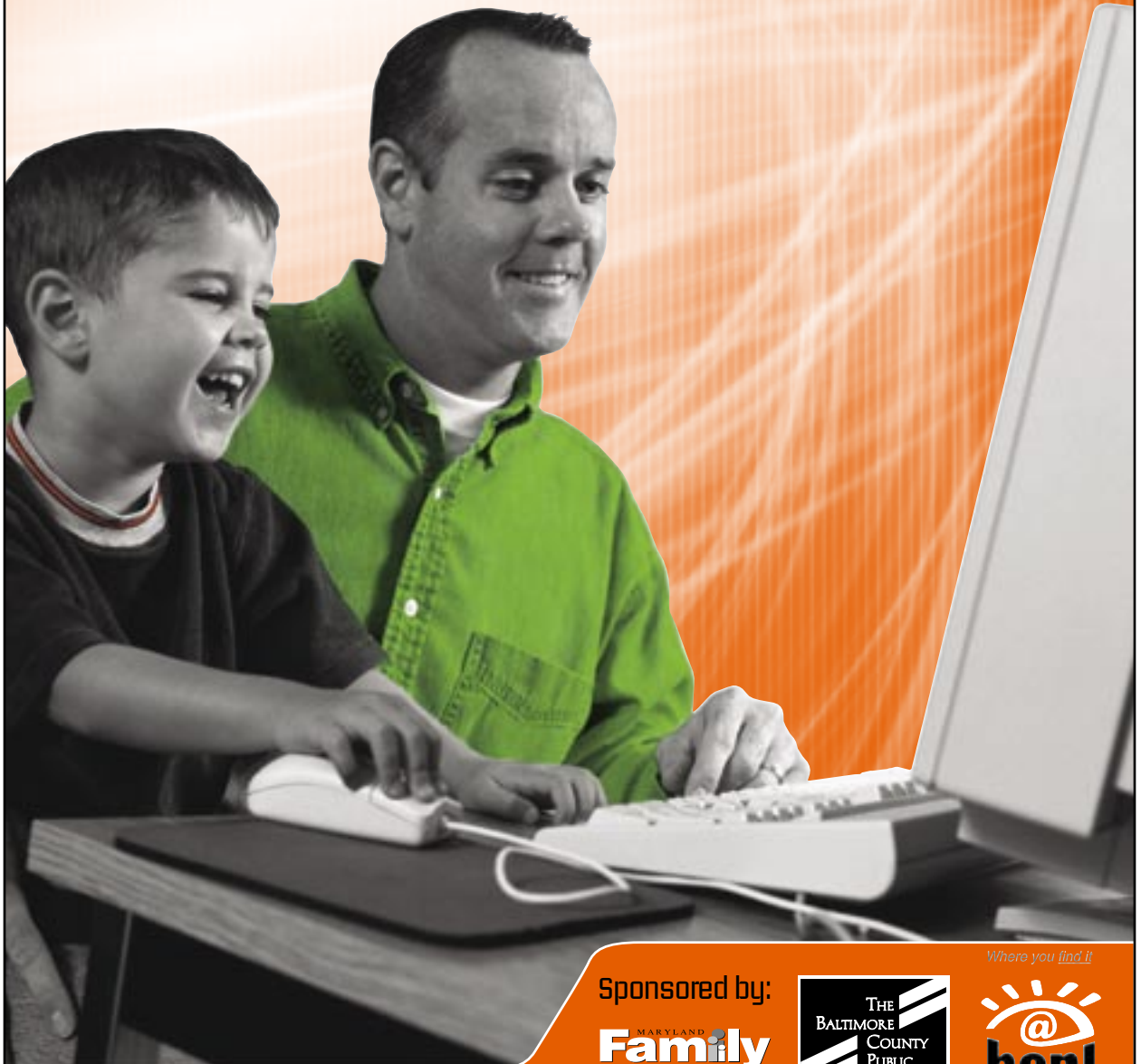


Family Guide to

child safety
on the internet

Brought to you by the Baltimore County community



Where you find it

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A partnership publication with the Baltimore County Public Schools and Maryland Family magazine.

Introduction

Dear Reader:

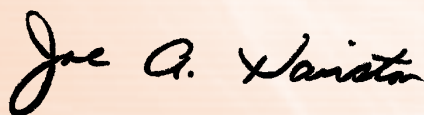
Our children are born digital natives. As they grow, they can access virtually any information they need from computers in their homes and schools, communicate instantly with anyone in the world from their cell phones and carry all their music on devices that fit in their hands. To educate and engage our children, the technology that is a part of their lives must also be a part of their learning experiences.

As described in our foundational document, the *Blueprint for Progress*, Baltimore County Public Schools embraces technology to enhance classroom teaching and learning, and prepare our students for higher education and careers. We are proud that state, national, and international organizations have honored our achievements in education technology.

This publication, *Family Guide to Child Safety on the Internet*, developed in partnership with Patuxent Publishing, is yet another step forward in our ongoing efforts to expand the safe and effective use of technology. In these pages, Baltimore County Public Schools staff, students, advocates, and partners share useful information and advice about ways that we can all work together to keep our children safe as they explore the technology that connects them to the world.

Just as keeping our classrooms safe is a primary responsibility of our school system, keeping our young people safe as they use technology is a primary responsibility for the entire community.

Sincerely



Joe A. Hairston
SUPERINTENDENT

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- Parry Aftab, Esq., *Executive Director*, WIREDSAFETY
- Della Curtis, *Coordinator Office of Library Information Services*, BALTIMORE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM
- Lynn Lockwood, *Assistant Director*, BALTIMORE COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY
- Lieutenant Ralph Donahoe, *Unit Commander of Youth & Community Resources*, BALTIMORE COUNTY POLICE DEPARTMENT
- Joyce Caldwell, *Library Media Specialist*, BALTIMORE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS, PERRY HALL MIDDLE
- Pam Moss, *Project Manager*, PATUXENT PUBLISHING COMPANY
- Emiko Watanabe, *Designer*, PATUXENT PUBLISHING COMPANY
- Dennise Cardona, *Copywriter*, PATUXENT PUBLISHING COMPANY

Overview

The world that we 30-somethings grew up in—with the birth of cable television, video games, and cassette tapes—must have been a frolic through the fields for our parents compared to how the parents of today must deal with emerging technologies. The day that the World Wide Web was spun was the day that would forever change the direction of how we communicate. Research papers once requiring a trek to the local library for information now would only take a matter of seconds to download facts from the convenience of one's cozy home. Reaching out to a favorite relative across the country now could be accomplished with a few keystrokes and a send button. School documents for group projects now could be shared without the waste of our delicate paper resource.

