

Cyber safe

The internet is a vast and tangled web of information.

SARAH GARVIS takes a look at ways to make a cyber experience safe.

Students as young as five are accessing the internet according to a recent study by NetAlert and the Australian Communications & Media Authority.

The report shows that boys were more likely to access the internet for entertainment while girls chose it for communications purposes.

More than 500 households took part in the survey. For further details, log on to www.netalert.net.au/03088-Research.asp



CHATROOMS

Chat rooms are cyber realms where people with similar interests can communicate in real time via their computer.

Messages in a chat room appear instantly and can be seen by everybody participating in the "chat".

Some chat rooms are moderated and certain messages may not be broadcast for reasons including bad language, obscene text or "off the topic" discussion.

Chat rooms are particularly appealing to young people, and present an effective means of communication for groups such as the disabled and the confined.

CHAT SAFETY

Do not reveal personal details such as your name, address, phone number, the names of family members or the name of your school.

- Remember that people can fabricate their identity.
- Use common sense when reading information in the chat room. Ask an adult if you are unsure.
- Tell your parents who you are chatting to. Never arrange a face-to-face meeting with someone from a chat room.
- Report anything that makes you feel uncomfortable to your parent or teacher.

CREDIBLE WEBSITES

How can you be sure the information from the web is reliable?

THINGS TO LOOK OUT FOR

- The web address may indicate which organisation owns the website. For example, gov.au is an Australian Government website.
- Do pop-ups continue to appear on your screen? If so, the website may be designed for a marketing purpose.
- There should be information about who authored the website and if they are reputable.

- The web page should be well designed, and the text should have no spelling or grammatical errors.
- Are there references and recognition of others' work? If not, the site may be in breach of Australian copyright laws.
- There should be dates to indicate how recently the content on the web page was updated. If not, you could be viewing information which is no longer relevant.

CYBER BULLYING

This is a form of bullying which is conducted through email, chat rooms, instant messaging or web pages.

Cyber bullying is behaviour that is not acceptable. It includes teasing, spreading rumours online, sending unwanted messages and defamation.

STAY SAFE

- Understand what cyber bullying is and the different ways in which it can occur.
- Research your school's policy on bullying. Similar rules should apply to the online environment.
- If you feel that you are a victim, seek advice from school counsellors, friends, teachers, parents or phone the NetAlert help line on 1800 880 176.

CYBER STALKING

Cyber stalking occurs when a person is stalked or harassed by another person using email, instant messaging or discussion postings on a web page.

Stalking behaviour includes threats, cryptic messages and sexual innuendo which are intrusive and make the recipient feel uncomfortable.

Cyber stalkers are usually motivated by control and intimidation, with their goal being to create a sense of fear in their victim.

POTECTION FROM CYBER STALKERS

- Stay anonymous. Only use ISP email (for

example, your school email address) for official communication and use other email accounts (such as hotmail or yahoo) for other communication.

- Choose an online name that is different from your real name and that doesn't specify your gender.
- When signing up for chat rooms or instant messaging, refrain from submitting any personal details that can be viewed by others online.
- Be careful when displaying photos of yourself. Remember others can save these photos to display on other websites.
- If you are being personally threatened, you should report the incident to either the local federal police department, or the Australian High Tech Crime Centre on (02) 6246 2101.

ONLINE PUBLISHING

Creating personal blogs and web pages is a fun and creative way to interact with friends and people from all over the world. Once something is published, it can be accessed by anyone with a computer and internet connection.

When creating a web page or blog, you should adhere to the following guidelines:

BLOG RULES

- Inform your parent/teacher that you are creating a web page.
- Do not publish any personal details about yourself, family or friends. If you include photographs, do not write captions which identify the subject.
- Group photos are safer than individual photos.
- You need to be aware of Australian copyright laws. These laws protect the rights of owners of information. For example, if you would like to quote the work of someone else, you must acknowledge where the information came from and provide a reference.

- You should be vigilant about what you write on your website. You should not publish negative comments about other people, or display their photographs without permission.

SURF THE NET SAFELY

Ask for Kids - www.ajkids.com

- Formerly Ask Jeeves for Kids, this is the fastest and easiest place for students to find answers online.

Awesome Library - K-12 Education Directory - www.awesomelibrary.org

- Awesome Library offers 23,000 carefully reviewed K-12 education resources.

Cantufind - www.cantufind.com

- Includes a Family Safe Search Directory, Family-friendly, and Kid-Safe Search Directory.

Dibdabdo - www.dibdabdo.com - A safe place for kids to surf the net.

Education World - www.educationworld.com - Offers the best education links and original content on the net.

Fact Monster: Online Almanac, Dictionary, Encyclopedia and Homework Help - www.factmonster.com - Find homework help and facts on thousands of subjects, including sports, entertainment, geography, history, biography and health.

Kids.net.au - www.kids.net.au

- Search engine, designed especially for kids, is fun, educational and child-safe. Topics include games, sports, school, entertainment, news, hobbies and arts.

