



PROTECTING YOUR CHILD ON THE INTERNET

Social Media is the new norm, however sexual predators and child molesters also use social networking sites to gain access to children. We **MUST** keep talking to our children and keep them aware! Perhaps even instituting restrictions on our children's usage of such online tools. Your children's experiences online are truly an individual parental decision, and here are some useful suggestions:

1. Learn about the online tools available to them so you can monitor your children's usage of the Web. Classes and online training are available for parents to become very 'web savvy'.
2. Make sure your child's 'browser and social website privacy settings' are high and that only their friends have access to their pages and information.
3. Make sure your child knows the people they 'friend'. Insist they do not 'friend' anyone they do not know already outside the online world. Many sexual predators pose as children online, even posting false pictures and information.
4. Remind your children to NEVER share personal information online, i.e. address, telephone numbers etc. Even email addresses they set-up, should not contain their full name as part of the address. There are tools online that perform what is called a "reverse lookup" of email addresses. Data is stored about email addresses wherever they are used, and if an email address contains someone's name, it becomes a way of unsavory characters to find data about that person.
5. Remind your child to be careful what they say on the Internet. They should only say what they would be happy to say to a stranger on the street.

6. Parents be sure to set up an account yourselves and require that your child adds you as a friend, this will help you keep an eye on the content of their page and who their friends are. If they refuse, then of course that is your opening to restrict usage of any social websites.
7. Tell your child that you must be informed if they would like to start an account on Twitter, Facebook or any similar internet site. If they have an account, ensure you understand what settings they use on these accounts. This determines how “exposed” their Internet site is.
8. Lastly, if you feel that there are situations, websites, online accounts or time spans in your child’s usage online, in which you feel helpless or unable to monitor regularly – there are affordable programs that can be installed on your child’s PC allowing you to log on and see every action, email and website visit that has occurred. Just search online for ‘parents control software’ and you will find many options.