A boundless source of benefits and convenience, the Internet is a vast information portal where access is granted 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The Internet is considered a critical tool for children as it engages powerful interactive and intellectual qualities essential to their successful future. However, despite these great benefits, children who access the Internet are vulnerable to risks and hidden dangers that if not properly monitored, could have harmful, even sometimes fatal, effects.

This guide was established to educate parents on ways to make the best of the Internet's benefits while protecting their children from these potential dangers.

The Internet opens the door to a world of endless possibilities for children. Our guide serves to educate parents on how vital it is to be aware of the potentially hazardous dangers of the Internet and how important it is to instill smart, safe online habits in their children. Through our guide, parents will learn how they can help their children get the most from their Internet use while remaining safe and unaffected by its hidden dangers. It also instructs parents on where they can go to get help for online safety issues such as: cyberbullying, online predators, child exploitation, and other potential dangers inherent within the Internet.



Critical Advice from Members of Your Community

Leaders in the fields of law enforcement, education, library systems, and telecommunications provide their expertise on where parents can go to get help, while a concerned parent and three inspiring students share their unique, personal perspectives.

WiredSafety.org An organization founded by Parry Aftab, Esq. that provides help, information, and education to Internet and mobile device users of all ages. When it comes to Internet safety or Internet privacy and security, WiredSafety is the group you read about in the newspapers and magazines and see on television around the world. It operates Teenangels, WiredKids, Cyber Law Enforcement, and Internet Super Heroes.

The Baltimore County Library Information Services educates parents on the practices of online safety for children. They share how current telecommunications policies and instructional programs support the safe and ethical use of technology today.

The Baltimore County Public Library tells what the public library system is doing to support the use of technology and its safe use for students and their families.

The Baltimore County Police Department reveals how they are working to protect students from unsafe practices, offers safety tips, and helpful resources parents can utilize if a violation occurs. We also have included information from the FBI about identity theft and what to do if you or your child becomes a victim.

A PTA member, proud parent of two children, and active Baltimore County Public School volunteer since 1995, reveals how she met the challenges of keeping her children safe while accessing the popular Web site, mspace.com. She discusses ways parents can ensure their children's safety while using technology in their home.

Perry Hall Middle School shares excerpts from three inspiring, candid letters written by students who were invited to give advice to incoming 6th grade students on the 'cool' uses of technology and how to use it safely.

Parenting Online

by Parry Aftab

What do we do when our children know more than we do about cyberspace? How do we set the rules of cyberspace when, we as parents, don't even understand the risks? The childproof locks, seatbelts and helmets we use to help keep them safe in everyday life won't protect them in cyberspace. There, we need new and different gadgets and safety tips. Welcome to the new world of parenting online!

We repeat the tried and true warnings our parents used on us because they pertain to the familiar—*don't talk to strangers, come straight home from school, don't provoke fights, and don't tell anyone personal information about yourself*. We know the dangers our kids face in the street, at the mall or in the schoolyard, because we once faced them. But cyberspace is a whole new world.

Since our children are apt to know more than we do about cyberspace, we worry about how we can teach them to avoid those dangers. *Don't panic!* Those dangers can be translated into cyberspace terms and managed using the same veteran warnings we've always used.

WONDERS AROUND EVERY CYBER-CORNER

The Internet is the largest collection of information in the world, always available without a charge and delivered to your home computer. Every question you might have can be answered online. Our children's artwork can be displayed, their news reporting published and their poems posted on the largest "refrigerator door" in the universe, where 700 million people can appreciate them.

You can search online for just about anything you want. The easiest way to do that is by using search engines. You can type your search into one of these engines and most likely find what you are seeking. Just as often, though, you will find sites that are trying to get your or your children's attention. Pornographers are the most frequent abusers of search engines, registering and coding their sites to trick people into visiting them, thinking they are Disney, Pokemon or even the White House.

Most of the search engines now have filtering options. By selecting one of these options, most inappropriate content is filtered out and the search results are typically kid-friendly. Two commercial search engines were designed just for kids and are wonderful places

to begin your child's search online.

Yahooligans!: they hand-select the sites, making sure nothing slips through. It is best for younger children, ten and under.

Ask Jeeves for Kids: although not as scrubbed clean as *Yahooligans!*, it contains many more sites, which makes it perfect for children slightly older than ten years of age. In addition, most full-size search engines have a filtered option that you can select. But remember that even if you use a search engine filter, kids searching images can find inappropriate things. Thankfully, image-blocking filters are available, as well.

In addition to kid-sized search engines, there are many wonderful family-friendly site lists. **WiredKids** has one of its own where the sites are selected and reviewed by specially-trained volunteers.

There are some entertaining sites that teach children online safety, as well. Although we prefer our **WiredKids.org**, **StopCyberbullying.org** and **InternetSuperHeroes.org**, there are some other special ones to point out. Disney's **Surfswellisland.com** teaches online safety Disney-style. Lesson plans, online safety worksheets and other wonderful resources are all available without charge. For homework help, visit **Discovery.com**, **Nationalgeographic.org**, **PBSkids.org** and The National Gallery of Art kids page at www.nga.gov/kids/kids.htm.

Librarians and library media specialists are the guides to valuable and safe online resources for children. And, if you need something you can't find, send an email to "Ask Parry," where Executive Director of WiredSafety and its family of sites and programs, Parry Aftab, publishes her Internet-syndicated online safety column. Drop by **WiredKids.org** or **WiredSafety.org** to find out how to submit a question.



