

YOUR KIDS AND THE INTERNET

SURVIVING THE COMBINATION:

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

Introduction

Why Children Naturally Love the Internet

Best Educational and FUN Web Sites for Children

Best Parenting Websites

Internet Search Directories

Contract for Responsible Use of the Internet

Glossary of Internet Terms

INTRODUCTION:

The world is changing. So many times that statement has been spoken from one generation to the next to explain how to understand, tolerate and survive noted progress. Most people marvel at the mechanical, technological and even social changes that occur from childhood through adulthood in any given generation.

More so than in any other time in history, current changes occurring in the way people interact in everyday life are more drastic than ever with the innovation and increased popularity of the Internet. The Internet offers people relatively hassle-free, cheap and sometimes mind-boggling methods of handling traditional normal activities in extraordinary ways. By virtue of current lifestyle trends, many people welcome the Internet's option of dealing with personal and commercial business in non-traditional fashion.

As the Internet begins to affect every facet of daily activity for many people, the innovation poses particularly unique challenges for parents. While the Internet allows for a wide-open self-regulated marketplace and think tank, the unabashed and uncensored nature of the information may prove unhealthy and detrimental to children if they are irresponsibly exposed to it.

So how are parents to survive in the wide-open free exchange of ideas and information? Many parents feel the need to avoid the subject for as long as possible, hoping that the information will somehow either bypass their children or reach them at a time when they can surely handle it. Unfortunately, too often this is not the case.

After consulting with hundreds of parents on the Internet and how to survive the onslaught of the new technology and information, I have concluded that most parents want to know how the Internet works, but unfortunately do not have the time to begin learning all that they need to know. In the meantime, children are on the cutting edge of the technological revolution and hunger to learn its processes. By way of self-exploration, school direction or peer introduction, many children will have some access to the Internet by age six.

Parents need to know what attracts children to the Internet and what are the most valuable

and popular Internet areas for children. Sometimes the most valuable areas of the Internet are not the most popular and the most popular areas are not the most valuable. Parents need to know how to distinguish between them.

There are some valuable software tools available to parents to help them try to keep the "information superhighway" safe for their kids. Content filtering programs, password protected and encrypted software, etc. will help in this effort, but will not be able to protect and prevent children from being exposed to inappropriate or unhealthy content 100% of the time. These programs have proven to be helpful but not the complete answer to steering children clear of danger and preventing them from accessing information that is not intended for them.

Parents need to view a child's attraction to the Internet similar to a child's attraction to television, video games or other media stimuli. Supervision and encouraging moderation are vital in providing parameters for children for using the Internet. Whether a child uses the World Wide Web for school research or an e-mail program to communicate with others, he/she must be taught that there are limits on time and energy spent on using the Internet.

Parents and children must discuss clear-cut expectations and agree upon certain guidelines to ensure safe and responsible use of the Internet's vast resources. The information in this book will provide tips for parents on how to survive the electronic world of the Internet. The best thing is, parents can learn all of the tips and insider hints in less than one day!

Good Luck!

Why Children Naturally Love the Internet

Children are attracted to the Internet for many reasons. Most information offered by the Internet's World Wide Web is arranged in simple and basic form, containing lots of colors, cool type styles, pictures, graphics and sounds. Children are naturally drawn to the special effects that are now commonplace within Web pages.

The layout and design of Web pages are very simple in nature and the ease of use of a computer mouse while navigating through the pages makes mastering the system easy for children. Kids can master the computer mouse long before they are able to type, and this allows them to be comfortable with accessing the information available on the Internet.

Children enjoy the non-linear approach to absorbing the information. Unlike school textbooks and other traditional educational resources, a child may click through the hot links of an Internet Web page in the order he/she chooses. This user control attracts children to the process and thus allows the intake of the information to remain managed by them.

The textbooks and other learning materials most traditional school systems use are very "linear" in nature, as students are taught lessons in particular order. Children are trained through the schools to problem-solve by using information in a linear sequence. The set-up of the resources offered by the

Internet may follow this pattern, too, but also offers so much more. Users may click through the links of information in any order they choose.

