

CYBER-SPACE WATCH

Everyone needs to pay attention to uses and abuses of the internet. What you write and the pictures you post can be forwarded and used against you in many different ways:

Damaging your reputation,

Compromising your employment,

Jeopardizing your college applications,

Involving you in accusations of bullying or harassment,

AND even leading to child pornography charges, if sexting pictures of under-age people.

The technology is changing faster than people can grasp all the possible outcomes, until serious damage occurs.

TALK ABOUT SAFETY FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION GUIDELINES

The FTC suggests these tips for socializing safely online:

* Consider restricting access to your page to a select group of people, for example, your friends from school, your club, your team, your community groups, or your family.

* Be cautious about posting information that could be used to identify you or locate you offline. In addition to full name, address, and phone number, this could include the name of your school, sports team, clubs, and where you work or hang out.

* Make sure your screen name doesn't say too much about you. Don't use your name, your age, or your hometown. Even if you think your screen name makes you anonymous, it doesn't take a genius to combine clues to figure out who you are and where you can be found.

* Post only information that you are comfortable with others seeing and knowing about you. Many people can see your page, including your parents, your teachers, the police, the college you might want to apply to next year, or the job you might want to apply for in five years.

* Remember that once you post information online, you can't take it back. Even if you delete the information from a site, older versions exist on other people's computers.

* Consider not posting your photo. It can be altered and broadcast in ways you may not be happy about. If you do post one, ask yourself whether its one your mom would display in the living room.

* Flirting with strangers online could have serious consequences. Because some people lie about who they really are, you never really know who you're dealing with. Be wary if a new online friend wants to meet you in person. If you feel threatened by someone or uncomfortable because of something online, tell an adult you trust and report it to the police and the social networking site. You could end up preventing someone else from becoming a victim.

For more information on internet statistics, information and safety:

www.netsmartz.org

www.WiredSafety.org

www.TheAntiDrug.com

www.ftc.gov

www.safeteens.com

www.WiredTeens.org