Parenting Online

CyberSense...

translating common sense for cyberspace

Don't talk to or accept anything from strangers. Online, it's hard to spot strangers. Unless your child knows them in real life, they are strangers, no matter how long they have chatted online. Strangers can easily masquerade as a 12-year-old girl and in reality be a 45-year-old man.

Don't wander around aimlessly. Allowing your children to spend unlimited time online as they surf aimlessly, is asking for trouble. Make sure there's a reason they're online. If they are just surfing randomly, set a time limit so that they come back home to human interaction, family activities (and homework).

Don't provoke fights. Trying to provoke someone in cyberspace is called "flaming" or "cyberbullying". It often violates the "terms of service" of your online service provider and will certainly get a reaction from other people online. Flaming matches can be heated, long and extended battles, moving from a chat room or discussion group to email quickly. If your child feels that someone is flaming them, they should tell you and the sysop (system operator, pronounced sis-op) or moderator in charge right away and get offline or surf another area. They shouldn't try to defend themselves or get involved in retaliation. It's a battle they can never win.

Don't steal. Don't illegally download music, movies or games.

Don't take 'candy' from strangers. Just like how 'offline candy' could be laced with drugs or poisons, a seemingly innocent attachment can destroy computer files, pose as your child and destroy their friends' files, or spy on her without you even knowing it. Use a good anti-virus program and update it often. You can get a list of recommended spyware blockers at WiredSafety.org. Practice safe computing!

Don't tell people personal things. Even if your children think they know who they're talking to, there could be strangers lurking and reading their posts without their knowing. Don't let your children put personal

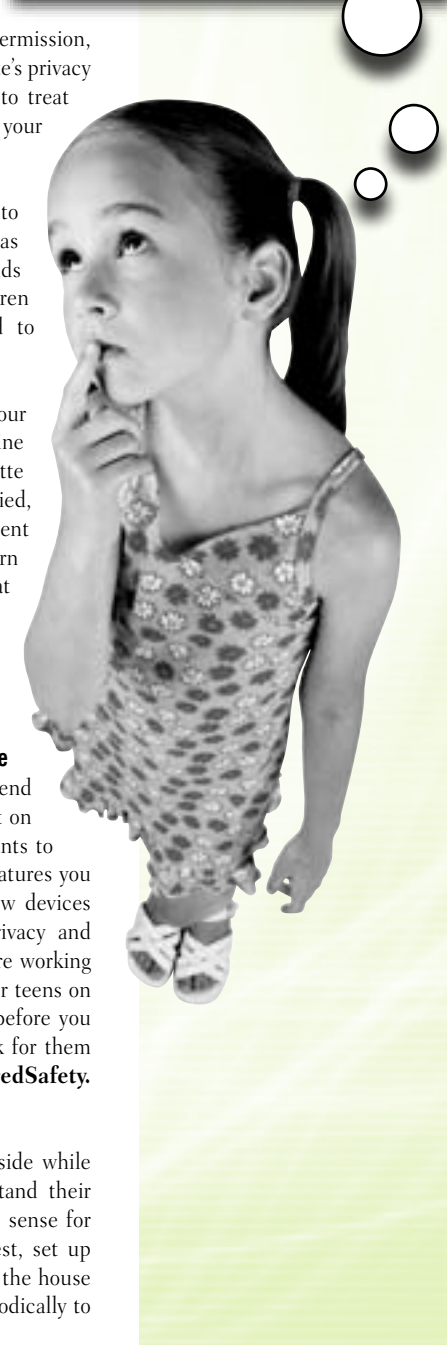
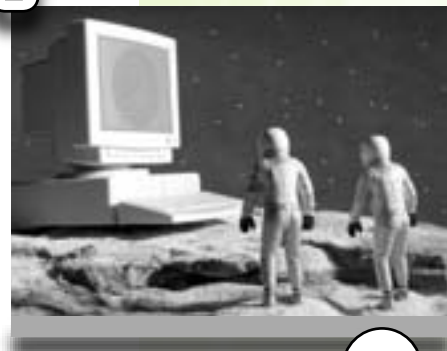
information on profiles. Explain what personal information is and teach them not to give it away in order to register or enter a contest, unless they ask your permission first. And, before you give your permission, make sure you have read the web site's privacy policy, and that they have agreed to treat your personal information, and your child's, responsibly.

Get to know your friends. Get to know their online friends, just as you would get to know their friends in everyday life. Talk to your children about where they go online and to whom they talk.

R-E-S-P-E-C-T. If you teach your children to respect others online and to follow the rules of netiquette they are less likely to be cyberbullied, become involved in online harassment or be hacked online. You can learn more about the ways to combat cyberbullying at our new website, StopCyberbullying.org or at WiredSafety.org's cyberstalking and harassment section.

Know the handheld and interactive gaming risks. Your children can send and receive text-messages and chat on Internet phones to anyone who wants to talk with them. Think about the features you are buying when you purchase new devices for your children. Check into privacy and security settings. Our *Teenangels* are working on new guides for parents and other teens on what to look for and think about before you buy a new interactive device. Look for them at your local retailer or on the WiredSafety.org and Teenangels.org websites.

Set Rules. Sit by your children's side while they compute so you can understand their surfing habits. Set rules that make sense for them. And, to keep children honest, set up the computer in a common area of the house and take a look at the monitor periodically to ensure they are following the rules.



Parenting Online



Tech Tools to help keep children safe

Parents must teach their children to be aware and careful in cyberspace. Even if every piece of technology protection available is used, unless your children know what to expect and how to react when they run into something undesirable online, they are at risk. Arming them well means teaching them well.

Blocking, filtering and monitoring

There are many tools available to help parents control and monitor where their children surf online. Some even help regulate how much time a child spends playing computer games, or prevent their accessing the Internet during certain preset times. To read more about the various products and services we have reviewed, visit WiredKids.org and WiredSafety.org.

Blocking Software

Blocking software blocks access to sites that are on a "bad list." They may also have a "good site" list, which prevents your child from accessing any site not on that list. Some of the software companies allow you to customize the lists, by adding or removing sites. I recommend you only consider software that allows you to customize the list, and lets you know which sites are included.

