

ON THE GRID

Young people all over the world have discovered that the Internet is a great tool. It's perfect for connecting with friends, researching information for school projects, or just playing a game once in a while. But did you know that the Internet can also be a dangerous place? Imagine being in a huge crowd of people all by yourself. Now imagine that you can't see any of those people; you can only hear their voices and learn only what they tell you about themselves. In a situation like that, you would want someone nearby who knows how to recognize danger signals and protect you from people who might want to steal from you or hurt you. That's what the Internet is like. If you are "In the Know," you can make the most of the Internet without exposing yourself to dangerous activity.

SECURITY THREATS

Many companies use pop-up windows, flashing banners, and other kinds of advertisements to attract your attention. An ad might say something like, "You're the 1 millionth visitor!" or "Claim your free laptop now!" Some even pretend to be official Facebook buttons or virus protection programs. As soon as you click on one of these ads, you are agreeing to give that



company access to your computer in some way. Without even knowing it, you could be downloading software that steals your credit card number, hijacks your email account, or even infects your computer with a virus. Never click on anything unless it is something you already know about.

Sometimes it might seem like it makes sense to post your phone number or address online. Maybe you just moved, and that's the quickest way to let all your Facebook friends know where you live now. But the stuff you put online is visible to more people than you think, and some people can use that information to commit identity theft. Even just saying something like "Going to the skating rink tonight at 7:00" could let the wrong kind of person know where you are. Keep personal information personal—don't post it for the whole world to see.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

Internet Safety Site

www.nsteens.org/

Games, Activities and More Information

www.wiredkids.org/

Anti-bullying tips, movie clips and more.

www.teencentral.net/

in the know

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INTERNET SAFETY

be web wise



ILLEGAL ACTIVITY

You probably aren't interested in committing a crime that could cost you fines and other penalties. But it's easier to do than you might think. If a song, movie, e-book, or other form of media is copyrighted, that means that it can't be copied legally. If you rip a song from a CD or download it, then send it to a few friends, you have broken the law. It doesn't work to take the attitude that "It's just one song—nobody cares." Music and movie studios take their money seriously, and they've actually sued people just like you in court to make an example. Watch out for services that use the term "torrent," and stay away from sites that advertise free videos and songs that you have to pay for from other sources.

serious trouble

SEXUAL CONTENT

Explicitly sexual content is sometimes called "adult content." Whether or not it's appropriate for adults, it's definitely not okay for young people to be involved with. It can be tempting to look at dirty pictures or talk about sex with other people online, but you can get into serious trouble very quickly. You might get yourself arrested for doing those things, but there's an even worse danger than that. Most people putting out pornography and trying to talk with young people about sex are adults who are interested in hurting kids and teenagers. If you come across anything that is sexual in nature, tell an adult right away and let them deal with the situation. Don't be embarrassed about telling your parents what you saw—nobody's going to blame you, and it's important for your safety.

criminal penalties



others online. Here are some good rules to follow to avoid cyberbullying:

- Remember that anything you post online is not just visible to you and your circle of friends. It's also visible to your entire school, city, state, and people around the world. Think of how a person would feel if you put that photo, text, or email on national TV for everyone to see. Never post anything that would be hurtful to someone else.
- You can avoid becoming a victim of cyberbullying by keeping private things private. Be careful with personal conversations online; it is very easy for someone to copy something you wrote and then pass it on to other people. Even as a joke, don't post pictures of yourself that you wouldn't want the whole world to see.

hurtful

- Give parents full access to your Internet activity. When parents want to check up on your email address, Twitter account, Facebook postings, and texting, it's not because they don't trust you. It's because they know that you might not yet realize that what you're doing is dangerous. Work with your parents and let them help you become a smarter, safer user.
- Use the computer in a public area of your home. If your family can see what you're doing online, there's less chance that there will be confusion if something bad happens. Your parents can see that you were not trying to hide a dangerous relationship or dirty pictures from them if they show up on the computer.
- If you accidentally click on an ad, realize that you posted personal information like a phone number or credit card number, tell your parents immediately. They won't be mad at you; they'll be happy that they can take care of the damage quickly without letting the situation get out of control.
- Tell an adult about any activity that seems unusual from people you chat, email, text, or instant message with. If a criminal is trying to get to know you, your safety depends on an adult taking care of the situation—even involving the police, if necessary.

CYBERBULLYING

Some kids think that bullying just means that someone took your lunch money at school. But cyberbullying is far more damaging than that. It humiliates its victims; exposes personal things to millions of people; and hurts its victims' self-esteem and feeling of worth. There have even been cases where teens have taken their own life because cyberbullying made them so miserable. Federal and state lawmakers are trying to figure out how to control this problem, even considering criminal penalties for bullying



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WHAT TO DO IF YOU GET INTO TROUBLE

The best way to get out of any of these forms of trouble on the Internet is to avoid them in the first place! There are simple ways that you can protect yourself:

