

# SELF-STUDY COURSE

## The Internet For Parents: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

September 2006

2.0 HOURS CREDIT

### CREDITS:

Klinkhart, Glen. [A Cybercop's Guide to Internet Child Safety](#). DigitalSecurus, 2005

NetSmartz Workshop "Keeping Kids and Teens Safer on the Internet" [www.NetSmartz.org](http://www.NetSmartz.org)

Magid, Larry. [Teen Safety on the Information Highway 2004](#). Retrieved August 14, 2006 from [www.SafeTeens.com](http://www.SafeTeens.com).

GetNetWise Website <http://kids.getnetwise.org/safetyguide/>

This self-study course was developed by Tamara L. Keech, Family Support Specialist for the Alaska Center for Resource Families, Anchorage Regional Office

The questionnaire at the back of this course is a way for the Alaska Center for Resource Families to assess that you have read and understood the information provided. To get 2.0 training hours credit for this self-study, complete the questionnaire and send it to the address below. You may keep this self-study for future reference.



Alaska Center for Resource Families  
815 Second Avenue, Suite 101  
Fairbanks, AK 99701  
(907) 479-7307 or 1-800-478-7307

[www.acrf.org](http://www.acrf.org)



# **The Internet For Parents: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly**

## *Part One: About the Internet*

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Whatever your age, the Internet is a great place to hang out. It's not only fun, but it lets you keep in touch with friends and family and provides an enormous amount of information. But as a parent, you are probably aware that there are some dangers in this flurry of "being connected" through the Internet as well.

Children of all ages are flocking to the Internet. Forty-five percent of children in the United States use the Internet, more than 30 million of those are younger than 18. Glen Klinkhart of the booklet, *A Cybercop's Guide to Internet Child Safety*, says one way to address Internet safety is to "throw your computer away, and never, ever allow your child to access another computer or the Internet again." But, he continues, for folks who want to live in the real world that their children live in, it is more beneficial to learn about the Internet and its hazards, and learn about the specific solutions that are available. Technology has provided some incredible ways to learn and to communicate. However, it also brings with it a dark side of which some people in our society like to take advantage.

This self-study will look at:

- *What is the Internet?*
  - *What is chat and chat rooms?*
  - *Preventing your child from being a victim*
  - *Protecting your family online*
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## **What is the Internet?**

Cyberspace is like a big city. There are libraries, universities, museums, places to have fun, and many opportunities to meet people from all walks of life. But, like any community, there are areas you need to avoid and other areas you need to approach with extreme caution.

There are many ways you can get into cyberspace. They include Internet Service Providers (ISP) and online services, which can provide you with an account that gives you access to everything on the public Internet. As your modem begins a connection with the ISP's computer and modem, your computer is given an identifying name and number by which the Internet can keep track of who you are. Your Internet provider does not tell the entire world that you are

online and what you are doing. But in order for your computer to send and receive information, your computer and the Internet has to know where to go and how to get there. Without a mailing address, the post office can't deliver your letters to you. Likewise, the Internet requires an address as well in order to deliver the information you requested.

Once the connection is made with your ISP, your online session is given an Internet Protocol Address (IP address for short). For example, when if you connect with your modem to the Internet, you might be given an IP address of 24.237.127.243. That little number is required to send and receive information while you are connected.

The word "Internet" refers to the electronic infrastructure of everywhere you go when you go "online" or on the "net" or "the World Wide Web." The Internet lets you ask for and receive information in all types of forms, including text, pictures or videos. When your home computer dials up your Internet Service provider (ISP) and you hear that series of high-pitched tones, that is your computer connecting to the Internet. You are now online with the Internet or as it is often referred to "the Net," "cyberspace", "online," or the "information super highway." From there, anything can happen!

It is important to note the types of dangers that children may be susceptible to on the Internet. In addition to the useful and educational information available on the Internet, a great deal of content exists that is not appropriate for children. This content can include nudity or other sexually explicit material; hate group or racist web sites; promotional material about tobacco, alcohol, or drugs; graphic violence; information on satanic or cult groups; or even recipes for making bombs or other explosives.

You might be ask "Why do I need to know about IP numbers, domain names, and all that other stuff?" Children can become the targets of cyber stalking or harassment that includes repeated and unwanted contact through the Internet that is rude or threatening. These IP names and addresses may become your only link to tracing and identifying the Internet suspects.

Millions and millions of people allow their office and home computers to be linked to millions and millions of other computers to form an electronic connection. A network is two or more computers linked together to share information. Many people think the only way to get online is through the computer. But it is now possible to reach into cyberspace from cellular phones, personal digital assistants and even some video-game consoles. Millions of children and teens go on the Internet every day to talk to others online, research materials for school assignments, learn more about a personal hobby or play games. Most are safe, but increasingly, some are not.