Children also may benefit from setting their own pace when using the Internet as an educational resource. The educational online content is set-up to be used by students with no built-in time limit or deadline (unless the user prefers it that way).

Most fascinating to children, though, is the interactivity of the Internet and the interactive

qualities of the educational resources online. As a choice is being made by a user to click the computer mouse on a Web page "hot link", the user begins an interactive exchange that can be brief or extended. Each time a user logs onto the Internet, the experience can be different and varied. Different users have different experiences while gathering similar information in this type of interactive environment. Learning tools no longer consist of just words and some pictures, but now also include more graphics, animation, video and sound. Children are drawn to the multimedia content.

The Most Educational (and fun!) Web Sites for Children

(Most of the following Web sites are commercial sites and include advertisements.)

Children should always be supervised while "surfing" on the Web!

(click on the Web site name to "link" to that site)

[FunBrain.com - http://www.funbrain.com/](http://www.funbrain.com/)

Educational games and puzzles and parent-kid challenges.

[FunSchool.com - http://www.funschool.com/](http://www.funschool.com/)

Educational games for kids from pre-school up to sixth grade

[Quia.com - http://www.quia.com/](http://www.quia.com/)

Thousands of educational activities in over 40 subject areas

[Kidscom.com - http://www.kidscom.com/](http://www.kidscom.com/)

Play smart, stay safe, have fun!

[Scholastic Books - http://place.scholastic.com/](http://place.scholastic.com/)

Comprehensive educational site from Scholastic Books

[Children's Television Workshop - http://www.ctw.org/](http://www.ctw.org/)

Includes Sesame Street Central and lots more

[Disney Daily Blast - http://www.disneyblast.com/](http://www.disneyblast.com/)

Online playground for fun and adventure

[Learn2.com - http://www.learn2.com/](http://www.learn2.com/)

Learn to do lots of different things

[HowThingsWork.com - http://www.howthingswork.com/](http://www.howthingswork.com/)

Find out the secrets to how lots of things work (in 3-D)!

[Internet Public Library \(Youth Division\) - http://www.ipl.org/youth](http://www.ipl.org/youth)

Lots of valuable resources all from one Web site

[Puzzlemaker.com - http://www.puzzlemaker.com/](http://www.puzzlemaker.com/)

Make all kinds of word searches, crosswords and mazes

[The Whitehouse for Kids - http://www.whitehouse.gov/WH/kids/html/kidshome.html](http://www.whitehouse.gov/WH/kids/html/kidshome.html)

Federal Government information designed for children

[Sports Illustrated for Kids - http://www.sikids.com/](http://www.sikids.com/)

Sports news written for children

Kid-Safe Internet Search Directories

[AJKids.com](http://www.ajkids.com/) - <http://www.ajkids.com/>

[Yahooligans.com](http://www.yahooligans.com/) - <http://www.yahooligans.com/>

[Alfy.com](http://www.alfy.com/) - <http://www.alfy.com/>

[Searchopolis.com](http://www.searchopolis.com/) - <http://www.searchopolis.com/>

[StudyWeb.com](http://www.studyweb.com/) - <http://www.studyweb.com/>

The Best Parenting Web Sites

The best Web sites full of information for parents of children of all ages.

(Most of the following Web sites are commercial sites and include advertisements.)

[A Listening Ear](#) - full of valuable Internet links to lots of parenting information

[ParentSoup](#) - information on children and chat areas for parents

[Parent Time](#) - information based on child's age and interests

[Moms Online](#) - a community of moms

[20ish Parenting](#) - fun and comprehensive site

[Father's World](#) - promoting and celebrating fatherhood

[Kid Solutions](#) - great tips and information for parents

[WeHaveTeens](#) - "...raising teenagers is like trying to nail jell-o to a tree"

[Screen It!](#) - comprehensive movie, video and CD-ROM reviews for parents

Content Filtering Web Sites:



Internet Search Engines and Directories:

(NOT safe for children to use alone)



Internet Search Directories

Knowing how to search the Internet is invaluable to most users. With the vast amount of information available, it becomes quite a task to search through it all to find what is needed. Parents should be able to help children use the resources of the Internet efficiently, so that the time online is spent with higher level thinking and learning rather than bogged down spending time searching through the vast information.