Filtering

Filtering software uses certain keywords to block sites or sections of sites. The software blocks sites containing certain keywords, alone or in context with other keywords. Some companies allow you to select certain types of sites to block, such as those relating to sex,

drugs or hate. As with the "bad site" lists, the keywords used by the filtering software should be customizable by the parent, and every parent should be able to see which terms are filtered.

Outgoing Filtering

Software is available to prevent your children from sharing certain personal information with others online. Information such as their name, address or telephone number can be programmed into the software, and every time they try to send it to someone online, it merely shows up as "XXXs."

Monitoring and Tracking

Some software allows parents to track where their children go online, how much time they spend online, how much time they spend on the computer (such as when they are playing games) and even allows parents to control what times of day their children can use the computer. We particularly like Spectorsoft.com, because their products can monitor all instant messaging platforms, which is key to keeping your children safe online. We recommend using a monitoring program as a bank would use a security camera. Review when you suspect a problem so as to avoid invading your children's privacy.

Parenting Wireless

Our families can carry powerful computing in handheld devices the size of a pack of playing cards (or smaller!). They can download and play music, movies, and games. They can take, store and share photos, video and audio. They are always in touch, always connected, always engaged. (And the newest hottest teen social network, Yfly.com, is using broadcast text-messaging to keep teens connected to their nearest and dearest friends through their mobile devices. MySpace and Facebook websites are using text-to-profile posting technologies now, too.)

The biggest problem is that the most often repeated safety tip warns parents to keep the computer in a central location to keep an eye on what's going on. So, how are we supposed to keep our kids safe when they are carrying access and communication devices in the palms of their little hands? At this point, it's less about standing over their shoulders and more about improving the "filter between their ears." You can do this by being proactive and informed. This all comes down to 3 key issues: the "3C's" – Communication, Content, and Commercialism. Every digital device or interactive service involves at least one of these issues. Once you find the C's involved, spotting the risks and solutions is easy. Start by reviewing all your interactive technology devices and services. If you are shopping for a new device or service, ask the salesperson these questions before plunking down your hard-earned money.

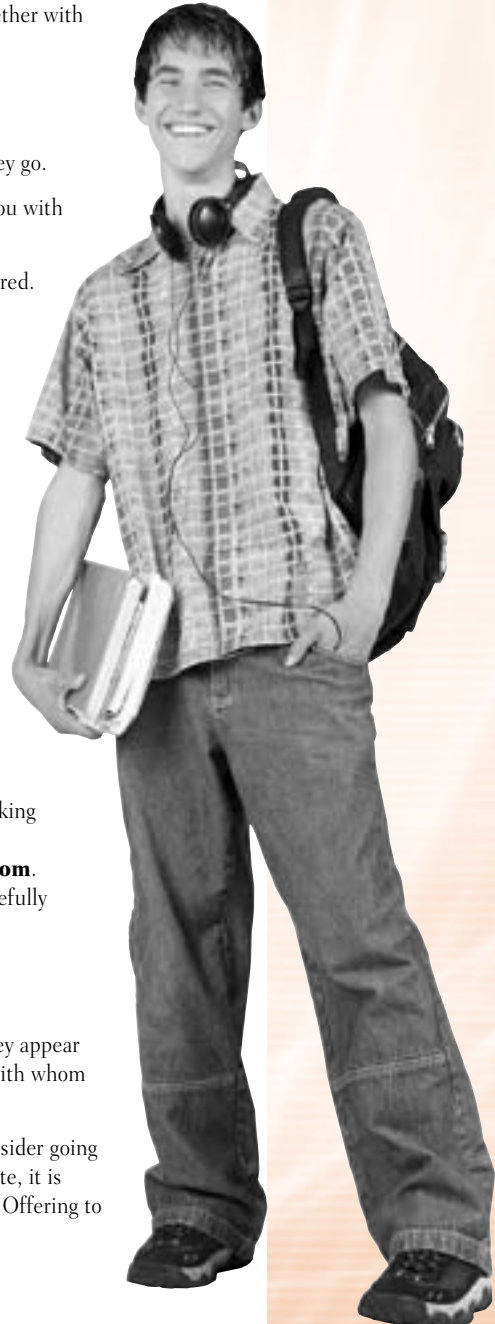
Communication: How does this device or service allow you to communicate with others? How does it allow others to communicate with you? Can you block, filter or monitor these communications? Text-messaging, voice capabilities, email, interactive profile features, and blogs fall into the first "C".

Content: What content or images can be accessed or shared using the device or service? Can you surf the Web, access and/or post blog or profile sites, or download media? Can you store images, personal information, video, songs, etc.? What controls exist to rate, block, filter, or monitor the content? Music and video downloads, pictures taken by the mobile device, adult content, content on profiles and blogs fall into this second "C".

Commercialism: Will this device/service cost me money? If so, how much? Are there ways to spend money or buy things using the device / service? Are there ways to control costs or prevent my kids from spending money or buying things without my approval? What controls exist to block, filter or monitor these costs or spending ability? Ringtones, music downloads, text-messaging and games fall into this third C.

Parenting Online

- Limit computer sessions. People, not computers, should be their friends.
- Keep the computer in a family room, kitchen or living room.
- For handheld and mobile Internet and text-messaging devices, make sure that the “filter between their ears” is working at all times.
- Learn enough about computers so you can enjoy them together with your kids.
- Teach them never to meet an online friend offline unless you are with them.
- Watch your children when they’re online and see where they go.
- Make sure that your children feel comfortable coming to you with questions and don’t overreact if things go wrong.
- Keep kids out of chat rooms or IRC unless they are monitored.
- Encourage discussions with your children about what they enjoy online.
- Discuss set rules and have your children agree & adhere to them, then post them near the computer as a reminder.
- Ask for passwords to all their email and instant message accounts and agree not to spy on them.
- “Google” your children (and yourself) often and set alerts for their contact information. The alerts will email you when any of the searched terms are spotted online. To learn how to “Google” them, visit **InternetSuperHeroes.org**.
- Teach them what information they can share with others online and what they can’t (i.e. telephone & cell numbers, address, their full name, and school).
- Check your children’s profiles, blogs and any social-networking posts. Social-networking websites include **xanga.com**, **livejournal.com**, **facebook.com** and **buddyprofile.com**. They shouldn’t be used by preteens and should be only carefully used by teens.
- Get to know their “online friends” just as you would their other friends.
- Warn them that people they chat with are not always as they appear and that they are not their friends, but rather just people with whom they chat.
- If they insist on meeting their online friend in real life, consider going with them. When they think they have found their soul mate, it is unlikely that your telling them “no” will make a difference. Offering to go with them keeps them safe.



