



# Crime Prevention Week

November 1-7, 2011

**Prepare – Prevent – Protect**

## Online safety tips for parents

Day 5: November 5, 2011



### Internet basics – common parenting skills apply.

Internet basics can be as straightforward as pushing buttons or clicking a mouse. Understanding how youth use the Internet, however, can be an overwhelming task, especially for adults who don't spend much time online.

- Whether youth are technologically savvy (blogging and messaging) or using the Internet mainly for homework, they can easily access the Internet wirelessly at any time through a number of devices that connect to the web through schools, homes and wireless hotspots.
- Take the time to regularly chat with your child about the places they like to go online, including popular websites such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. If there are sites that you are unfamiliar with, visit these sites to learn more about them. Discuss with your child how easy it is for people to change their identities online and pose as someone they are not.
- Tell your children about your feelings on sharing information through social media websites. Develop house rules on how to stay safe and monitor your child's Internet use (through devices such as game consoles, phones, tablets and laptops) by the means you believe are appropriate. Children are vulnerable online, so continue to place Internet devices in high-traffic family areas, bearing in mind that the smallest of cellphones can allow your child to share information online while sitting at the dinner table.

### Encourage young people to act safely and respectfully toward themselves and others.

- As a family, learn how to build strong user names and passwords that aren't descriptive of the individual or his/her interests. Ask children to keep user names and passwords for online accounts, including social media accounts, in a sealed envelope on the fridge in case you need to access their account(s) in an emergency.
- Encourage them to think before they post. Keeping personal and identification information private can be difficult. Names, birth dates, ages, phone numbers, home addresses, birth places, maiden names, social insurance numbers, school names and sports teams can complete a puzzle of personal information when posted and shared online. As a result, their identity, whereabouts and activities can be pieced together by anyone.
- Talk to your children about the risks of creating or receiving sexually explicit messages, videos or photos. There are laws that apply to the production and possession of sexually explicit content. Children need to understand that Internet technology can allow a person to share too much, even if it's just out of curiosity.
- Tell your children that if they see something online that doesn't feel right, like cyberbullying, harassment or threats, it's okay to tell someone they trust. If you or your child come across sexually explicit photos of children online or if a child tells you that someone tried to lure them or a friend, report it to your local police agency, school or Canada's tipline for sexual exploitation, [www.cybertip.ca](http://www.cybertip.ca).

### Three online snares to be aware of and how to handle them:

- Games. Children communicate verbally and in writing while online gaming. Understand how these tools work before you connect a gaming console to the Internet and check in with your children regularly about the games they're playing online. Create a gaming agreement.
- Online gambling. Most websites prohibit users under the age of 18 or 19 from participating in online gambling; however, e-casinos, card games, live bets and poker sites are growing in popularity with tweens and teens. Educate your children about the risks attached to online gambling (addiction, debt, fraud).
- Online shopping. Talk to your children about the risks of providing personal banking and credit card information when using online services such as PayPal, eBay and Craigslist. Encourage your children to check for security features, such as a security lock near the bottom of the web page, to ensure that it's safe to provide personal banking and credit card information. Secure sites also help rule out phishing scams (attempts to get sensitive information by disguising as a trustworthy source).

### Understand the law. The promotion in any way, shape or form of any sexual activity with children under the age of 18 is illegal.

- Using the Internet to entice youth (anyone under the age of 18) to meet for sexual acts or to help arrange sexual encounters is a crime under the Criminal Code of Canada.
- There can be serious consequences for a person who sends sexually explicit photos or videos of someone under the age of 18, even if the sender knows the individual. For example, if a young person were to share a sexual photo or video from a boyfriend or girlfriend who is under the age of 18, it could be considered distribution of child pornography and may result in criminal charges.
- Be aware of how children use the Internet of their own accord or when prompted by a peer or person they're communicating with online. Communicate with elementary-aged children about the risks and consequences of using the Internet to harass or threaten, even if they think it's in good fun.
- Children between the ages of 10 and 12 need to understand that anyone outside their peer group who is communicating with them in a sexual manner is very dangerous and needs to be reported. Children who are prompted to produce or share content need to feel confident that, if they tell a person about the incident, they won't be judged or *punished* for initially engaging in a risky conversation.

### The following Criminal Code Offenses apply to youth and could apply to children under the age of 12 if they use the Internet in a negative way:

- Child Pornography
- Criminal Harassment
- Luring a Child
- Uttering Threats



Need to report something? [www.cybertip.ca](http://www.cybertip.ca) is a service provided by the Canadian Centre for Child Protection. Cybertip.ca receives and analyzes tips from the public.

Spread the word -- *If you or your organization is interested in sharing audience-specific online safety tips with your network, please request a copy by emailing*  
[vijay.morancie@rcmp-grc.gc.ca](mailto:vijay.morancie@rcmp-grc.gc.ca)