

Family Insider—*Summer Internet Use*

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“To be ignorant of one’s ignorance is the malady of the ignorant.”

— Amos Bronson Alcott

Summer is here, and kids around the world are enjoying a break from their busy school schedules. Although there are many activities available in which kids can participate during the summer months, it is not unusual for kids to spend limitless hours in front of the TV or on the computer, surfing and chatting the day away. Working parents may be leaving their kids home alone, and although they may be physically confined to their homes, when using the Internet, kids are roaming the cyber streets alone. Boredom, talking to strangers, too much unstructured time, and unsupervised use of the Internet can be a recipe for disaster. However, if properly prepared, your child can be safe and have fun online. The unstructured time that kids are afforded this summer can also present opportunities for them to develop interests and pursue activities they may not have time for during the school year.

Discussions about parent expectations and rules for kids during summer months at home are essential. Children should be aware of the dangers they could encounter at home and online, and be prepared to respond appropriately. Rules for Internet use and acceptable online activities should also be discussed with kids. Risks online increase as time spent online increases, and a lack of supervision can be tempting. Because they believe their actions online are anonymous, kids may be drawn to visiting inappropriate Web sites, talking to strangers, revealing personal information on their blogs or in communications, or participating in cyber bullying. During the summer, many teens are also tempted to meet online friends at the pool, mall, amusement parks, or other locations. Know who your child is communicating with



online and who they are with when outside your home.

i-SAFE encourages parents and kids to complete the i-LEARN Online training videos at <http://ilearn.isafe.org> to prepare them for safe summer Web surfing. In addition to family education on Internet safety, many parents choose to use parental-control software. While multiple types of software are available that allow parents to set restrictions on the amount of time a child spends online, as well as the sites that are allowed/disallowed while the student is surfing, relying on parental controls alone is not a good idea. If you choose to use parental-control software, do a Web search for “parent control”

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NAC Tracks



How concerned are you about where your students go and what they do on the Internet?

Vote here

Summer Internet Use *continued from page 1*

reviews” to compare software products and find the product that’s appropriate for your family’s needs.

There are many summer activities for kids other than watching TV, aimlessly Web surfing, or chatting with friends all day. Summer is a great time for families to spend time online together. If your family is planning a vacation, have kids do the research and planning to occupy some of their online time. Planning the family vacation, researching attractions, and finding maps can be a fun and educational process. It will help keep their academic skills sharp while increasing the likelihood that they will enjoy the vacation more because they helped plan it.

Summer affords kids more time to delve into interests that they often don’t have time to pursue during the school year, such as learning Web site design, taking on a new hobby, or learning to write poetry. Have your child set a summer goal to avoid boredom and lack of direction. Support him or her by showing interest and providing materials necessary to be successful with the new pursuit (i.e. art materials, books, etc.).

Many kids also complete required community-service hours during summer months. While volunteering at a library, community center, or religious organization, kids can teach others how to use the computer or Internet, and about the dangers online and how to respond responsibly to those situations. Encourage your kids to become certified i-MENTORS by completing i-SAFE’s i-MENTOR training. Once completed, kids are empowered to share important information on Internet safety with others in their schools and communities. From our Web site, kids can download the i-SAFE Student Toolkit and submit a “Mentor Menu” so i-SAFE can provide them with direction and materials for activities and events.

Educate your kids about online dangers, provide them with ideas for online activities, and involve yourself in their online worlds to ensure a fun, productive, and safe summer.

For more information on Internet safety or ways your family can help educate your community about online dangers, contact us at parents@isafe.org.

NAC Corner—Summer and the Internet

Summer vacation is upon us again. It is a happy time for students. They have time to do many things they cannot do during the school year: sleep late, play longer, and spend more time on the Internet. They also have time to develop boredom, and students often turn to the Internet when they are searching for something to do.

In a survey of 12,734 students in middle and high school, 46% of those who visit chat rooms do so mainly because they are bored or lonely—the most often cited reason. Unfortunately, the Internet activities of your children may not be adequately supervised at home. In our survey of 4,440 parents conducted during the past year, almost 93% indicated that they provided Internet guidelines for their children; yet, our survey of 12,665 students in middle and high school found that 37% indicated that their parents had provided no such rules. In another survey of 12,740 students, 41% indicated that they did not share where they went or what they did on the Internet with their parents.

