

# Cybersafety starts with you.



**It's no secret. The Internet can be an incredibly dangerous place for your child.**

Cyberbullying is a real (and all too common) threat. Child predators lurk on commonly accessed websites that children use. Irresponsible or immature posts made online by your child can have life-long consequences that affect his admission to college or future employment opportunities.

As a community, it's our collective duty to protect our children by educating them about responsible digital citizenship. As the most important person in your child's life, cybersafety starts with YOU.

Engaging in frequent and open dialogue with your child about the potential dangers of the Internet is a great place to start — but alone, it's simply not enough.

**Follow the Seven Cybersafety Action Steps on the reverse of this page for specific tips and advice on how to ensure you're protecting your child from modern cyberdangers.**



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## **Cyberbullying 101**

### **Quick Tips for Stopping a Cyberbully**

#### **Avoid contact with the cyberbully.**

First and foremost, tell your child to ignore the cyberbully. If he persists, block the bully or consider changing your child's e-mail address/screen name/phone number, etc.

#### **Document evidence of cyberbullying.**

Keep an electronic copy of the harassing content (e-mails, chat messages, etc.) by saving the file or taking a screenshot on your computer and noting the dates and times of the activity.

#### **Notify the school.**

Inform your child's school of the cyberbullying behavior and ask for their help monitoring the behavior of the bully and your child during the school day. The school may have its own policy for dealing with cyberbullying, but also ask administrators to document any suspicious activity and notify you immediately.

#### **Report the incident to the authorities.**

If contacting your child's school doesn't put an end to the bullying — or if you don't know the identity of the cyberbully — report the incident to your local police department. They often are able to help you identify the bully through your Internet Service Provider and can help you take remedial action.

## **Want to learn more?**

## **Visit [cybersafephilly.com](http://cybersafephilly.com).**

- 1 Infuse conversations with real-life scenarios and let your child do the talking.**

Sit down with your child to discuss the Internet and his online activities. First, encourage your child to do the talking. You'll get a sense for what he is aware of and the areas where he may need some education or reinforcement. Discuss the types of difficult situations your child may encounter while online, such as receiving an instant message from a stranger that includes sexual content or someone posting a hurtful comment on your child's Facebook wall. Ask your child how he would handle these scenarios, and suggest methods for handling them. If your child seems uncomfortable with the conversation at any point and suggests that he — or someone else — may be a victim of cyberbullying, stalking or any other form of cyberdanger, urge your child to give you details immediately. Make sure it's clear that you're always available to help and no one will be in trouble for telling the truth.
- 2 Set the ground rules.**

If you don't have them already, set clear ground rules for computer and Internet use in your home. Is your child restricted to using the Internet during certain times of the day/night? Is there a time limit for Internet use? Are there certain websites your child may not visit? Is your child permitted to join social networking sites like Facebook? Is your child allowed to be alone on a computer or laptop without supervision? By removing computers from your child's bedroom and other private areas, it's easier to keep an eye on Internet activity. Stress that the very public nature of the Internet requires an equally as public place in your home to access it. After you establish the parameters, post them in a visible place, i.e. near the computer or on the kitchen refrigerator, as a constant reminder of the house rules.
- 3 Stress the lifetime implications of "that one time."**

Remind your child that anything he shares online — comments, photos, videos, etc. — can rarely be taken back and are more often than not archived somewhere (even with privacy settings). Later down the road, questionable and seemingly harmless information posted online could jeopardize your child's college admissions process or job search. Four out of five college admissions officers report Googling a potential student to find information posted on blogs, websites, Facebook, Foursquare, Twitter and other social networking sites. "That one time" at a party, documented on the Internet via video, photo or status update, can follow your child through his lifetime.
- 4 Get connected yourself.**

Join and participate in the social networks/forums/websites your child frequents — even connect with him on those networks to keep a pulse on his digital world. Being present online can help you spot suspicious activity — and take appropriate action — sooner than you would otherwise. And, chances are, your child will think twice about his actions knowing you're officially tuned in.
- 5 Review — and restrict — personal information.**

Meet with your child to see what information he has publicly posted about his life on social networking and other websites. Any and all information, such as birthday, mobile phone number, home address, etc., can be used to manipulate or exploit your child, so make sure it doesn't include anything too detailed or revealing. If necessary, have your child remove sensitive information. Also review all pictures and videos your child may be "tagged" in and, if necessary, have your child "untag" himself.
- 6 Opt-in to stricter privacy settings.**

On many social networking sites, default privacy settings allow anyone to view profile and other information. Discuss the various privacy options with your child to figure out the best options, then manually change the settings based on your choices. It's a good idea to review every privacy setting available to make sure they're all set at the levels you as a parent find appropriate and safe.
- 7 Consider using monitoring software.**

In addition to educating and communicating with your child, you may want to consider installing Internet monitoring software on your computer. With this software, you can block access to inappropriate websites, track the websites your child is visiting, view instant messages and chat sessions, see the posts your child makes to social networking sites and more. For instance, Verizon FiOS offers Verizon Instant Security Suite (VISS), which allows parents to customize levels of protection for each child in the household. VISS provides YouTube filtering, alerts parents when their child is attempting to post personal information to social networking sites and conveniently sends those alerts straight to the parent's in-box or mobile phone. If you choose to commit to this type of software, let your child know you'll be monitoring his online activity periodically and unannounced for his own safety.