Parenting Online

Dear Families,

I am asked questions about kids' online safety at least a hundred times a day. Is the Internet a dangerous place? Are there predators out there looking to set up a meeting with my child? How can we find good and reliable content online? How can I supervise my child's surfing when I can't even turn on the computer? **Here is the one simple answer: The single greatest risk our children face in connection with the Internet is being denied access.** We have solutions for every other risk, which bears repeating, over and over, especially when we hear about Internet sexual predators, hate, sex and violence online. But our children need the Internet for their education, careers and their future. Happily, most of the risks are easily confined.

In each and every case when children encounter Internet sexual predators offline, they go willingly to the meeting. They may think the person is a cute fourteen-year-old girl or boy whom they feel they know from chatting online, but in actuality they are meeting someone they don't know. That means we can prevent 100% of these crimes. We must simply teach our children not to meet Internet strangers offline. If they are set on meeting that person anyway, go with them. That way, if the person does turn out to be a cute fourteen-year-old, you are the hero. And if they aren't, you're an even bigger hero.

Our *WiredKids*, *WiredTeens* and *Teenangels* programs, in addition to being fun and educational sites, are also volunteer programs where children and teens are taught online safety and privacy and responsible surfing. They then use these skills to help other children and teens learn to surf safely, as well. Talk to your children about what they do online (and offline also), and let them know you are there to help if things go wrong. You will note that in our safe surfing agreement, parents have to promise only one thing...not to overreact if their children come to them for help. Earn their trust, and be worthy of it. Register your children at **WiredKids.org**, our children's online safety site, and we will make sure they learn what they need to know about enjoying the Internet safely and privately. It's not about technology at all...it's about communication and good parenting. And, if you have a question of your own, visit **WiredKids.org** or **WiredSafety.org** and click on "Ask Parry." Remember, we're all in this together!

Parry Aftab, Esq.

Parry Aftab, Esq.
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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For more cybersafety tips and help or to book a program for your community, visit WiredSafety.org, the world's largest Internet and wireless safety and help group or contact Parry Aftab directly at parry@wiredsafety.org.





Online Safety “Cheatsheet” of basic rules for parents

We urge you to set rules. Some kids like to see rules set out clearly in an agreement. Here's one to use and post near your computer to help them remember how to surf safely.

I want to use our computer and the Internet.

I know that there are certain rules about what I should do online.

I agree to follow these rules and my parents agree to help me follow these rules:

- I will not give out my or my parents' name, address, telephone number, or my school name to anyone I meet on the computer.
- I understand that some people online pretend to be someone else. Sometimes they pretend to be kids, when they're really grown ups. I will tell my parents about people I meet online. I will also tell my parents before I send an email to or answer any emails from new people I meet online.
- I will not buy or order anything online without asking my parents or give out any credit card information.
- I will not fill out any form online that asks for my information or my family's without asking my parents first.
- I will not get into arguments or fights online. If someone tries to start an argument or fight with me, I won't answer him or her and will tell my parents.
- If I see something I do not like or that I know my parents don't want me to see, I will click on the "back" button or log off.
- If I see people doing or saying inappropriate things to other kids online, I'll tell my parents.
- I won't keep online secrets from my parents.
- If someone sends me any pictures or any emails using bad language, I will tell my parents.
- If someone asks me to do something I am not supposed to do, I will tell my parents.
- I will not call anyone I meet online, or in person, unless my parents say it's okay.
- I will never meet anyone in person whom I met online, unless my parents say it's okay.
- I will never send anything to anyone I meet online, unless my parents say it's okay.
- If anyone I met online sends me anything, I will tell my parents.
- I will not use something I found online and pretend it's mine.
- I won't say bad things about people online, and I will practice good netiquette.
- I won't use bad language online.
- I know that my parents want to make sure I'm safe online, and I will listen to them when they ask me not to do something.
- I will help teach my parents more about computers and the Internet.
- I will practice safe computing, and check for viruses whenever I borrow a disk from someone or download something from the Internet.
- I won't post my cell number on any messages, and will check with someone before posting something personal about me on my blog or on a networking site.
- I will 'Stop, Block and Tell!' if I am harassed online or cyberbullied.
- I will 'Take 5!' before reacting to something that upsets me or makes me angry online.
- I will practice responsible "thinkB4Uclick" rules. (I know I can find out more about these things at **InternetSuperHeroes.org** and **StopCyberbullying.org**.)
- I will learn how to be a good cybercitizen and control the technology, instead of being controlled by it.

I promise to follow these rules. *(signed by the child)*

I promise to help my child follow these rules and not to over react if my child tells me about bad things in cyberspace. *(signed by parent)*

Baltimore County Public Schools

Preparing students for Success in the 21st Century

by Della Curtis

Technology is becoming increasingly prevalent in our everyday lives as well as the workforce. Recent studies predict that by the year 2010 almost every job in the American workplace will require some use of technology. Our schools mirror this trend. Our challenge is to prepare students to use technology as a tool for problem solving in the information age where our students must learn to make choices between the information goldmines or landfills, ethical or unethical use of intellectual property, and privacy of personal information or broadcasting to worldwide populations.