So perhaps now, with the start of summer, when opportunities for unsupervised Internet access are at a peak, it would be useful to share these findings with other parents. You may also choose to encourage parents to arrange more offline activities for their children, such as scheduling outdoor



activities or providing books to read—the kinds of activities we engaged in ourselves as children before the Internet existed.

Ask an Expert—*Educating the Older Crowd*



Q Does i-SAFE offer training for older Internet users? My parents have recently purchased a computer and have just subscribed to a DSL service for the Internet. Although they do not have young children to worry about online, I know there are risks about which they should be aware. My concerns are mostly those related to computer viruses, scams, and identity theft.

A We are so glad that you asked this question!

An increasing number of older people are discovering the benefits of the Internet and choosing to become cyber citizens. They are using the Internet for a multitude of purposes, and engaging in any online activity poses risks to the user.

Online shopping and banking can be beneficial to those who are confined to their homes. E-mail and chat rooms often fulfill the need for companionship for those who are lonely and allow them to communicate with family and friends around the world. Gaming sites provide entertainment. Hobbies and planning and booking trips for dream vacations are also popular activities. Many older users are also seeking relationships through online dating Web sites.

Aged fifty and older users with families are also understandably concerned about the safety of their children and grandchildren. Predators, computer security, identity theft, intellectual-property theft, and cyber bullying are all serious concerns that should be communicated to younger Internet users. Retired users often have the time and desire to volunteer in their communities, and the i-FIFTY+ program is a great way for them to utilize their new skills and knowledge to help students and other community members learn about being safe online.

i-SAFE is aware of the need for Internet safety education for older users. We recently released the new i-PARENT and i-FIFTY+ online training (see “Did You Know,” Page 4). While the i-FIFTY+ videos are dedicated to issues that concern users who are 50 and older, it also equips them with information and tools to educate their families and form i-PARENT Boards to educate others in their communities.

Direct your parents to <http://ilearn.isafe.org>. Once they register, they can return to the i-LEARN Web site to begin their on-line training. i-FIFTY+ is the education they need to gain the confidence and skills for successful and safe Internet use. 

Tech Tip—*Cell-Phone Messaging*

Q Now that school is out, we purchased a cell phone for our son so we can keep in touch with him while at work. We have followed your tip sheets and feel that he is a responsible computer user. We check the Web sites he visits and set rules on when the computer can be used, and we never allow him to chat or use IM on the computer. However, I overheard him and his friends talking about SMSing on their cell phones. What is this, and should I be worried?

A Good question. SMS isn't new technology and has been around for quite some time. It stands for Short Message Service, and it's a way to send text messages between cell-phone users. Although similar to chat or instant messaging (IM) on a computer, there are some built-in safeguards that make it far less risky to use. To send an SMS, you must know the mobile number of the person you wish to “text.” That means, like a phone call, you have to know the number of the person you wish to reach. With the help of the Internet, there are now SMS chat sites where you can fill out a profile and give out your cell number so other people can contact you. However, this could lead to the same dangers faced by other social-networking sites. Another concern of SMSing is the cost. Nothing on a cell phone is free, and most carriers have a monthly limit on the number of text messages (often called data traffic) you can send before you go over the limit. If you feel that your son may use his new cell phone in an unsafe manner, you can always have that feature disabled by contacting your cellular service provider. 



Did You Know? Introducing i-PARENT and i-FIFTY+

Today's fastest growing group of Internet users are adults older than 50. The Internet has changed the way these adults are communicating, shopping, banking, and socially conducting their lives, making them more vulnerable to dangers online. It is essential that this group is educated about how to stay safe while online.

i-SAFE Inc. recently launched two new programs—i-PARENT and i-FIFTY+, an expansion of i-LEARN Online, which is designed to help your family and others to become Internet safe. These programs target parents and adults 50 and older, and provide the tools and knowledge they need to feel safe and secure on the Internet. Both provide access to an easy-to-use, “on-demand” system for Internet safety education through any computer with Internet access.

