



CANADIAN CENTRE *for*
CHILD PROTECTION™
Helping families. Protecting children.

The **DOOR** that's not **Locked.**

Safety and the Internet:

A parent's guide for
children ages 13–15

www.thedoorthatsnotlocked.ca



The web is a wonderful place so long as you understand the dangers. We are committed to helping parents, teachers and anyone else who like to better understand the good, the bad and the ugly about the web.

We are here to keep kids safe while exploring and enjoying the door that's not locked. This brochure will help you improve your teen's safety on the Internet. It includes information about youth from 13 to 15 years of age, common interests, and strategies to help them stay safer online.

It's especially important to teach teens safety strategies, as they have a keen interest in using the Internet to connect with their friends and experiment with relationships. Teens are meeting a variety of needs online. This can include developing and maintaining friendships, seeking privacy, and exploring new interests. **It's important to explain to teens that the Internet is a public place.** Let your teens know that online activities will be supervised.

All Web. No Net

Far reaching and largely unrestricted, you need to know what your teens are facing as they explore the online world. Below are some ways you can learn more about what your teen is doing online.

- ✎ **Stay engaged with your teen.** S/he may be reluctant to communicate openly with you; it's important to keep lines of communication open and continue building your relationship. Encourage your teen to come to you in times of need; show interest in what is important to him/her, and be aware of his/her online activity.
- ✎ **Understand how to control privacy settings.** Most online journals, blogs, instant messages and social networking sites have privacy settings that determine who can and can't view a user's profile and information. Learn how to use and increase privacy settings so that you can then show your teen how to do this.
- ✎ **Know your teen'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 the username in advanced people search.
- ✎ **Check to see that your teen's IM program** is set up so that no one can begin speaking to him/her without his/her permission.

Keeping 13–15 year Olds Healthy & Safe

As your teen gets older, you will notice changes in his/her behaviour and interests. While it's exciting to see your child seek more independence, if they are on the Internet, there are new personal and online safety concerns that you should be aware of as well. The following section outlines common characteristics of teens 13-15 years of age.

The Growing Personality

- ✗ Values acceptance and belonging as s/he expands his/her identity.
- ✗ Heightened focus on his/her appearance and the opinions of others.
- ✗ Is very sensitive, easily humiliated, and is extremely concerned about social judgment.
- ✗ Demonstrates 'pseudo-maturity' by appearing to handle more than developmentally capable.
- ✗ Seeks deeper relationships (may use the Internet to confide in others).
- ✗ Distances him/herself from parents to form his/her identity.
- ✗ Takes huge emotional risks in search of his/her identity.
- ✗ Explores sexuality; it's natural for your teen to be curious about sexuality, and s/he may want to look at photos and explore sexual subjects.
- ✗ Demands privacy.
- ✗ Focuses on whether his/her behaviour conforms to the behaviour of others, not whether it is right or wrong.
- ✗ Is positively influenced by the presence of safe adults.

Online Activities

- ✗ Uses Instant Messaging, email, weblogs, etc. to communicate with others.
- ✗ Plays online games with opponents.
- ✗ Uses webcams and digital cameras to take and send pictures.
- ✗ Uses cell phones (talking to friends, web surfing, taking pictures, text messaging).
- ✗ Uses peer to peer programs to download music, games and videos (e.g. Limewire).
- ✗ Creates personal pages for social networking sites (Facebook, Myspace).

As a Parent, What Can You Do?

- ✗ Limit the amount of time your teen spends online.
- ✗ Use filtering software (for more information visit www.thedoorthatsnotlocked.ca).

- ✗ Despite appearing to be able to handle most situations, your teen requires and unconsciously seeks adult guidance.
- ✗ Know your teen's login information and email addresses. What username or character names has your teen given him/herself? It should not provide identifying characteristics or information about him/her or his/her hobbies (shygirl, sexygirl14, etc.)?
- ✗ Know who your teen is communicating with online.
- ✗ Monitor webcam use and any posting or exchanging pictures online.
- ✗ Encourage open communication at home and be conscious of his/her sensitivity to social judgment. S/he may be hesitant to share personal experiences.

What Should You Talk To Your Teen About?

- ✗ Let your teen know that you will monitor his/her online activities, as the Internet is a public place.
- ✗ Discuss respect and dignity and how your teen portrays him/herself online.
- ✗ Explain the importance of being careful with pictures your teen posts or sends online; reinforce that once a picture is sent, control over what happens to it is lost.
- ✗ Explain how experimenting in a public place like the Internet can have irreversible, embarrassing consequences.
- ✗ Talk to your teen about the risks involved with sharing personal information with people online and how it can be misused to embarrass or manipulate them.
- ✗ Warn your teen about individuals s/he chats with online who start talking about sex, puberty, ask 'weird' questions or request dirty pictures. Tell him/her to trust his/her instincts and block anyone who makes him/her feel uncomfortable.
- ✗ Explain to your teen that it's illegal to threaten someone online or offline. If someone threatens him/her online, s/he needs to tell a safe adult.
- ✗ Discuss the inaccurate representations of healthy relationships in the media, and explain the true qualities of healthy relationships (see www.kidsintheknow.ca).
- ✗ Tell your teen not to share his/her password with anyone, and that his/her password should be a combination of numbers and letters (both upper- and lower-case). Explain that popup ads and malicious sites appear legitimate, but that email and messenger providers will never ask for your teen's username and password.