### *Tips for Kids and Teens*

- *Don't give out personal information.*
- *Do not respond to mean, offensive, threatening or unwanted emails.*
- *Choose a screen name that doesn't identify you as a young boy or girl.*
- *Remember, people online may or MAY NOT be who they say.*
- *You don't know who is really there so never say anything in a chat room that you wouldn't say in public.*

## What are Chat Rooms?



Chat rooms let you engage in a live conversation with people around the block or around the world. It is like being on a party line, only you type instead of talking. Everyone in the “chat room” can see everything you type. These rooms are found in various areas of the Internet and are often unregulated or monitored with little or no supervision. Chatting has become a big thing, even young children are chatting online.

Below are some of the chat rooms that people visit.

American Online has chat rooms for its members. AOL subscribers can setup their own chat rooms or use the already existing chat rooms. AOL has millions of paying subscribers so there are always plenty of folks to chat with. ([www.aol.com](http://www.aol.com))

Yahoo now offers a series of World Wide Web browser based chat rooms and a Yahoo-messaging system. They offer free email to their customers as well. ([www.yahoo.com](http://www.yahoo.com))

The ICQ chat system allows users to set up chat rooms using their ICQ software and website. ([www.icq.com](http://www.icq.com))

All of these chat rooms have the potential to increase communication between people. This is a great benefit for people who have friends and family members across the globe.

## Predators Use Chat Rooms, Too

The downside of this great technology is that online predators have also learned to use chat rooms. Online chatting is also a great way to meet new victims and get to know them without their parents hanging around. Sexual predators may target children online while maintaining relative anonymity. These predators target likely victims; make contact and work to develop friendships; emotional reliance; and interest in sexual topics. He or she may initiate offline sexual relations quickly or spend months “grooming” the child towards a sexual relationship. Sexual predators may use material goods, such as compact disks and games, to attract children off-line. There have also been many cases where predators have sent children bus tickets or money to cover the cost of travel or even have traveled to meet the children.

### CHAT ROOM ABBREVIATIONS

Below are a few of the acronyms and text messaging shorthands.

@TEOTD	At the end of the day
143	It means: I love you
86	Out of or Over
AISI	As I see it
AML	All my love
BSF	But seriously, folks
DTRT	Do the right thing

You can find another list of acronyms at [www.netlingo.com](http://www.netlingo.com)

Online predators also use chat rooms to teach each other how to not get caught. They also trade and sell photographs and movies made of their victims to other molesters. Chat is probably the

most dangerous area on the Internet.

Children in foster care are extremely vulnerable. They have a strong desire for attention, validation, and affection often along with a lack of caution or self-preservation. Children are taught to obey adult request and demands and may be less likely to know when it isn't appropriate to do so. In addition, children are naturally curious about sex and other "forbidden" topics. It is important to note that children also may be hesitant to tell a trusted adult if they are approached in an inappropriate way, because of a feeling of embarrassment or the stigma of being a tattletale.



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### **Part Two: *Keeping Children Safe***

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### **Preventing Your Child From Being A Victim**

The first simple step to take is: **GET THE COMPUTER AND THE INTERNET OUT OF YOUR CHILD'S BEDROOM!** “The most important requirement is based on the many observations I have made during hundreds of investigations and search warrants in the homes of victims and suspects,” says Glen Klinkhart of [A Cybercop's Guide to Internet Child Safety](#). He says whenever he goes to the home of a juvenile suspect or victim, he always finds that the youth has had unlimited access to the computer and the Internet. The Internet access is usually in their bedroom or some other unsupervised area of the house. Officer Klinkhart states that this is worse than giving them the keys to the candy store. Your children need guidance and it is your job to provide the guidance.

What parents can do about the Internet? How do you prevent your youth from seeing pornography, hate groups, bombs and drugs on the Internet? Officer Kinkhart offers these suggestions:

1. Take to computer out of the unsupervised area.
2. Use the World Wide Web along with your children. Discuss what sites you are going to go to and be there to help direct their interest.
3. Set up Internet and web surfing rules.
4. Take the time to visit web sites that have been deemed child friendly.
5. Check up on your youth's web surfing activities from time to time. That may mean making a habit of walking by the youth while they are on the computer. It may also mean searching the computer outside of your youth's presence to see where they have been on the web.
6. If your child has an e-mail address, talk to them about what they use for a name. It is best not to give personal information through your e-mail account. [Babyblues15@hotmail.com](mailto:Babyblues15@hotmail.com) leads you to believe that this is a 15 year old with baby blue eyes. If your youth plays soccer you don't want [soccerboy12@hotmail.com](mailto:soccerboy12@hotmail.com) this will give a predator a conversation starter.

## Checking Your Child's Web Activities

You should check up on your youth's Internet activities from time to time. You do not have to spend money for specialized computer software to track their web surfing. It is your right as a parent to see that your youth is following the rules you set up for Internet access. Some parents have had to take the keyboard and lock it up when their youth consistently do not follow the guidelines set up for Internet activity.

