

“INTERNET SAFETY”

Did you know that there are more than one billion internet users worldwide? The value of the internet as a resource cannot be questioned, however when taking advantage of its benefits we also need to be mindful of its dangers.

When discussing online safety, the first consideration is our children. The convenience of the internet unfortunately is available not only to those with harmless intentions. Just as you are cautious about who your children and grandchildren meet with in the real world, you must take some basic security measures about who they meet online.

Online chat rooms can be a dangerous place, and you should be aware of who your child is chatting to. Opportunities for exploitation are limited if the computer is visible by all members of the family so try to avoid having computers in children’s bedrooms where they are out of sight. Make sure your children know not to send pictures or profiles of themselves to strangers, and perhaps spend time exploring the internet with your child, letting them teach you about their favourite websites.

If anyone in your household receives child pornography or if your child is sexually solicited online, make sure you contact police immediately on 000.

What should I tell my child?

If your child uses chat rooms, there are a few basic tips you can give them to help make sure they are using the internet safely. For example, make sure they know that if someone posts offensive pictures or says something rude or frightening, they shouldn’t respond and should leave the chat room straight away and tell you, a teacher or another trusted adult what happened. Remind them that “stranger danger” applies to online strangers too, and they shouldn’t give out personal information to someone they don’t know, whether it’s online or in the real world.

The internet is a resource which can be a great educational aid to children, and harmless contact with friends through chat rooms is becoming a normal way for young people to socialize. However, we do need to keep in mind it is a resource which is equally available to those who wish to prey on our children, and we do need to take some simple safety precautions. More information about safely enjoying the internet is available from the Australian Internet Safety Advisory Board at www.netalert.net.au or free call 1800 880 176.

SOURCE: ACT Policing