The i-PARENT program provides parents with the tools needed to protect their children and family online. Through a comprehensive series of online videos, parents learn about the importance of safe and responsible use of the Internet, and how to spread the message to other parents and adults

within their communities. Each module introduces parents to the most updated information on cyber bullying, cyber security, identity theft, social networking, and intellectual property. After viewing all the modules, parents become certified parent trainers and are able to train other adults on how to protect their families.

The i-FIFTY+ program is designed to educate adults aged 50 and older about Internet safety and security. The online program includes a series of videos on Internet safety topics that are most likely to victimize adult computer users. The modules include lessons on the threats of cyber security, dangers of illegal downloading, and the most recent scams on investments, foreign lotteries, and more. The i-FIFTY+ program also teaches older adults about Internet safety issues affecting the youth of our society. They learn how to advocate for Internet safety within their own communities.

These programs are the next step in providing Internet safety education for our families and communities. Visit <http://ilearn.isafe.org/> for more information. 

Get Involved



Summer is here, and while it is a time for relaxing and enjoying family and friends, we must remember that online dangers never take a vacation. With that in mind, use these summer months to increase awareness among community members and to form an i-PARENT Board.

During the summer months, you often have more contact with families in your neighborhood—at the pool, the park, the community center. Use these opportunities to distribute Internet safety information to raise awareness about online dangers. Engage people in conversations about how they can

respond by becoming part of a community i-PARENT Board (make sure to get permission to distribute information if you choose to do so in a public facility).

To obtain materials for distribution:

1. Log in to the i-SAFE Web site (www.isafe.org) with your user name and password.
2. Click on “Submit Implementation Plan” from your personal page.
3. Select “Brochure Distribution” to distribute i-SAFE brochures. Select “Information Table” to distribute brochures and tips sheets, and to sign up parents to join your i-PARENT Board.
4. Complete the remaining fields to inform us of the details of the event.
5. Download materials provided on your personal page.

Don't forget kids and teens this summer! Direct your students to <http://xblock.isafe.org> to learn more about Internet safety and to become i-MENTORs. Here they can submit a “Mentor Menu” to join community-awareness efforts by distributing safety tip sheets to students. 

The Power of One—Stay in Touch Safely



It's summer, my favorite time of the year!! I love going to the beach with friends and hanging out at that famous pizza place. I can't wait!!

This summer is going to be different than in the past, though. You see, last year I moved from the place where I grew up. It was small town where everyone knows each other, so when I moved, it was hard to keep in touch with my friends.

One of the ways I used to keep in touch with my friends was through an online social-networking group. Everyone told me it wasn't safe, but I didn't pay attention to them. It was the only way I could keep in touch with my friends, so it didn't bother me what other people said . . . until the day I was chatting online with my best friend and this guy logged in to my Web site and began asking me questions. At first it didn't bother me because it wasn't the first time a stranger wanted to know something about me. Everyone in my social group seemed very friendly, so it didn't seem wrong. I plainly answered his questions and returned attention to my friend. The next day the same thing happened. He began with a couple more questions, but this time they seemed more person-

al. As he asked me things like, "Do you get along with your parents" or "Do your parents treat you badly," things began to feel strange. I quickly realized that I had to stop chatting with this person.

I began to ignore him in the chat room and used all of the safety tips my social group had provided me. Weeks passed, and that seemed to get rid of the problem. I thought everything had worked out. When I entered the chat room one day, he was there and asked me, "Why were you only online for 20 minutes yesterday?" That's when I realized he had been watching me. I was really scared and wanted to tell someone, but I thought that if I did, my parents would take my computer away, and I really didn't want that! After this incident occurred, I got out of that social group and decided to e-mail my friends instead. That summer, I learned how dangerous the Internet can be if you don't use it wisely!