There are basically two types of search functions for the Internet's World Wide Web: search engines and search directories. Both types of Web sites help users sift through the Internet's available resources, but each with a slightly different approach.

Search engines are Web sites that feature software that goes through tens of thousands of other Web sites and pages and finds resources on different topics. Users of search engines input words or phrases (called "keywords") that the search engine will use to find Web sites matching the inputted criteria.

Some search engines employ software called "spiders" that "crawl" through the World Wide Web searching for Web sites matching the user's keywords. Other search engines allow you to actually type in a full question in order to execute a Web search. Either way, once a user inputs the keywords, most search engines will return hundreds of Web site addresses that match the criteria.

This large number of matches may be valuable to a user or possibly cumbersome, as it is tedious to then sift through the numerous suggested sites.

Search directories are similar to search engines, except there are live people actually categorizing the information. Rather than relying exclusively on Web search programs to find matching data within the Web sites, search directories list the information grouped into categories. The theory behind these sites is that they are more manageable than simple search engines, but yet many directories do not feature all sites available on a certain topic. Even worse for users, are the search directories that list information based on fees paid to them by the Web sites. This limits available resources as well.

Some of the best Web sites for searching for information on the Internet, feature meta-searches, which combine search engines and directories. A user inputs keywords just once, and the meta-search Web site simultaneously sends the user's criteria through numerous searches. The user may then view the returned search results from the different search engines and directories from one central site, rather than having to go to each individual site and run individual information searches.

Most search engines and directories are NOT safe for children to use. Most search Web sites are concerned with matching keywords and other criteria and not determining whether or not the material is inappropriate for children. There are Web search directories available that are designed to be used by children and are screened and filtered by educators, parents and others.

Here are some invaluable kid-safe search directories:

AJKids.com
 Yahoooligans.com
 Alfy.com
 Searchopolis.com
 StudyWeb.com

Contract for Safe and Responsible Use of the Internet

Many families have used a "contract" between parents and children in an effort to promote safe and responsible use of the Internet. The purpose of the contract is to ensure that children understand what is expected of them when using the Internet, so that there'll be no confusion or ambiguity with safe and responsible online use.

It is suggested that parents re-create and print out a copy of the following "Contract for Safe and Responsible Use of the Internet." (Information may be found at the end of the book on how you can receive a free copy of the contract in the mail, or by e-mail)

Once you print out your copy of the contract, have everyone in the family sign it.

The contract:

As a member of this family, I realize that access to the Internet is a privilege, and it is up to me to make safe and responsible choices while using the Internet. I realize that the consequences of not practicing safe and responsible use of the Internet can be serious and any bad choices made while online may be dangerous for me and cause me trouble.

Therefore, I promise:

To never reveal any personal information about myself online. This includes my real name,

address, telephone number, name or location of my school, name of any of my family members or friends, or any other personal information. If I feel the need to reveal or provide any personal information while online, I will first consult with my parents or teachers.

To never upload or send my picture to anyone online who I don't know in real life, without notifying my parents. I will first check with my parents if I want to send my picture through the Internet to anyone and will tell the other person that my parents know I am sending them a picture.

To understand that everything I see and everyone I meet online may not be telling the truth. I will always be careful to consider all possibilities of the information I receive while being online.

To notify my parents or teachers if I come across anything online that makes me feel uncomfortable. Online information that may make me feel uncomfortable includes inappropriate Web sites that I may have come across accidentally, correspondence with someone who seems to be making me talk about things I do not want to, or anything else confusing or scary.

Never to meet face-to-face with anyone I've met online without first asking my parents. I also agree not to contact anyone I meet online by telephone without first notifying my parents.

Not to sign up for anything online without first asking my parents or teachers. This includes revealing my name or e-mail address to my favorite Web sites, or ordering/purchasing anything online without my parents' permission.

To follow all rules agreed to about being online. This includes the time of day, length of time and reasons for using the Internet. Using the Internet is a privilege that I have earned, and one that I must respect.

