

DCTS Internet Tools & Guidelines for Your Teen

KIDS AT THIS AGE:

- Crave both group identity and independence
- Tend to download music, use instant messaging (IM), e-mail, social networking sites, and play online games; most of them have visited chat rooms, and many have participated in adult or private chats
- May push the boundaries of safe online behavior by looking for gross humor, gore, gambling, or explicit adult sites
- Are more critical and selective in their media interests and activities
- Are more likely to receive unwanted sexual comments online
- Receive the highest percentage of pornographic spam
- Are interested in building relationships with online acquaintances (especial true of girls)
- Are more likely to be asked for a real-life meeting by an online acquaintance, and more apt to accept
- Are still vulnerable to online marketers who encourage them to give out personal information through surveys, contests, and registration forms
- May be bullied or be bullying others online
- Are more likely to use credit cards online
- May be experimenting with online gambling

REMEMBER: A teen's prefrontal cortex is not fully developed at this age; teens still need your guidance!

GUIDELINES:

- Create a list on Internet house rules with your teens. You should include the kinds of sites that are off limits.
- Set parental controls at the age-appropriate levels and use filtering and monitoring tools as a complement-not replacement-for parental supervision. Use parental controls on all Internet-enabled devices such as cell phones, gaming devices, iPods, and mobile devices.
- Keep Internet-connected devices in an open area and out of your teens' bedrooms.
- Talk to them about their online friends and activities just as you would about their offline activities.
- Talk to your teens about their IM list and social networking friends and make sure they're not talking to strangers. Your teens should only use parent-approved buddy lists and you should check their lists regularly to make sure your teens do not alter them.
- Insist that your teens tell you first if they want to meet an "online friend". Then check out the online friend, and if you feel the online friend is safe, accompany your teen to the meeting.
- Teach your teens to protect personal information.
- Help protect them from spam. Tell your teens not to give out their e-mail address online or respond to junk mail, and to use e-mail filters.
- **Teach your teens responsible online behavior. File-sharing and taking text, images or artwork from the web may infringe copyright laws.**
- Talk to them about ethical behavior. They should not use the Internet to spread gossip, bully, or threaten others.
- Oversee financial transactions online, including ordering, buying, or selling items.
- Discuss gambling and its potential risks, and remind your teens that it is illegal for them to gamble online.
- Do periodic spot checks (like checking browser history files) to monitor your teens' online behaviors.

REMEMBER: Kids are safest if not on social networking sites. Follow these guidelines if you allow your teens to use them.