly Mitchell and Janis Wolak; Crimes Against Children Research Center, University of New Hampshire