Signed _____
(child)

Signed _____
(child)

Signed _____
(parent)

Signed _____

A USEFUL GLOSSARY OF INTERNET TERMS:

Applet - A small software application added to a computer file or Web page to show special effects such as animation or sound.

Bit - The smallest measurement of digital information read by computers.

Bandwidth - The rate/speed information travels from one place to another either inside a computer or between computers. Bandwidth is usually measured in bits per second, kilobits (thousands of bits) per second or megabits (millions of bits) per second. For instance, a 56K modem allows for a connection of 56 kilobits per second.

Blocking software - A computer program that allows parents, teachers, or guardians to "block" access to certain Internet Web sites and other information available over the Internet. Also known as "filtering" software.

Bookmark - Like a traditional bookmark, this digital version is for marking a place on the Internet that is interesting or frequently visited, so that a user can go back to the site(s) without having to remember or retype the Internet address.

Boot - to start a computer or computer program.

Browser - A software product that lets you find, see, and hear material on the World Wide Web, including text, graphics, sound, and video. There are many different kinds of Web browsers, the most popular being Netscape Navigator and Microsoft Internet Explorer.

Byte - Bytes are a basic measurement of computer memory. A byte is made up of eight bits.

Cache - A cache is the location on a computer's hard drive where the Web browser stores information (text, graphics, sounds, etc.) from Web pages or other Internet sites that have been visited recently so that returning to those pages or sites is faster and easier.

CD-ROM - "Compact Disk Read Only Memory"- a computer disk that can store large amounts of information. Special CD-ROM drives on computers playback the information although cannot save any new data.

Chat - A feature of Internet online services or Web sites that allows participants to communicate in "real time" by typing messages back and forth. After a user types a message on his/her computer, and sends it, it is instantly displayed on the computer screen (s) of another user or users.

Chat room - (also can be referred to as "chat channel") A location on the Internet (within a Web site or online service) where people can chat - communicate - with each other by typing messages back and forth. The "real-time" communication can be seen by all members of the chat room or can be sent privately between two chatters.

Cookie - A piece of personal information that an Internet Web browser saves and sends back to a Web server when the user revisits a Web site. The server recognizes the information from the browser, thus identifying the user. Cookies can contain information such as user preferences, log-in or registration information, e-commerce online shopping patterns, or history of recently visited Web sites. Most Web browsers will allow users to "disable" the cookie feature, if that's preferred.

Commercial online service - Usually refers to Internet Service Providers with large numbers of subscribers. These services provide access to the Internet, but also may offer lots of other on-line content, games, and chat rooms that are available only to subscribers.

Cyberspace - is the vast area shared by the connected computers and servers of the Internet. The prefix "cyber-" is synonymous with anything having to do with the Internet.

Discussion group - An area on the Internet focusing on a specific topic or topics where users can read and "post" comments (similar to a traditional bulletin board). Discussion groups cover a wide variety of topics. (also sometimes referred to as "Newsgroups")

Directories - similar to search engines, this is a software application that distinguishes Internet Web sites by categories for easy search by users. Users enter "keywords" to direct the application to list Web sites containing the desired information.

Domain name - An Internet Web site address reserved by a user, usually followed by .com, .net, .org or .edu.

Download - Copying or transmitting data or other information from a remote computer or server to be stored on the hard drive of a user's computer.

DSL - Digital Subscriber Line - A new technology that allows high-speed access of the Internet over standard phone lines.

Electronic Mail (E-Mail) - A way of sending messages and information electronically from one computer to another. Users can electronically send letters, and other text-based messages, as well as multimedia documents. New "information appliances" (including hand held devices) other than computers are also capable of sending e-mail.

Ethernet - the most common technology for connecting computers together to form a network.

Emoticons - combinations of type written characters that help a user express emotion or action when composing e-mail, an Instant Message or chatting. One example would be the smiley face :-).

FAQ ("Frequently Asked Questions") – help for users about a specific Web site, mailing list, product, or game. It is always a good idea for parents to find the FAQ of a certain Web site or other area of the Internet to quickly investigate or get informed about that site.

Filtered ISP - An Internet Service Provider (ISP) that automatically blocks access to content that is inappropriate for children, subject to specific guidelines.

