Internet Safety

Millions of students head to the nearest computer to conduct school research online. With the Internet’s help, they can create everything from detailed projects on rainforests to slide presentations about how a hurricane forms without setting foot in a library.

There is a wealth of information on the Internet, and it is a great tool. You can’t keep kids off the Internet.

Yet the Internet is not the place for an all-access pass. Kids of all ages need parental supervision. A few common-sense tips can help keep your child safe online.

1. The computer should be in an open area, not in a child’s room. You don’t want to spy on your kids or peer over their shoulder, but you want them to know you’re in the room.

2. Assure your children that you know you can count on them to use the Internet responsibly. Kids need to feel they’re trusted.

3. Set clear expectations for your child, based on age and maturity.
   - Does your child have a list of websites she needs to stick with when doing her research?
   - Is she allowed to use a search engine to find appropriate sites?
   - Is your child allowed to visit social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace?
   - What sites is she allowed to visit just for fun?
   - Write down the rules and place them next to the computer.
   - Your child’s teacher should be able to advise you on which sites are appropriate for schoolwork and educational fun.

4. Use filtering software designed to help parents limit the websites children can access. Some programs have monitoring features that can tell you which sites your child visits and can even send you a message letting you know your child is online. (While such programs have come a long way since the early bug-ridden days, they are not a substitute for supervision and communication.)

5. Tell your child if you are using software to track her online activity. Remind him that you are not spying; you are keeping him safe. Tell him that protecting him is your job as a parent.

6. Stay involved with your child’s school by remaining in close contact with your child’s teachers and counselors. If trouble is brewing among students online, it probably started at school. Knowing what’s going on at school will increase the chances that you’ll hear about what’s happening online.
7. A growing concern with kids and the Internet is online bullying. Ask your child specific questions about whether he is being bullied at school or online. Talk about your own experiences in school with bullying, letting him know you know it goes on. Assure him that you won’t try to fix the problem, if it is happening, without talking to him first.

8. Parents often worry about their child being bullied, but they don’t readily consider that their child could be a bully. Talk to your child about why it is not OK to bully other children, online or in person. Teach compassion and kindness, from the get-go, they will know that being a bully...doesn’t feel good.

9. Tell your child that people who introduce themselves on the Internet are often not who they say they are. Show your child how easy it is to assume another identity online. Don’t assume your child knows everything about the Internet. Kids are naturally trusting.

10. Instruct your child to never give out personal information online, including her full name, gender, age, school, address, or teams. Teach your child to be generic and anonymous on the Internet.

The Internet offers incredible benefits to families, and people are becoming more connected at a younger age every day. From the moment youth start using technology, parents should take an active role in communicating and keeping current on what their child is doing....Open communication creates a relationship of trust that will make this process easier.

Additional Resources - Search Engines / Research Sites

Bookmark these kid-friendly sites and you’ll get age-appropriate search results the next time your child needs to go online for homework or project research.

- AllSafeSites - A child-safe Internet search engine.
- American Library Association’s Great Websites for Kids - A comprehensive list of child-safe websites by subject area.
- Common Sense Media - This site reviews websites and other media for children and rates them according to their age-appropriateness.
- Ask Kids - This search engine from Ask.com is geared toward children ages 6-12.
- Famhoo - A family-friendly search engine.
- GoGooligans - Advanced safe-search engine for children and teens.
- KidsClick - A search site owned and run by the School of Library and Information Science at San Jose State University.
- OneKey - An Internet search engine that filters out pornography and explicit sexual content from results.
- Quintura for Kids - This “visual search engine” allows users to narrow their results by pointing their cursor at graphics representing search terms.

Sources:
http://www.schoolfamily.com/additional-resources/127-search-engines-and-research-websites