The first thing you have to do is decide which web browsing software do you and your youth use. The majority of the time it will be either Microsoft Internet Explorer or Netscape's Navigator. When a person uses these programs to go to different sites, both of these browsers save pieces of their web surfing information on your computers hard drive. Ask a computer savvy friend to show how or check out the booklet The Cybercop's Guide to Internet Safety from the Alaska Center for Resource Families which can give you step by step directions on how to search the history. This booklet can also be downloaded from the Internet at [www.NetSmartz.com](http://www.NetSmartz.com).

## Protecting Your Family Online: More Safety Tips from NetSmartz.com

NetSmartz.com offers some other guidelines for parents to help them keep control of the Internet in their home and keep their children and teens safe.

1. Establish rules for Internet use and keep the house rules posted by the computer.
  - What sites can your child visit?
  - Who can they talk to?
  - How long will they be online?
  - Where can they use a computer?
2. Keep the computer in a common room.
3. Discuss the importance of telling you, or a trusted adult, if something ever makes your child feel scared, uncomfortable or confused while online.
4. Communicate with your children.
  - Prepare yourself beforehand.
  - Talk and be open with your child and teens.
  - Keep your cool. Be cool! Encourage them to confide in you.

5. Be Informed.
  - Learn everything you can about the Internet.
  - Ask your kids to show you places they go.
  - Learn chat room lingo by going to [www.cybertipline.com](http://www.cybertipline.com) for a list of acronyms (like POS  
Parent over Shoulder)
  - Know other access to electronic communication, such as text messaging.
6. Consider safeguarding options.
  - Check out blocking, filtering, and rating applications.
  - Learn about filtering and monitoring software and **WHEN TO USE THEM.**
7. Be aware of the “CyberTipline”. Report incidents to CyberTipline by calling 1-800-843-5678 or at [www.cybertipline.com](http://www.cybertipline.com)
8. Know who your children talk to online.
9. Check your children’s E-mail addresses for appropriateness.
10. Don’t post your child’s E-mail address in any directory.
11. Always read a web site’s privacy policy before giving any personal information. Also make sure that a web site offers a secure connection before giving credit card information.
12. Don’t forward E-mail to “everyone” in your address book.
13. Talk to you children about what personal information is and why they should never give it out.
14. Make sure children only exchange E-mail with people they know and let them use chat areas you supervise.
15. Make sure you are aware of any other places your child may be using the Internet such as a friend’s house or the library.
16. Show your children how to turn off the monitor when something makes them feel scared, uncomfortable, or confused.
17. Teach yourself or ask help to do the following:
  - Set parental controls.
  - Check history files.
18. Access more tips on the “Parents and Educators” section of [www.NetSmartz.org](http://www.NetSmartz.org)

## Some Stats About Youth and the Internet



- About four million teens (19% of 12 to 17 year olds) who use the Internet have created some sort of blog (web log) according to a November 2005 Pew Internet and American Life Project Study.
- In a survey of 500 teenagers ages 14-18 across the country when asked if someone they had met online has wanted to meet them in person, 58 % said “yes” and 29% said they have had a “scary” experience on line.
- The number one media concern for parents has shifted from television to the Internet, with 85% of parents saying that it poses the greatest risk to their children among other forms of media.
- Half of teens ages 13-18 often communicate through the Internet with someone they have not met in person.
- Almost one in eight youth ages 8-18 discovered that someone they were communicating with online was an adult pretending to be much younger.
- 86% of the girls said they could chat online without their parent’s knowledge, 57% could read their parents email, and 54% could conduct a cyber relationship.
- On average children/teens use the Internet about 5 hours per week. The breakdown of use was:
  - 80 % used the Internet for Homework
  - 70% used Email
  - 69% used the Internet for Games
  - 50% used the internet or downloaded Music
  - 42% used the Internet for Chatting or Instant Messaging

**Some of the popular web sites with Alaskan kids are [www.wouldyouhitthis.com](http://www.wouldyouhitthis.com) Over 900 teenage girls are registered in the Anchorage/Valley area. A couple other popular sites are [www.ratemypic.com](http://www.ratemypic.com) and [www.hotornot.com](http://www.hotornot.com).**

## Final Words From GetNetWise.com

*Get Net Wise is a website devoted to children and youth's safety on the Internet at <http://kids.getnetwise.org/safetyguide/>.*

“Just as adults need to help kids stay safe, they also need to learn not to overreact when they find out a child or teenager has been exposed to inappropriate material or strayed from a rule.

Whatever you do, don't blame or punish your child if he tells you about an uncomfortable online encounter. Your best strategy is to work with him, so you both can learn from what happened and figure out how to keep it from happening again.

“The challenges posed by the Internet can be positive. Learning to make good choices on the Internet can serve young people well by helping them to think critically about the choices they will face. Today it's the Internet; tomorrow it may be deciding whether it's safe to get into the car of someone a teen meets at a party. Later it will be deciding whether a commercial offer really is "too good to be true" or whether it really makes sense to vote for a certain candidate or follow a spiritual guru. Learning how to make good choices is a skill that will last a lifetime.”

--- <http://kids.getnetwise.org/safetyguide>