Filtering software – Computer software installed by a user that sorts information on the Internet and classifies it according to content. Some filtering software allows the user to block certain kinds of information on the Internet from being viewed on the user's computer.

Firewall - a security program that places an electronic "wall" around a computer or network of computers, keeping it from being accessible to the general public.

File Transfer Protocol (FTP) - a software application that allows users to transfer ("download" or "upload") files from one computer to another.

Flaming - Sending a nasty message through e-mail or Instant Message, or posting a nasty comment in a newsgroup or discussion group, usually in response to a breach of netiquette.

Gateway - access from one computer to another or one area of the Internet to another.

GIF - popular format for files used to display pictures or graphics on a Web site or other section of the Internet.

Hacker - A person who tries to break into a computer system.

Hardware - The tangible parts of a computer and its peripherals (printer, modem, etc.)

Home Page - The first page of a Web site. This page usually contains most of the links to the content areas of the site.

Hyperlink ("link") - Instant transfer from one Internet Web page to another. A hyperlink may be text based or in the form of an image or portion of an image. The user may be linked to

another page within the same Web site or to another site altogether. A user may configure his/her Web browser to identify hyperlinks by change of color (blue for instance) or change of font style (underlined or in italics). When a user's computer mouse cursor "hovers" over the hyperlink, the cursor changes shape to indicate the transfer option. By clicking the computer mouse, the user is transferred to the linked Web page.

HTML - Hypertext Markup Language - The standard language used for creating Web pages and other documents on the World Wide Web.

HTTP - Hypertext Transfer Protocol - The standard language used by computers connected to the Internet to communicate with each other.

Icon - a small picture that represents either text based information or a "link" to another Web page.

Information Superhighway - refers to the Internet, the large and vast group of computers all connected via a series of workstations, networks, servers and personal computers.

Instant Message (IM) – computer software that allows users to communicate simultaneously with each other one-on-one in "real time."

Internet - A collection of thousands of computers and computer networks connected to each other.

Internet Relay Chat (IRC) - Computer software that allows users to "chat" online in a live forum. May feature collective "chat rooms."

Integrated Services Digital Network (ISDN) - A process that connects users to the Internet over standard phone lines at speeds higher than a 56k modem allows, but not as fast as DSL.

Internet Service Provider (ISP) - A company that provides access to the Internet, most often through a local phone number. ISP's can be small companies with only a handful of subscribers or large companies with millions of subscribers.

Internet Protocol (IP) - The computer language that allows software programs to communicate with each other over the Internet.

Intranet - A private network that works like the Internet, except that it can only be accessed by a select group of people, such as the employees of a company.

Java - A computer programming language that allows Internet Web pages to contain animation and other special effects. Java also allows users to view the different effects in a consistent way regardless of what kind of Internet Web browser is being used.

JPEG - a popular format for files used to display images on a Web page or other section of the Internet. These files are more compact than "GIF" files.

Keyword(s) – The word(s) used when using search engines or directories to find information on the Web. A user types the keyword(s) into a search "window," to allow criteria for the search. The search engine or directory will then list Web pages containing those words.

Local Area Network (LAN) - A network of connected computers and/or servers that are physically located near each other.

Link (or "hyperlink") - Instant transfer from one Internet Web page to another. A hyperlink

may be text based or in the form of an image or portion of an image. The user may be linked to another page within the same Web site or to another site altogether. A user may configure his/her Web browser to identify hyperlinks by change of color (blue for instance) or change of font style (underlined or in italics). When a user's computer mouse cursor "hovers" over the hyperlink, the cursor changes shape to indicate the transfer option. By clicking the computer mouse, the user is transferred to the linked Web page.

ListServ - a "discussion group" using e-mail to send messages to each of its members. Once a user signs up for a listserv, he/she will receive all messages sent through that listserv e-mail address.

Log-off - to disconnect from the Internet or other on-line connection or to shutdown a computer.

Mailing List - similar to listserv, this is an e-mailing list users can subscribe to. Most mailing lists focus on a certain subject or common trait among its members (parents, for example).

