Insuring Your Child A Safe Internet Experience
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Technology and the Internet are everywhere in your child’s world. Most children between the ages of 12 and 17 have access to the Internet, either through their home desktop or laptop computers, cell phones, game consoles, or portable gaming devices. Technology is truly embedded in the lives of today’s youth.

While the Internet is a virtual library your child should access to do research for school, there is also a dark side to this resource. While on the internet, children can be targets of sexual predators. Children can also be bullied or threatened online, often by their own peers. Parents play an important role in keeping children safe on the Internet. Communication is the foundation for making the Internet safe. The You Tube video, Internet Safety, shows how vulnerable children are in cyberspace. The video may be accessed at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xZHq4CQekTY.

PC Tattletale @ http://www.pctattletale.com/parenting/12-internet-safety-tips.htm advises parents to teach children the following 12 lessons for Internet safety:
1. Always use an Internet "screen name". Never reveal your real name, where you go to school, what your phone number is or where you live.
2. Always tell a parent or guardian if you receive ANY email, instant message, or chat that you find scary, upsetting or that makes you uncomfortable in any way.
3. Never respond to a threatening email or message. Instead, save that message to a special folder on your desktop so that an adult can take the appropriate action.
4. Never trade or post personal photographs in the mail or over the Internet. If you do post a personal picture on your personal blog or myspace account, make sure that the picture does not reveal any information in the background that might give an online predator a clue as to where you live or what school you go to.
5. Never agree to meet anyone in real life that you have met in a chat room or online.
6. Never tell anyone your password or login information.
7. Never accept any invitation go in a private chat room.
8. Don’t believe everything someone says online. People lie.
9. Never accept an "Instant Message" from a stranger or chat with a stranger online.
10. Never tell anyone how old you are.
11. If you make a new "friend" online, tell a parent or guardian, and introduce this new friend to your parent or guardian online.
12. Always get permission from a parent or guardian before using the computer.

Finally, it is strongly recommended that parents and their child sign an Internet Safety Agreement and post the agreement on the computer used by the child. An example of an Internet Safety Agreement is available @ http://www.loveourchildrenusa.org/parent_safetyagreement.php.

For more newsletters like this and information about the Collaborative on Early Adolescence, visit http://www.niu.edu/cea/.