

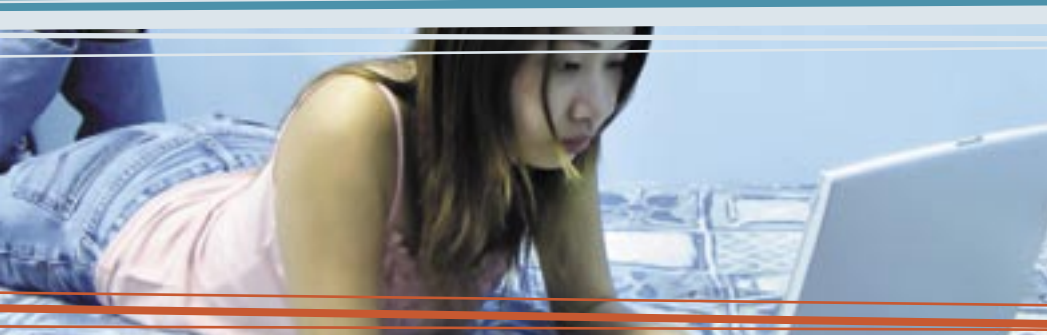
A PARENT'S GUIDE FOR ADOLESCENTS  
**ages 13-15**



# SAFETY and the INTERNET

This brochure is intended to help you improve your adolescent's safety on the Internet. It includes information about youth from 13 to 15 years-old, common interests at this age, and strategies to help them stay safer online. It is especially important to teach this age group Internet safety strategies, as they have a keen interest in using the Internet to connect with their friends and experiment with relationships.

Today, adolescents are meeting a variety of needs online. This can include developing and maintaining friendships, seeking privacy, and exploring new interests. It is important to explain to youth that the Internet is a public place. Establish the expectation that online activities will be adult supervised.



## GET INVOLVED

### LEARN WHAT YOUR ADOLESCENTS ARE DOING ONLINE

#### Stay engaged with your adolescents.

Adolescents may be reluctant to communicate openly with their parents. It is important to keep lines of communication open and continue building your relationship with them. Encourage them to come to you in times of need. Show interest in what is important to them and be aware of their online activity.

#### Check the websites your children visit by reviewing their history files.

For example, open Internet Explorer (IE) and click on the *toolbar* button at the top of the page for history files (looks like a clock). To adjust the number of days that IE keeps the history, go to the *Tools* button, select *Internet Options* and then the *General* tab. At the bottom is the history section.

#### View your children's Instant Messaging (IM) logs (e.g. MSN Messenger, AIM, Y! Messenger).

For example, open MSN Messenger and log in as the user you want to track, select *Tools, Options, Messages* and near the bottom is the *Message History* setting. Ensure that the box is ticked next to "Automatically keep a history of my conversations". The location of the saved conversations is also shown here. Open the folder where the logs are saved to review your children's IM activity.

**Check your adolescent's profile on free email accounts.** For example, you can check member profiles of Hotmail users at <http://spaces.msn.com> and Yahoo! Users at <http://search.profiles.yahoo.com>. Type in username in advanced people search.

**Check to see that your adolescent's Instant Messaging program is set up so that no one can begin speaking to him/her without his/her permission.** In MSN messenger, select *Tools, Options, Privacy*. Ensure that the box is ticked next to "Only people on my Allow List can see my status and send me messages". Also ensure the box is ticked next to "Alert me when other people add me to their contact list" (this should be automatically checked off).

## HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT AND PERSONAL SAFETY OF 13-15 YEAR OLDS



As children get older, you will notice changes in their behaviour and interests. It is exciting and healthy to see them seeking more independence from their parents. However, with increased independence comes new considerations surrounding personal safety, including online safety. The following section outlines common characteristics of youth 13-15 years-old.

### The Growing Personality

- Acceptance and belonging are most important to this age group as they are building their identity
- Heightened focus on their appearance and what others think of them
- Very sensitive and easily humiliated (extremely concerned about social judgment)
- Demonstrate "pseudo-maturity" by feeling they can "handle" more than developmentally capable
- Seek deeper relationships (may use Internet to confide in others)
- Separating from parents to form their own identity
- May take huge emotional risks in search of their identity
- May explore sexuality. It is natural for them to be curious about the opposite (same) sex and may want to look at photos and explore sexual subjects
- Demand privacy
- Focus on whether their behaviour conforms to the behaviour of others, not whether it is right or wrong
- Often maintain good behaviour by having an adult present

### Online Activities

- Use Instant Messaging, email, weblogs, etc. to communicate with others
- Play online games with opponents
- Use webcams and digital cameras to send pictures
- Use cell phones (talking to friends, taking pictures, text messaging)
- Use peer to peer programs to download music, games and videos (e.g. Limewire)

## What Can Parents Do?

- Use filtering software ([www.cybertip.ca](http://www.cybertip.ca)—click on information for parents)
- Supervise your adolescent while online and consider putting the computer in a common area (kitchen, family room, etc.) of your home. Even though adolescents can appear as though they can “handle” things, they actually require and unconsciously seek adult guidance and supervision
- Know your adolescent’s login information and email addresses. What username or character names has your adolescent given him/herself? Does it provide identifying characteristics or concerning information about him/her or his/her hobbies (shygirl, sexygirl14, etc.)?
- Know who your adolescent is communicating with online
- Monitor webcam use and any posting or exchanging pictures online
- Encourage open communication at home and be conscious of her/his sensitivity to social judgment. S/he may be hesitant to share personal experiences
- Limit the amount of time your adolescent spends online

## What Should Parents Talk to Their Adolescents About?

- Set the expectation that you will monitor your adolescent online, as it is a public environment
- Discuss respect and dignity and how they portray their self image online
- Just as you would explain codes of conduct for offline activities, the same should be done for activities online (personal boundaries\* are crossed quickly online)
- Explain where it is appropriate for them to have privacy: confiding in close friends face-to-face, writing in a journal, etc. (the Internet is not private)
- Explain the precaution that should be taken with sending pictures. Once they are sent they lose control of what happens to them
- Talk about the difference between healthy vs. unhealthy relationships\*
- Tell your adolescent not to open attachments if s/he doesn’t know the sender
- Explain to your adolescent that it is illegal to threaten someone online or offline. If someone threatens them online, they need to tell a trusted adult
- If your adolescent comes across something or someone that makes her/him feel uncomfortable, explain that s/he can tell you without fear of losing computer privileges

# QUICK FACTS

## ABOUT THE ACTIVITIES CHILDREN ARE INTERESTED IN ONLINE

### Bulletin Board Systems (BBS) and Forums (e.g. Nexopia, Do You Look Good)

An online public discussion board for chatting with others, sending and receiving email, and uploading and downloading files. Users can view and/or comment on messages posted. Run on a host computer, BBSs are often related to the specific interests or hobbies of the originating writer.

### Chatrooms (e.g. YahooChat, MIRC)

An online meeting space where you can chat with others in real-time. Similar to a party line, but involving typing, this forum enables conversations with multiple people at one time. While some chatrooms are monitored, typically it is an uncontrolled and unsupervised environment.

### Email (e.g. Hotmail, Gmail)

Text messages sent through a computer system or network from one user to another.

### Instant Messaging (e.g. MSN, Yahoo Messenger)

Electronic communication that involves components of both chat and email. After downloading the IM software, users maintain lists of “buddies”/“friends” and are notified when their contacts are online. Short text messages are sent back and forth and some IM programs also include file transfer, webcam viewing, voice chat and other applications.

### Peer to Peer Programs (e.g. Limewire, Bearshare)

Programs that allow users to establish a connection and have direct access to shared files on each other’s computers. This communication network allows the exchange of images, videos, music files, etc. without utilizing a centralized server.

### Weblogs or Blogs (e.g. My Space, MSN Spaces)

A web application which contains writings, postings and images about various topics. Free to create and available for public viewing on the Internet, they are used as journals to discuss the creator’s thoughts and opinions on any topic.



COMMON LANGUAGE  
USED BY CHILDREN ONLINE

## DO YOU KNOW WHAT YOUR CHILDREN ARE SAYING?

ABBREVIATION	MEANING
<3	heart
A/S/L?	Age/sex/location?
BF	Boyfriend
F2F	Face to face
GF	Girlfriend
H&K	Hug and kisses
ILU or ILY	I love you
IPN	I'm posting naked
IWALU	I will always love you
KOTL	Kiss on the lips
LDR	Long-distance relationship
LMIRL	Let's meet in real life
NIFOC	Naked in front of computer
NP	Nosy parents
PAW	Parents are watching
POS	Parent over shoulder
PM	Private message
QT	Cutie
SOMY?	Sick of me yet?
TOY	Thinking of you
WTGP?	Want to go private?
WUF?	Where are you from?



## RISKS FOR CHILDREN ON THE INTERNET

### Exposure to sexually explicit material

Don't be alarmed if your adolescent is interested in exploring sexual material. It is important, however, to be aware that some materials found on the Internet can be explicit. Youth may come across sexually offensive material or they may use it as a manual to learn about sexuality. Discuss the components of a healthy relationship and healthy sexuality.\* Ensure they understand that they can talk to you about anything they see on the Internet without fear of losing their Internet privileges.

### Public nature and permanence of the Internet

The Internet is a public forum and once information has been sent, the user loses control of how it may be used.

### Building relationships online

Youth should be taught the difference between healthy and unhealthy relationships\*. They need to know how they deserve to be treated.

### Complying with threats

When threatened, youth may comply. Teach them to anticipate possible situations they may encounter online and to rehearse appropriate responses.

\*For more information, please visit our website at [www.kidsintheknow.ca](http://www.kidsintheknow.ca)

### What is Cybertip.ca?

Cybertip.ca ([www.cybertip.ca](http://www.cybertip.ca)) is a web portal for receiving and addressing reports of online child sexual exploitation. This includes child pornography (child abuse images), online luring, child sex tourism, and children exploited through prostitution. Since January 2005, Cybertip.ca has been operating as Canada's national tipline.

### What is Kids in the Know?

*Kids in the Know* ([www.kidsintheknow.ca](http://www.kidsintheknow.ca)) is an interactive safety education program for children from Kindergarten to High School. The purpose of the program is to reduce child victimization by teaching effective personal safety strategies. Lessons on child personal safety and sexual exploitation are divided equally throughout and are supplemented by books, posters and online family activities.

### What is CyberWise?

Cyberwise.ca is an Industry Canada SchoolNet ([www.cyberwise.ca](http://www.cyberwise.ca)) comprehensive website that provides useful information for parents, teachers, youth professionals and young Canadians to help protect children from sexual exploitation on the Internet. It has been created in the context of the National Strategy for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation on the Internet.



**More information on child safety is available online  
at [www.kidsintheknow.ca](http://www.kidsintheknow.ca) or by contacting us at:**

**615 Academy Road  
Winnipeg, MB R3N 0E7  
204.945.5735  
1.800.532.9135**

**Kids in the Know Founding Funders:**

The Honeywell logo, consisting of the word "Honeywell" in a bold, red, sans-serif font.The Microsoft logo, consisting of the word "Microsoft" in a bold, black, sans-serif font.The logo for Canada's SchoolNet, featuring the text "Canada's SchoolNet" in a stylized, purple and red font, with the website address "www.schoolnet.ca" below it.