Modem - A hardware device installed inside a computer that allows it to communicate with other computers over telephone lines. A modem enables "dial-up" access to the Internet. Modems are defined by the speed in which data may travel through it.

Monitoring software - A type of software product that allows a parent or other monitor to track the Internet Web sites or e-mail messages that a user visits or reads, without necessarily blocking access.

Mouse - A hand-held peripheral hardware device attached to your computer, which allows users to give commands to the computer by clicking a button on the device.

Multimedia - A combination of two or more types of information such as text, images, graphics, audio, and video.

Netiquette - defined as proper behavior while using the Internet. It is an unwritten set of on-line guidelines for manners and appropriate behavior when communicating on-line.

Newsgroups - are discussion groups on the Internet focusing on a specific topic or topics where users can read and "post" comments (similar to a traditional bulletin board). Newsgroups, which have no connection to news organizations or current events, cover a wide variety of topics.

Online Service Provider - a commercial service that provides dial-up access to online content, the Internet and other areas. For example, America OnLine, Prodigy and others have online content that only members of the service may access as well as direct access to the Internet.

Parental controls - software and/or online features that enable parents to monitor, track and filter the content to which their children have access.

Password - a secret word or other alphanumeric combination to control user access to a computer program, Web site or other area of the Internet. Parents may find using passwords vital in their efforts to monitor access their children have to online content.

Peripherals - other pieces of hardware connected to your computer, such as the keyboard, modem, etc.

Plug-in - a software program that works with Internet Web browsers to play audio and video.

Posting – The “uploading” of a message from the user’s computer screen to a discussion group or other public message area on the Internet. The message itself is called a “post.”

Search directory – similar to search engines, this is a software application that groups Internet Web sites by categories for easy search by users. Users enter “keywords” to direct the application to list Web sites containing the desired information.

Search engine - a software application that allows users of the Internet to “search” or locate information available among the millions of Internet Web pages. By typing in “keywords,” users can search for Web sites that contain the information desired.

Server - a large capacity computer or group of computers that stores information and/or software programs and makes them available to users through the Internet.

Server-based filter - filtering software at the server level which blocks out certain Web sites programmed by the server operator.

Software - A computer program that gives your computer operating system directions to perform a certain task or group of tasks. Computer programmers write computer code into the software programs to perform these tasks.

Spam - inappropriately unsolicited “junk” e-mail or other messages (and postings) from hackers, commercial advertisers, or adult Web site operators. Many times spam is sent to large blocks of e-mail addresses or through other online message systems.

Spider - A software program that “crawls” through the Internet, searching through millions of Internet Web pages and Web sites and indexing information in a database. Most search engines and search directories would use a “spider” to help users track down information on the Internet.

Transmission Control Protocol / Internet Protocol (TCP/IP) - A computer “language” that allows for transmission of information across the Internet.

Upload - Copying or transmitting data and other information from your computer to another computer or server.

Uniform Resource Locator (URL) - The Internet’s designated address of a Web site. Each Internet Web site is assigned a URL in order for a user to access the site. The URL may contain a domain name or other alphanumeric combinations.

UseNet - “newsgroups” - a collection of thousands of discussion groups focusing on various special interests. Users “post” their messages, which are then sent to a public “bulletin board,” which can be accessed by anyone visiting the discussion.

Virus - programming code that can be attached to computer files that will damage or destroy other vital computer files and information. Many viruses are transferred during downloads of application files from the Internet that may be “infected” with the virus code.

Web (World Wide Web) - a part of the Internet that features information delivered publicly through text and graphical design. Web servers host the different Web pages and Web sites, which may feature not only text, but pictures, graphics, animation and sound. Users must have a Web browser to access the graphical information.

Web-based chat - different than IRC, this live chat originates from a specific Internet Web site.

Web-based e-mail and Instant Messaging - e-mail and Instant Messaging services offered by a Web site and not directly from the Internet Service Provider, or independent software. This type of e-mail and Instant Messaging can be accessed from any computer using a Web browser.

Webmaster - the designer and administrator responsible for the creation, management and updates of an Internet Web site.

GOOD LUCK!!

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