So I know this summer will be different. I will make better choices because I now know how to stay safe online. The experience last year helped me prevent those types of situations. I still use the Internet to talk to my friends, but now I use "Yahoo Messenger." It's cool, safe, and fun. I can only talk to people who have asked for approval, meaning I have to know them, while still enjoying a lot of cool things like games. I also use my e-mail once in awhile because it's so simple to use. There are so many ways to stay safe online. Kids like you and me just need to take the time to research and find them. Visit <http://xblock.isafe.org> for one of the safest teen sites around. Here are some other cool sites I visit: www.sparknotes.com, www.a-teens.com, www.yahoo.com, and www.mtv.com.

Leslie Medina, i-MENTOR Coordinator, i-SAFE



Looking for a fun, educational Web site for your kids? The National Gallery of Art Kids site, at <http://www.nga.gov/kids/kids.htm>, features interactive

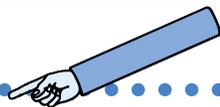
art adventures where kids can learn about works of art from medieval to the present time, create online artwork in the art gallery, and enjoy an animated musical story. NGA also features family guides and educator resources.

In Your Neighborhood

Everyday there are many i-SAFE events going on across the country. We've made it easy for you to get involved and help spread the message of Internet safety to your peers and your community. Simply check our "Calendar of Events" at http://www.isafe.org/channels/sub.php?ch=ai&sub_id=3 to find an event near you.



Internet Safety Tip



Talk to other parents about your experiences.

Remember: You are not alone. The experiences you are having with your child online, good or bad, are not unique.

- 47 percent of parents tell i-SAFE that they feel limited in their ability to monitor and shelter their kids from inappropriate material on the Internet.

Look at it this way: Wouldn't you want someone to warn you about trouble found online? Of course you would. That's why you need to communicate with other parents. But don't feel like you need to set up a meeting. This is a conversation you can hold anywhere with anyone. And if you really want to make a difference in your community, tell a group. Any group will do—PTA, bridge club, Rotary club, etc. Don't keep this to your-

self. Share.

- 69 percent of parents tell i-SAFE that they feel they know a lot about what their kids do on the Internet.

Tell other parents because they may have already been through this ordeal. We did mention that your situation is not unique, right? The best resource is not a Web site, a book, or even a newsletter. The best resource is someone who has faced the problem, dealt with the problem, and solved the problem. Talk to other parents, and you will find that resource.

Once you become the resource others seek, make sure you share it.

E-mail us at parents@isafe.org for an easy (and free) solution to talking with groups about Internet safety.

Team Up With i-SAFE

Currently, i-SAFE has reached more than one million students with Internet safety information. By providing free materials, programs, and educational videos, students are learning how to make positive choices when challenged with today's technology. Not only are students learning to protect themselves against predators, they are also learning how to make decisions regarding intellectual property, identity theft, and more.

i-SAFE strives to provide your family with the most current information regarding the issues youth face today on the Internet. In order to bring our programs and materials to your community and your home, we rely upon donations.

We would be grateful if you, or perhaps someone you know, could assist i-SAFE in educating as many children as possible. Since i-SAFE is a 501(c)(3) corporation, your donations are fully tax deductible.

To donate, e-mail donations@isafe.org or go to http://www.isafe.org/channels/sub.php?ch=gi&sub_id=2.

We Value Your Input

Do you have a question or a comment about an article? Perhaps you have a story you wish to share with other readers. Do you know somebody whose story will inspire others to get involved? Whatever the case, we would like to know. Please e-mail us at editor@isafe.org with questions, comments, or contributions. If snail mail is your preference, **send written correspondence to:**

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The series of i-SAFE newsletters also includes the *i-EDUCATOR Times* and *Kewl Timez* (for students). We encourage you to read the others and ask you to use the main article to initiate discussion and action with your students and your community.

About i-SAFE

Founded in 1998 and active in all 50 states, i-SAFE Inc. is the leader in Internet safety education. i-SAFE is a nonprofit foundation whose mission is to educate and empower students, parents, seniors, and community members to safely and responsibly take control of their Internet experiences. i-SAFE provides knowledge that will enable them to recognize and avoid dangerous, destructive, or unlawful online behavior, and to respond appropriately. This is accomplished through dynamic K through 12 curriculum and community-out-reach programs to students, parents, law enforcement, and community leaders. i-SAFE is the only Internet safety foundation to combine these elements. www.isafe.org