

## Cyber Ethics

February 19, 2007

### Summary Cyber Ethics

Teaching your children acceptable behavior on the Internet

What is cyber ethics? And how do you teach it to your children? Simply put, cyber ethics is a code of behavior for using the Internet. One easy way to think about cyber ethics and to address the subject with children is this: acceptable behavior on the Internet is very much the same as acceptable behavior in everyday life.

For instance, at an early age, children learn what it means to be honest, and to respect the rights and property of others. They are taught to not take what does not belong to them, and to be considerate of others. On the Internet, the same basic rules apply.

Dos and don'ts. The difference between using and abusing the Internet.

Here are some helpful dos and don'ts pertaining to situations that children are likely to encounter.

- **Schoolwork**

#### **Do use the Internet to help you do your schoolwork.**

The Internet is the world's largest library. You can find information on almost any subject from science, math and technology to language, art, history, current events and more. When you use information, photos and other materials that you find on the Internet in your homework or research projects, make sure that you identify the sources of the information in footnotes, just as you would if you used books in your school library to get the information.

#### **Don't copy information from the Internet and call it your own.**

It is sometimes tempting to copy information from the Internet into your schoolwork, and to present it as your own work. That is dishonest, just like taking someone else's jacket and calling it your own. And it might be illegal, too. Much of the information, pictures and other materials on the Internet is copyrighted, which means it belongs to someone else. If you take it without permission, or without identifying the source in a footnote, you are breaking the law.

- **Music, video, games and copyrights**

**Do use the Internet to learn about music, video and games.**

There are many websites where you can learn about music by listening to sample tracks, preview movie videos, and learn about new computer games.

**Don't use the Internet to download or share copyrighted material.**

When something is copyrighted, it means that someone else owns it, and you cannot copy or distribute it without their permission. It is dishonest and illegal to download copyrighted music, video, games or other materials. It is also dishonest and illegal to share copyrighted music, video, games or other materials over the Internet. When you see this symbol — © — it means that the material is copyrighted.

- **Email and instant messaging**

**Do use the Internet to communicate with friends and family.**

Email and instant messaging (IM) are good, fun ways to communicate with your friends and your family. Always make sure that you know the people with whom you exchange email and IM.

**Don't use the Internet to communicate with strangers.**

Do not use email or IM to talk to strangers. They may not be who they say they are, and if they are not, they are not nice people. Don't give out your email or IM address to people you don't know, either online or in person. Don't open email or email attachments from people you don't know. Unsolicited email may contain **viruses** that will damage your computer and the information on it.

**Don't pretend to be someone else.**

Just as you don't want others to hide their true identity with their email or IM you, don't pretend to be someone else when you're online.

### **Don't be rude or use bad language.**

When you use email or IM, be considerate of others. Don't be rude, mean or use bad language. You wouldn't do that in real life, and you shouldn't do it on the Internet either.

### **Don't give anyone personal information or passwords.**

Don't tell people, especially strangers, more about yourself than you would if you met them in person. Don't tell them what you look like, your age, where you live, your phone number, what school you go to, or any passwords that protect your computer or your private information.

- **For Parents**

### **Don't leave your children unsupervised.**

**Parental control is important.** Make sure you know what sites your children visit when they're on the internet, and with whom they're communicating. Look over their shoulder. Keep track of the websites they visit. There are websites and programs available that direct children to sites that are fun, interesting and appropriate. And there are others that restrict their browsing to appropriate websites. The best control, however, is parental involvement. Make sure they understand acceptable behavior on the Internet. And make sure they follow the rules.

### **Do encourage your children to use the Internet.**

The Internet has a lot good things to offer children. When used wisely, it is a great tool for information gathering and learning and, via email and instant messaging, for practicing written communication.