Quick Facts – Your Teen's online interests

Cell/Mobile Phone Text Messages

Short Message Service (SMS), more commonly known as text messaging, allows users to communicate with other users through brief, typed text. These messages can be easily deleted, leaving no trace of the message sent, or saved and distributed by malicious users.

Instant Messaging (e.g. Live Messenger, Yahoo!, AIM)

Instant Messaging is 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.

Social Networking (Facebook, MySpace, Twitter)

Social networking deals with the relationships between individuals, and the various social areas that connect them. Many websites on the Internet offer this type of communication whereby people are encouraged to post personal information (pictures, thought, etc.) and chat with others in real time.

Webcam

A webcam is a video camera that is usually attached directly to a computer.

Massive Multiplayer Online Role Playing Game (MMORPG)

A MMORPG is a type of online game where a large number of players interact with one another in a virtual/fantasy world (e.g. Runescape, World of Warcraft).

Video Gaming Consoles

A video gaming console is an interactive computer or electronic device that uses a TV or monitor to display the video game. It hooks up to the Internet so multiple players can interact online. While players can talk to each other through these games, no history of conversations can easily be saved with these devices (e.g. Playstation 2 or 3, Nintendo Wii, Xbox, etc.).

Avatar

An avatar is a digital expression of an individual. It may take the form of an animal, creature or person, and is often used in chat forums, games, and personal profiles.





Common language used by children online

Do you know what your child is saying?

| ABBREVIATION | MEANING |
|--------------|------------------------|
| asl | age/sex/location |
| bf gf | boyfriend girlfriend |
| brb | be right back |
| cam kam | webcam |
| g2g gtg | got to go |
| h/o | hang on |
| jk jks | just kidding jokes |
| kk | ok cool |
| lol | laugh out loud |
| noob | new individual |
| nvm | nevermind |
| omg | oh my god |
| pic | picture |
| plz | please |
| ppl | people |
| sxy sexi | sexy |
| ttyl | talk to you later |
| ty | thank you |
| ud | you would |
| ur | you are |

TIP: Sounding out the string of letters may help you understand the word or words. Also try adding letters to a string of text to figure out the word.

Risks to 13–15 year-olds on the Internet

Teaching your teen good Internet skills that promote awareness and knowledge will make his/her online experiences safer.

1. Exposure to Sexually Explicit Material

Don't be alarmed if your teen is interested in exploring sexual material. It's important, however, to be aware that some materials found on the Internet can be explicit. Teens may find sexually offensive material and use it as a manual to learn about sexuality. Discuss the components of a healthy relationship and healthy sexuality. Ensure your teen understands that s/he can talk to you about anything on the Internet without fear of losing Internet privileges.

2. Public Nature and Permanence of the Internet

Teens are using the Internet to test limits and experiment with identity, often underestimating the public nature of the Internet. A teen will engage in private conversations and share private information, unaware of the lasting consequences of his/her behaviour. Teach your teen that once material is sent online, control over what happens to the material is lost, and subsequent exposure can be devastating. Talk to them about protecting their private information and about being careful who they chose to share it with.

3. Building Relationships Online

A teen uses the Internet to connect and position themselves socially – even experimenting with dating relationships. Boundaries are often tested in this environment, and lines are more readily crossed. Teens can quickly find themselves in situations they think they can handle, yet do not have the capacity to deal with. It's important for you to stay emotionally connected to your teen, and pay close attention to any significant changes in behaviour. Explain how individuals can manipulate emotions to try to get teens to send inappropriate photos or information they may regret having sent. For more information, see www.kidsintheknow.ca.

4. Threats and Coersion

Individuals seeking to exploit teens may use threats to increase compliance that could result in the teen sending a naked image of her/himself. Talk to your teen about the use and illegal nature of online threats. Explain to your teen that s/he should never comply with threats, and to seek a safe adult for help.

5. Lack of Boundaries

Boundaries are quickly crossed online. Individuals looking to victimize teens quickly turn conversations sexual, asking personal questions about puberty and development. Make sure your teen knows to stop any conversation that is uncomfortable and to tell a safe adult.



CANADIAN CENTRE *for*
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The Canadian Centre for Child Protection is a registered charity dedicated to the personal safety of all children. It operates Cybertip.ca, Kids in the Know, and Commit to Kids.

The Door that's not Locked

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To report the online sexual exploitation of children, visit www.cybertip.ca

Founding Partners:



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More information on child safety is available at www.protectchildren.ca or by contacting us at:

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