Choice #1: Information Goldmine or

Landfill The 2003 study from the University of California at Berkley School of Information Management and Science provides some startling statistics. The exponential growth of information is at a rate of 5 exabytes per year. Let's use the Library of Congress as a framework to understand the scope of this statistic. The Library of Congress houses 17 million books. 5 exabytes would translate to 37,000 new Library of Congress collections. The rate of digital content produced via the Internet is a similar story. The World Wide Web (WWW) is 17 times the size of the Library of Congress, with a growth rate of 30% per year. The study concludes that the knowledge base doubles every 7 years. This information explosion trend will continue, thus making it increasingly important for all to make wise choices regarding the validity of information, effective search strategies to locate needed information, and how to manage "information overload."

Choice #2: Ethical or Unethical Use of Intellectual Property

Access to vast amounts of "free" information from around the globe may be misinterpreted as authorization to use all or any part of another's intellectual property for one's own purposes. Technological tools make it easy to copy/paste as opposed to "deep reading" for understanding and synthesizing to communicate new knowledge. The copy/paste behavior is the antithesis of knowledge-worker behaviors. Further exasperating the temptation is the availability of sources where students can download a complete term paper on any topic needed. A Google search ("free term papers") on 3/31/06 provided web links to 346,000 choices.

Choice #3: Privacy of Personal Information or Broadcasting to a Global Audience

Because millennials* are trusting by nature, freely share information using their technological devices, and know that adults will protect them unconditionally with rules,

laws, and policies in their physical world, they are confident that their virtual world is the same. Giving out personal information such as a name, age, sex, address, phone number, likes and dislikes, photos, etc. is done with little reservation knowing there will be no consequences. After all, *I am anonymous in my virtual space, I can be whomever I want to be – real or not real – and I'm in my house and safe in my room.*

Meeting the Shared Challenge

Our challenge is to prepare our students to become effective information consumers and producers of information who will make ethical, responsible, and safe choices. This requires more than learning to operate a computer, but how to use it as a tool for problem solving - learning to be a knowledge worker who uses cognitive skills for lifelong learning, productivity, and achievement in this information-based global economy.

Leadership with Vision

Dr. Hairston, Superintendent of Baltimore County Public Schools, who received the 2006 Technology Administrator of the Year Award, clearly has the vision for technology in Baltimore County Public Schools. The BCPS Blueprint for Progress mirrors the conditions essential to a knowledge-worker learning environment. These are:

- Integrate technology in the teaching and learning process.
- Provide teachers with professional development opportunities for using and integrating technology into curriculum and instruction.
- Provide opportunities for all students so they will acquire and apply information through the use of educational media, including technology and media centers.
- Identify and consistently implement a common core of research-based instructional practices resulting in more purposeful and engaging work for students.

Baltimore County Public Schools

Technology Standards

There are essential conditions required to create a knowledge-worker learning environment in our schools. According to the International Society for Technology in Education, these conditions are:

- Educators skilled in the use of technology for learning
- Content standards and technology integrated curriculum
- Student-centered approaches to problem-based learning
- Instruction in ethical and safe use of information networks
- Access to contemporary technologies, software, and telecommunications networks
- Vision with support and proactive leadership.

Problem Solving Framework

Along the great strides in creating technologically equipped schools, it is important that students are equipped with a problem-solving model. The model provides a framework to help them learn the process each step of the way – to effectively search for information, to read critically, to question information authenticity, to organize and produce new information, and to document information sources. The BCPS *Information Literacy Process Model* is more than a framework of what should be done. It is a tool to support teachers, students, and families in teaching essential 21st century skills. <http://www.bcps.org/offices/lis/models/tips/index.html>

Online Research Models

The framework is just the beginning. It, like technology, must be integrated into teaching and learning, thus the BCPS Online Research Models that are collaboratively designed by teams of library media specialists and teachers during summer curriculum workshops for the past 7 years. In 1999, the Maryland Business Roundtable recognized these Online Research Models as one of the best practices in technology integration in Maryland. See models for each level at the following URL's:

Elementary School: <http://www.bcps.org/offices/lis/models/elem.html>

Middle School: <http://www.bcps.org/offices/lis/models/middle.html>

High School: <http://www.bcps.org/offices/lis/models/highcore.html>

The onLINE Website

In 1991, the Office of Library Information Services designed the first BCPS website to connect educators, students, and their families to evaluated Internet resources that directly support the teaching and learning of *BCPS Essential Curriculum*. With the revision of Maryland learning standards... the *Voluntary State Curriculum* ...another first leap to serve the same purpose was completed in July 2005. Not only does this source link to authoritative text-based Internet resources, but also to the newer digital content of "learning objects," multimedia, simulations, and tutorials.

<http://www.bcps.org/offices/lis/>

MDK-12 Digital Library

The Enhancing Education Through Technology Grant provides ALL Maryland students 24/7 access to a core of "quality" digital content such as full text magazines, newspapers, multimedia, videos, and evaluated websites. Additional digital content accessible 24/7 to BCPS students, families, and teachers is funded by BCPS. These resources include *e-Science Reference Books, Historical Newspapers, Literature Resource Center, World Book, and BrainPop*. <http://www.bcps.org/offices/lis/feebased/index.html>

Telecommunications Policy

The BCPS policy outlines a code of behavior for knowledge-worker students to practice safe, ethical, and responsible use of telecommunications. The Acceptable Use for Students is included in the *BCPS Student Handbook* that is annually sent home to all families for their review and signature. See policy 6166P and rule 6166R - *Telecommunications Access to Electronic Information, Services, and Networks* at http://www.bcps.org/system/policies_rules/6000toc.htm

Below is a summary of the expectations the school system has for all students who use telecommunications:

STUDENTS SHALL:

- Use telecommunications for educational purposes.
- Communicate with others in a courteous and respectful manner.
- Maintain the privacy of personal name, phone number, password(s), and respect the privacy of others.
- Use only telecommunications accounts and passwords provided by the school.
- Report any incident of harassment to the supervising employee.
- Agree to the review of communications, data, and files by the Baltimore County Public Schools.
- Comply with copyright laws and intellectual property rights of others.

