



Family Values

Promoting Cyber Safety – Part 1

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Although a national study indicates that most parents consider the Net a safe place, there is still the concern that unsavory characters hang out in cyberspace. How closely should parents supervise their children's use of the internet? Should they choose a "guide" role or a "watchdog" role?

Some software programs allow parents to monitor every keystroke and review the Web sites and chat rooms their children visit without the kids even knowing. Is spying on our children the answer? How do parents help their children safely explore the wonders of the information age?

Some protection is certainly needed. That is the purpose of the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA), which kicks in on April 21, 2000. It requires commercial Web sites and online services to inform parents and obtain "verifiable consent" before collecting, using or disclosing personal info from kids under 13. It is designed to ensure safety on the internet.

Several child-friendly Web sites are already complying with COPPA requirements. Wired Kids.org is putting together a list of firms wanting to comply with COPPA. Parents can go to this site and determine to what extent their kids can partake in the sites that register for this service. To help parents decide, Wired Kids will outline the risks for children participating in particular events.

Another helpful resource is *The Parent's Guide to Protecting Your Children in Cyberspace* (McGraw-Hill, \$12.95), written by Parry Aftab, president of Wired Kids.org. This book provides good practical protection advice on children's use of the internet.

Another resource on the Web is GetNetWise.org. Created by a coalition of corporations and non-profit organizations, including America Online, AT&T and MCI WorldCom, this comprehensive site includes: an online safety guide; an area explaining family-friendly browsers and other tools; a place where you can report trouble to authorities; and lists of appropriate kid sites from the American Library Association, Children's Partnership and others.

Microsoft also has teamed with NBA's Shaquille O'Neal and the Boys and Girls Clubs of America on a CD-ROM called *Stay Safe! Online*. It features a safety quiz for small children. Parents will be able to download the program off the Web starting in May.

For more information:

- www.aol.com
- www.barbie.com
- www.bonus.com
- www.cme.org
- www.cyberangels.org
- www.cyberpatrol.com
- www.cybersitter.com
- www.familypc.com
- www.fleetkids.com
- www.getnetwise.org
- www.headbone.com
- www.junkbusters.com
- www.lycoszone.com
- www.nick.com
- www.netnanny.com
- www.surfmonkey.com
- www.surfwatch.com
- www.spectorsoft.com
- www.wiredkids.org

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