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Children Online: A Guide to Children and Parents

On the occasion of Safer Internet Day [ISOC India Chennai](#) initiates work on the task of working with Children, Parents, Schools and Colleges in the region to work on Online Safety strategies to make the Internet.

There is a remarkable Digital Divide among this generation of children in the Indian context. Some are wired. They chat, email, blog, podcast ... Others are unconnected but would soon be on the Internet and become sort of wired.

Wired Kids are several generations apart from their parents. They have a world of their own online, they explore the ocean of knowledge on the Internet, they interact and learn and they build their own online networks, There is a flip side. Children have a tendency to take risks as they are explorers in pursuit of adventures. On top of this inherent nature, the anonymity of the Internet encourages them to take greater risks.

There is Discovery and Encyclopedia Britannica on the Internet and there are also dangerous places online where children get exposed to the wrong kind of people, pornography, and sometimes even come across lurking predators. Just as parts of a city are dangerous, a part of the Internet is dangerous. The child has to go online with definite caution, stick to child-friendly 'places', have different levels of cautions with respect to different kinds of Internet activity, namely Browsing, Messaging, Blogging and Social Networking.

What Are Signs That Your Child Might Be At Risk On-line?

The [Federal Bureau of investigations](#) of the US Government lists the following as signs that your child might be at risk online.

- *Your child spends large amounts of time on-line, especially at night or when no one is watching.*

- *You find pornography on your child's computer.*
- *Your child receives phone calls from men you don't know or is making calls, sometimes long distance, to numbers you don't recognize.*
- *Your child receives mail, gifts, or packages from someone you don't know.*
- *Your child turns the computer monitor off or quickly changes the screen on the monitor when you come into the room.*
- *Your child becomes withdrawn from the family.*
- *Your child is using an on-line account belonging to someone else.*

There are signs that your child is getting into serious trouble. A large number of kids get into trouble with the wrong kind of people they meet online or even with internet bullies and predators. Parents or Teachers need not wait until they see these signs but instead orient them right from the start.

“children can get into trouble when they wander around after school. Wandering aimlessly online isn't any different. Parents needed to know their children are safe” says Parry Aftab's Wiredkids.org The site features a [Parenting Online](#) guide Parents sit with their children and agree on Rules for Safe Surfing and it is a good idea for parents and children to together sign an [Internet Agreement](#)

The following is from Wired Kids' [Guide to Parents](#)

Online Safety Guide to Parents

- 1. Personal information stays personal. While this is an important rule for children it's also an important rule for parents. Giving information on your family and your children to the wrong person could be dangerous.*
- 2. Make sure your child doesn't spend all of his or her time on the computer.*
- 3. People, not computers, should be their best friends and companions.*
- 4. Keep the computer in a family room, kitchen or living room, not in your child's bedroom. This way parents can monitor what is happening when the child is online. Knowing you are watching, kids are less likely to put themselves in risky situations and you can safely oversee what's going on.*
- 5. Learn enough about computers so you can enjoy them together with your kids.*
- 6. Watch your children when they're online and see where they go.*
- 7. Make sure that your children feel comfortable coming to you with questions. This should apply to all situations including the computer. If your children feel they can trust you they are more likely to come to you with tough problems and questions.*

8. *Keep kids out of chat rooms or IRS unless they are monitored.*
9. *Encourage discussions between you and your child about what they enjoy online. This way you can direct your children to safe sites that fit in with their interests and it helps our children like we want an active role in their lives.*
10. *Discuss these rules, get your children to agree to adhere to them, and post them near the computer as a reminder.*
11. *Help them find a balance between computing and other activities.*
12. *Remember to monitor their compliance with these rules, especially when it comes to the amount of time your children spend on the computer.*
13. *Get to know their "online friends" just as you get to know all of their other friends.*
14. *Warn them that people may not be what they seem to be. I can say I'm a 12 year old boy named Billy but I'm not. The Internet provides a cover for people to put on whatever persona's they desire. Predators often pose as children to gain our children's trust.*

Passwords

Don't give out your passwords or store them where they can be found: remember that those who control the passwords control the world. Find a password you can remember easily, but one that's not so obvious that your children can figure it out. Also, change your password frequently.

Protecting your children when they're not home

Make sure you and the parents of your children's friends agree about monitoring the children's activities online, and that you use similar tools to enforce your choices. If not, circumventing your parental controls is as simple as your children walking next door and computing at a friend's house.

Credit Cards

Don't store your credit card information on your computer. It creates too much of a temptation for computer-savvy kids and their friends.

Good things about the Internet

While being so cautious it is important not to become unduly wary of the Internet and not to make the children paranoid. The safety concerns are real, but there is so much good about the Internet and it is a ocean of knowledge and connects your

children to the world. Internet makes it possible for your child to get a world education irrespective of the school you have chosen for your child.

In the developed world, Children get connected at a very young age and is beginning to happen in India as well in homes where the parents have a computer. Internet makes the same resources available to a child in an Indian village as available to a child in USA or Europe and we are just beginning to harness the wealth of the Internet.

ISOC India Chennai is headed by Sivasubramanian Muthusamy, CEO of Turiya takes up the task of Online Safety for Children, mooted by Syed Nazir Razik of Proto.in The initial task group includes Chandramohan, an entrepreneur and CEO of Bharath Planet, Sarto Rajendran, who is a HR consultant and CEO of Guardian Management Services, Kalyaan Kumar Gogineni, CEO of Quadsgroup and Kiruba Shankar, CEO of Business Blogging Pvt Ltd. The team can be reached at the email address isocindiachennai@gmail.com

Resources

<http://www.fbi.gov/publications/pguide/pguidee.htm>

<http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/index.cfm>

<http://www.wiredkids.org/index.html>

<http://www.wiredsafety.org/parent.html>

And Sign this: <http://wiredkids.org/parents/parentingonline/agreement.html>

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