

DEFINITIONS

Just as there are different TV channels and kinds of magazines, there are many types of places to visit in cyberspace. Here are a few. Please be aware that web pages are constantly being revised and may change their addresses and content without warning. The sites named below are examples only, not necessarily recommendations.

- **Internet** is the global network that connects individual personal computers and larger computer networks together.
- **World Wide Web** generally refers to the files, text, pictures, sounds, graphics, videos, etc. that are stored on various computers and accessed via the Internet through Web sites. Sites can be sponsored by educational & nonprofit organizations or by companies marketing and selling products. There also are thousands of sites created by individuals to express an idea, pursue a hobby, or publish their own work.
- **Web 2.0** refers to interactive online resources that let people collaborate in ways previously unavailable.
- **Databases** offer an enormous quantity of searchable articles, facts, and information. Experts tend to be consulted and/or in charge of database content. Some databases are subscription-based and may be available at your library. Example: The Children's Literature Comprehensive Database (<http://www.childrenslit.com>). Others are freely available on the Web. Example: Lisa Bartle's Database of Award Winning Children's Literature (<http://www.dawcl.com>)
- **Search Engines** are computer programs that search the Internet and store information about Web sites. This stored information is used to quickly direct people to sites that may contain useful information. Example: Ask For Kids (<http://www.askkids.com>)
- **E-mail** is electronic mail that makes it possible to send a written message to one person or thousands of people almost instantaneously. E-mail services are available from a number of providers. Example: Hotmail (<http://www.hotmail.com>)
- **Instant Messaging (IM)** allows people to see if their friends are using the Internet and then send messages back and forth in real time. IM is available on some mobile phones and handheld gaming devices. Example: Meebo (<http://www.meebo.com>)
- **Blog (Weblog)** is a frequently updated, chronological publication of thoughts, pictures and Web links. Blogs can be personal or created by a group to share information among its members. Example: Author Mo Willems (<http://mowillemsfaq.blogspot.com>)
- **Chat rooms** are generally devoted to particular subjects like baseball or TV shows. Participants can talk to each other in real time, with their remarks appearing as they type and enter them. Some chat rooms offer private messages that allow one-on-one discussions similar to Instant Messaging. Example: Kidzworld Chat (<http://www.kidzworld.com/chat>)
- **Social Networks** are online communities made up of individual, member profiles. Members can connect with each other through a common interest or geography and communicate via e-mail, IM, discussion boards, text & voice chat, blogs, and file sharing all on one Web site. Example: MySpace (<http://www.myspace.com>). Some social networks exist in virtual worlds, where interaction occurs in simulated environments. Example: Second Life (<http://www.secondlife.com>). Social networks may have age restrictions.
- A **wiki** is a collection of Web pages that allows anyone—from computer programmers to elementary school students—to add, edit, and search the information it contains. Example: Wikipedia (<http://www.wikipedia.com>)
- **Podcasting** refers to the production, sharing, and downloading of digital audio or video files. Example: Just One More Book (<http://www.justonemorebook.com>)

NAVIGATING THE 'NET *With Your Kids*



The Internet, World Wide Web, Information Superhighway, and Cyberspace are all ways to describe an exciting and fun learning tool that continues to offer families and children access to a wide variety of information.

At the touch of a keyboard or the click of a mouse, it is possible to view a copy of the Gettysburg Address or today's breaking news. Children can find assistance with science projects, watch a movie trailer, send messages by e-mail, or chat with friends across the street or in another country.

Keeping up with the Internet

How do parents and children keep up with new technologies and the opportunities they provide for fun and learning?



A great starting point is the American Library Association's "Great Web Sites for Kids" (<http://www.ala.org/greatsites>). Many of these recommended sites are educational and all of them are fun! They are easy

to navigate, are sponsored by trusted sources, and make effective use of the Internet to create unique, interactive experiences.

You and your children can also ask your local librarian or visit your library's Web page for recommended sites. Some libraries even offer Internet classes for children and adults. By taking these classes, both you and your child can become experts in what the Internet has to offer.