STUDENTS SHALL NOT:

- Knowingly enter unauthorized computer networks or software to tamper or destroy data.
- Bypass the school system's filtering server.
- Access or distribute abusive, harassing, libelous, obscene, offensive, profane, pornographic, threatening, sexually explicit, or illegal material.
- Install personal software on computers.
- Use telecommunications for commercial, purchasing, or illegal purposes.
- Use telecommunications in any other manner that would violate School Board disciplinary policies.

http://www.bcps.org/system/policies_rules/forms_exhibits/6000Series/FORM6166-A.pdf

Our shared challenge is to prepare all students to be productive, successful, responsible, and contributing citizens in a global-based economy. The *Blueprint for Progress*, the written master plan for Baltimore County Public Schools, sets forth the vision and strategies to build curriculum and technological capacity for a 21st century knowledge worker global economy. The information goldmines or landfills, ethical or unethical use of intellectual property, and privacy of personal information or broadcasting to a global audience – all choices – will be easier through education at home, school, and the community.

Baltimore County Public Library

Helping Parents, Helping Kids

The Baltimore County Public Library (BCPL), with 17 branches throughout the county, has always been a quality resource for parents and kids alike. In 2005, BCPL was again rated one of the top five large library systems in the country for its customer service and efficiency. Whether providing parents with programs or information to assist in preparing their children for school, or providing kids the resources to complete their schoolwork or expand their horizons, your local library is ready to help.

Public computers

All of BCPL's branches have computer terminals available for public use and many branches offer courses on basic Internet and database usage. Please check our quarterly *Calendar of Events* for specific branch classes and schedules. Our computers are situated to be highly visible and close to library information desks. Staff routinely circulates in the area to answer questions and provide guidance on doing research and exploring resources. While we take care to use computer filters and try to monitor individual usage to help protect children from inappropriate material, the ultimate responsibility for monitoring children's use of the Internet rests with parents or caregivers. If you have any questions or concerns about your child's use of our computers, please contact your local branch manager.

Online resources

BCPL's motto is "Where you find it" and this is especially appropriate concerning the needs of young students. We offer online librarian support through the *AskUsNow* reference service, giving students the ability to communicate with an actual librarian through live online chat sessions 24 hours a day seven days a week. *AskUsNow* can help students with questions, research guidance and Internet navigation. The library's Kids Catalog of available materials is easily accessed by young readers as they look for their next great reading adventure.

We have developed a Kids Page on our Web site www.bcpl.info with specific information areas to find materials related to homework assignments or just to browse in pursuit of hobbies or interests. Children can find reading ideas by subject area or author, games, and other activities that will all challenge their minds and broaden their reading skills. Included on the Kids Page is a Parents Corner with

helpful advice on exploring the Internet with your child and preparing your young ones for entering school.

BCPL subscribes to many databases, including some that are ideal resources for young students and can be accessed free of charge in your local branch or remotely from home or school. The Kids Page includes a section called Got Homework? with links to the World Book Encyclopedia Online, the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary and the Discovery Channel's online resource **Discovery School.com**. Other databases include Kids Search and Searchasaurus for elementary and middle school students.

Your local librarian would be happy to help you find the right online resource for your needs or those of your children.

Reading programs

BCPL is a strong proponent of preparing young children for school and fostering the growth of their reading and comprehension skills beginning at a very early age. The better they are able to read, the better they will be able to make use of online resources for their education and personal enrichment. Therefore we regularly present programs for kids and parents/caregivers aimed at developing and improving these critical skills all year long, not just during the school year.

Our Summer Reading Club program encourages children and teens to continue their classroom reading activities by using a fun theme and offering small prizes when they complete reading tasks. With mascot, Sneaks the Cat, leading the way, children have fun reading while maintaining their reading skills between school sessions. Parents/caregivers of babies and toddlers can participate in the program by reading to them which familiarizes preschoolers with books and reading activities. We work in conjunction with the Baltimore County public schools and area private schools to make sure students are recognized for their reading achievements during summer break, creating another incentive to read year round.

The Baltimore County Public Library has a long history of providing quality materials and information to customers of all ages, including through the use of the Internet and other online resources. This tradition is especially important for the development of literacy skills and a love of reading in our children. By our giving them the tools and appreciation of reading, they can benefit from the vast information resources that will foster their lifelong learning and personal growth.

Baltimore County Police Department

A Proactive Approach to Internet Security

The Baltimore County Police Department takes online safety very seriously, especially when it comes to children. They suggest that taking a proactive approach is perhaps the single best tactic to protecting a child's safety. There are many steps parents can take to ensure that their children safely enjoy the endless benefits of the Internet.

Lieutenant Ralph Donahoe, Unit Commander of the Baltimore County Police Department's Youth and Community Resources Section, points out that the Baltimore County Police offers presentations on Internet safety. The Police Athletic League (PAL), created to provide a safe and structured environment for the youth throughout Baltimore County and provide an opportunity for these young people to interact with police officers in a positive setting that offers an outlet for educational and athletic programs, holds Internet safety talks with their youth members. Lt. Donahoe further adds, "It's really the parents' responsibility to be a parent." He urges parents to "monitor their children's online activity and to take an active role in their lives." When a problem does arise, he says, "We urge parents to call 911 so that we can take an initial report and, when substantiated, investigate the case even further."



Online Safety Tips from the FBI

The FBI advises parents to take the following precautions when their children go online:

- Have children show you their favorite online destinations
- Keep your computer in a common area of the house, not in children's bedrooms
- Use your local service provider's parental controls and/or blocking software
- Maintain access to children's online accounts and randomly check their email
- Instruct children to never arrange a face-to-face meeting with someone they met online, to never upload pictures of themselves to the Internet, to never give out identifying information, and to never download pictures from an unknown source

Identity Theft & Steps a Child Can Take to Avoid Being a Victim

All someone needs is your children's name, address, birth date, or social security number to steal someone's identity. The best line of defense against this devastating crime is awareness. If you or your child becomes a victim, law enforcement officials suggest that you contact the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), which is the federal clearinghouse for complaints by victims of Identity Theft, at: **877-IDTHEFT**.

Turn to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children for Guidance

The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children® (NCMEC) and Boys & Girls Clubs of America (BGCA) have created **The NetSmartz Workshop**, an interactive, educational safety resource to teach kids and teens how to be safe on the Internet. NetSmartz combines the newest technologies available and the most current information to create high-impact educational activities that are well received by even the most tech-savvy kids. Visit them at: **www.netsmartz.org** or visit the NCMEC website for more online safety information at: **www.missingkids.com**.

