

Kids and Technology: Tips for Parents in a High-Tech World

Although children may not want to admit it, the school year is here. Parents know that back to school means a packed planner filled with everything from recitals to parent-teacher conferences. As time gets stretched, parents and children may talk less and fall back on timesavers, like notes or text messages.



But when it comes to your child's safety in the virtual world, parents should not rely on one strategy alone. According to a study published in the *Journal of Adolescent Health*, children say they know how to get around home and school filters to access MySpace, e-mail or instant messaging programs. Children also admit that they will access blocked sites from friends' computers who do not have limits on their Internet access.

Experts recommend parents use multiple strategies to keep kids safe in the virtual world. "Unfortunately, prohibiting access to technology or sole reliance upon blocking or filtering software are often not enough to prevent electronic aggression," says Marci Hertz, a health scientist at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). "Kids are savvy and can get around filters and blocking software. Just like putting a seatbelt on before starting the car, there are some fundamental strategies parents should observe to make sure use of electronic technology is a safe experience."

A new CDC resource for educators and parents offers the following strategies:

- 1. Talk to your child.** Parents ask their children where they are going and who they are going with whenever they leave the house. They should take the same approach when their children go on the Internet—where are they going and who are they with?
- 2. Develop rules.** Together with your child, develop rules about acceptable and safe behaviors for all electronic media.
- 3. Explore the Internet.** Visit the websites your child frequents, and assess the pros and cons. Most websites and on-line activities are beneficial. They help young people learn new information and interact with people who have similar interests.
- 4. Talk with others.** Talk to other parents about how they have discussed technology use with their children.
- 5. Connect with the school.** Parents are encouraged to work with their child's school and school district to develop a class for parents that educates about school policies on electronic aggression and resources available to parents.
- 6. Educate yourself.** Stay informed about the new devices and websites your child is using. Continually talk with your child and explore the technology yourself.

For more tips, visit

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/dvp/YVP/default.htm>