Keeping up with your kids

Spending time online with your children is the best way to learn about the Internet and teach your children responsibility, good conduct, and the values that are important to you. Ask your children to share their favorite Web sites and what they like about them. Help them discover sites that can assist with their homework, hobbies, and special interests. A set of suggested criteria to assess the quality and validity of Web sites is available at the Great Web Sites for Kids Web page.

The vast majority of Web sites are safe. But, like the real world, the virtual world contains content that may not be appropriate for children. Parents should also examine Web sites for racial, gender, and other biases they feel are inappropriate and learn if filtering software has an appropriate role in their household.



Whether or not a filter is in place, guidance from parents and other adults is crucial in creating safe and positive Internet experiences for your children. We strongly recommend that you supervise older as well as younger children's Internet use at home and at the library. It is a good idea to place computers in the kitchen, family room, or living room so that you can see your children using it. Young children should never be allowed to "surf the Net" alone. Review your safety guidelines with them on a regular basis.

Suggested family Internet safety guidelines

The best way to ensure your child's safety on the Internet is to be there. Of course, that is not always possible. Just as you teach your children rules about dealing with strangers outside the home, you should also provide rules for communicating online at home or elsewhere. Discuss your library or community center's Internet use policy with children as well as your family rules. You may also decide to make an "Internet Use Agreement" with your child. GetNetWise.org offers sample contracts.



Recommended rules for kids

- Always ask a parent's or guardian's permission before using your full name, address, telephone number, or school name anywhere on the Internet.
- Do not respond to messages that make you feel uncomfortable or uneasy.
- Never tell anyone your passwords.
- Do not give out credit card numbers without parents' or guardians' permission.
- Never arrange to meet in person someone you've met online unless you discuss it with your parents or guardian and an adult goes with you.
- Do not believe everything you see or hear online. Some people may be trying to sell you something or spread false information. Any information you see or hear that seems untrustworthy or frightening, discuss with your parents or another adult you trust.

Suggested netiquette for kids

It's also important to teach children "netiquette"—how to behave online. Such straightforward rules as not typing in all capital letters (it looks like you are shouting), being polite, and keeping quiet in chat rooms until you get a sense of what people are talking about, are simply good manners as well as common sense.

Online profiles and networks

Having an online presence for most kids is akin to breathing air, it's something they do to socially survive. Whether they have a blog or belong to one of the hundreds of online communities, participation is not only compulsory, it's a necessity. With adult guidance, these online activities need not be dangerous or risky. Talk to your child about what is and is not appropriate for them to post. If you create an atmosphere of trust and openness, it will be easier for your child to come to you if they do encounter any kind of problems online. The nonprofit Tech Parenting Group has additional social networking tips and strategies you can use with your child. This information can be found at <http://www.ConnectSafely.org>.



Gaming



Playing games on a computer is something most kids (and many adults!) will do from time to time. Online gaming includes everything from single-player games like solitaire to complex, multi-player games that take place in fully developed virtual worlds. In addition to improving a child's hand/eye coordination as they move their attention quickly between the screen, keyboard, and mouse, many experts believe games that are rich with strategy and

decision making can improve a child's higher level thinking skills.

Many games played via the Internet have some aspects of social networking like chat, discussion boards, and/or personal profiles. As such, you and your child should practice the same strategies for online gaming as you do for social networking: be cautious what you post, never use your full name, and quit playing if you feel you are being harassed or bullied.

Cyberbullying

Using online technologies to threaten and inflict hurtful behavior onto others is called cyberbullying. It can take many forms: a direct e-mail, an instant message, a posting on a Web site, the unauthorized editing of a personal profile, or even the removal of someone's name from a "friends" list. Cyberbullying is a crime in some localities and more legislation is being debated throughout the country. Additional information including tips for dealing with cyberbullies can be found at <http://www.cyberbully411.org>—a Web site created by the nonprofit Internet Solutions for Kids, Inc.

Have fun!

Becoming aware of what is available on the Internet and using it wisely with your children will help keep them safe and provide fun and educational experience for the whole family.

We hope these tips and guidelines will help you and your children enjoy the benefits of the Internet. Remember: It's not the technology, but how technology is used that makes a difference in a child's life.