Students Share Their Thoughts

on Internet Safety in an Essay Contest

When asked to submit a letter to give advice to incoming 6th grade students on the 'cool' uses of technology and how to use it safely, many students at Perry Hall Middle School stepped forward to offer their input. Joyce Caldwell, Library Media Specialist at the Middle School said, "It was great to see the kids' thoughts on Internet safety and to hear what they had to recommend to fellow students." Caldwell said the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place winners will be recognized in an upcoming parent bulletin, Pawprints, and they will also be able to share excerpts from their essays with other students over the morning announcements.



1st place winner Olivia Cyberspace Predators – Cyber Stalking

"Did you know in the United States alone, there are 80 million adults and 10 million children who have access to the Internet? Out of those 90 million, some of them are Cyberspace predators. These people will prey on any victim who happens to respond to their instant message or email. That's how it all starts – a simple "hello" or "what's up." Later on, if you keep responding to them, they might ask you for personal information (ex. address, phone number, or email address). No matter what, you don't want to give out personal information, even if they say they want to "hang out." Always ask an adult before giving out personal information. It may sound dumb, but you will end up being much safer."

2nd Place Winner: Blake Sharks in Cyberspace! Beware of Surfing on the Web

"Resist the urge to post a picture of yourself or type personal information on a site open to the public. Someone could actually take your picture and do strange and awful things with it, and then post it on another site. If you type in things like your age, address, or telephone, strangers – who you should not trust – could use this information. Sharing personal information online is like letting someone read a love note you wrote for a special person, to a million people. That would be awful!"

3rd Place Winner: Vivian Internet Safety

"To those who will eventually become 6th graders, here are some suggestions to staying safe online. If you're in the middle of instant messaging, and some stranger's screen name comes up asking you to talk to them, just block them off. If the person said something to you in an inappropriate manner, uses foul language, or harassment, tell an adult. Never reveal your identity, such as your name, age, sex, phone number, address, or school to any stranger online via e-mail or chat room. Never answer or discuss any personal or family business with the stranger such as parents' names, profession, their incomes, work schedule, etc."



Parents On Board



Do you remember the overwhelming responsibility you felt to ensure that your infant traveled safely in the car? You carefully strapped the child into the car seat and proudly displayed the "Baby on Board" sign. As our children grow and become more independent, we cruise along relying on our common sense, on the advice of well meaning friends and relatives, and on all the parenting tips we can possibly absorb. Our confidence builds as we successfully meet each new challenge of parenting. Just when we think we have earned a chance to relax, we find ourselves faced with new situations that scream out the reminder that parental guidance is crucial to ensure our child's safe journey through life. I highly suggest that every parent place an imaginary "Parent on Board" sign on their computer as a family reminder that all of our parental advice on safe and responsible behavior in the neighborhood must apply to the extended neighborhood of cyberspace as well.

I am just a mom who thought she was pretty aware of the challenges of raising a preteen and teenager in today's world. I involved myself in their school and extracurricular activities, knew their friends, and tried to understand the current trends. I never fully realized to what extent many of our tech savvy kids had abandoned parental advice as they enjoyed unsupervised use of technology, until I watched a Dateline Episode, "Why Parents Must Mind *MySpace*", which aired on January 27, 2006. At the conclusion of the show, I learned that my seventh grade daughter had recently created a MySpace account. Since she was under the age of 14, her account was immediately closed. My son, a high school student, did not have an account. Ten minutes after the show

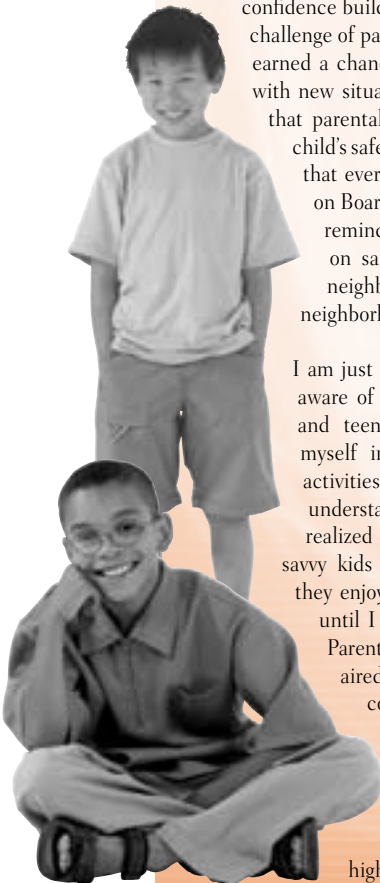
aired I felt relieved that I had successfully addressed the *MySpace* issue with my children.

When I awoke the next day I found that I could not forget this Dateline episode. I was sure that many other parents had no idea that their children were posting so much personal information for millions of people to see. I experienced the need to gain a better understanding of why the social networking sites were so popular with our adolescents. My curiosity has led me on an interesting research journey and has helped me to confirm what I had felt all along. The problem is not the existence of the Internet, social networking sites, instant messaging, and all of the other communication devices available to our children. The problem is the inappropriate and unsafe manner in which our children choose to use these technological devices. The logical solution is parental involvement.

Parents need to educate themselves about the Internet in order to initiate a meaningful discussion with their children regarding acceptable guidelines for safe and responsible use. The current challenge we now face is how to successfully blend our vast parental knowledge of life experiences with our children's incredible knowledge of technology. The reality is that parents will never understand the Internet and technological gadgets as well as our children. However, there is a lot of satisfaction in knowing that when our children use the chat abbreviation *pos*, parent over shoulder, we can confidently respond *pob*, parent on board!

Nancy L. Ostrow

Nancy L. Ostrow
Parent, PTA Member & Baltimore County Public
School volunteer



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www.learninghow.com

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Owings Mills: Valley Center, Reisterstown Rd., Owings Mills 410-581-1007

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They have teamed up with the Baltimore County Public Library System to promote this important publication

