Internet Safety: Guidelines for Parents

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Inside This Issue

What is Cyber Bullying?

Cyber bullying is a new form of harassment that occurs in the online environment. In all cases, cyber bullying occurs between children. When adults get involved it is no longer considered to be cyber bullying. There are two ways that cyber bullying occurs: direct attacks and cyber bullying by proxy. Direct attacks are sent via message to the victim. Cyber bullying by proxy involves using others to help bully a victim. Either way the same effect occurs, children are tormented by another person's actions in the online environment.

Each cyber bully has their own unique method of bullying because a child's imagination is endless. For example, one cyber bully may post mean comments on their victim's Facebook page; whereas, another bully might make ads that offer the victim up for sex. Cyber bullying is very dangerous because sometimes a victim of cyber bullying can easily become a bully themselves after being targeted. Also, cyber bullying has been known to result in extreme acts, such as violence and suicide.

As a result, parents need to get involved and talk to their children about the people that they meet online. When talking to their children, parents need to make sure that children understand the importance of respecting others while online. Children should be educated on what cyber bullying is and how they can stop it if they encounter it. Also, parents should make sure their child knows that they can always talk to them if they are being bullied.

Are You Secure from Cyber Attacks?

In today's technologically dependent society, it is important for you and your family to pay close attention to how much personal information is stored on your computer. For example, think about all the times that you or a family member has done one of the following: entered a password, used a security code, entered a credit card number online, or received an email on your family's computer. Unfortunately, each one of these actions makes you and your family susceptible to a wide variety of cyber attacks if not done securely. Therefore, it is important to know how cyber attacks occur and know how to protect yourself and your family.

Cyber attacks can come in the form of another person or as a malicious code. A hacker is an example of a person that manipulates a computer system for their own gain. Some hackers can spread malicious code or even worse, they can alter personal information. Malicious code can be represented in three distinct ways that are dangerous to a family's computer: viruses, worms, and Trojans. Viruses require a user to perform an action, such as opening an infected email. Worms derive from software flaws and they can spread without a user knowing. Lastly, Trojans are software programs that are not what they claim to be, such as, secure file transfer software that really sends personal information to a remote hacker. Understanding the different types of cyber threats is the first step to becoming more cyber secure.

The best way to protect your computer from cyber attackers is to make sure that you have computer security options enabled. Make sure that your computer has a powerful firewall, current antivirus software, or any other security solution that can block malicious attacks that are targeting your computer system. You can also install filtering software on your computer. Filtering software blocks websites so that users can not go to certain websites that could possibly harm their computer. Filters are beneficial for parents because they can limit the sites that children can visit and lessen the probability of children coming in contact with cyber attackers.

Top Five Internet Safety Tips for Parents

1. Talk with your child on a regular basis about what they like to do online and who they talk to online.
2. Use parental controls to help you filter out harmful content, monitor the sites your child visits and find out what they do online.
3. If your child needs a username and password to access one of their favorite websites, help them develop ones that do not reveal personal information.
4. Make sure that your child's computer is located in a central location and not in your child's room.
5. Make sure that your child knows that they are never to give out their personal information.

We're here to spread the news on online safety, privacy and security.

Online Resources for Parents

Internet Safety Tips

http://criminaljustice.state.ny.us/missing/i_safety/guidelines4parents.htm

http://www.isafe.org/

Computer security

http://www.us-cert.gov/cas/tips/ST04-001.html

Cyber bullying

http://www.stopcyberbullying.org/index2.html

Kid Friendly Search Engines

http://www.yahooligans.com/

http://www.awesomelibrary.org/

http://www.askforkids.com/

http://www.kidsclick.com/

Phishing

http://www.cyberangels.org/newsletter/phishing_june08.htm

I Think I Can…I Think I Can…Which Search Engine is the Best for Your Kids?

Every search engine boasts the ability to find information on the Internet. Unfortunately, not all search engines come back with appropriate results for children. This is due to the fact that the majority of search engines get their listings by crawling through the web and grabbing every website with similar keywords. By crawling through the web it is easy for inappropriate material to appear as search results.

One way to solve this problem would be to use filtering software to ensure that children cannot access sites that have pornographic or inappropriate material. Some parents like filtering software because they can determine what content is allowed on their computer. Unfortunately though, not every family can afford filtering software.

So, an easy way to fix this problem without having to spend money would be to research search engines that are appropriate for children. When researching, parents will find that the kid friendly search engines get their listings without crawling through the web. In fact, kid friendly search engines are reviewed and categorized by people that are concerned with Internet safety for children. These search engines have to be approved before they can be identified as kid friendly.

Some examples of kid friendly search engines are:

Yahooligans

Awesome Library

Ask Jeeves

Kidsclick

KidsClick!
web search for kids by librarians

Phishing for New Victims

Phishing is a fraudulent act that is completed by a con artist in the online environment. Phishing scams allow the con artist to gain access to a person's confidential information, such as credit card information, social security number, or banking information.

As a parent, there are a few things that you can do to protect yourself and your children from becoming the next phishing victim. Often phishing scams are conducted via email or by making a copycat website. For example, an email that says you need to email your social security number so that you can access the internet or a website that resembles Amazon.com.

To avoid a phishing scam, it is important to make sure that your child knows that exchanging personal information over the Internet is dangerous. Children should not make purchases online without the assistance from their parents. Children should also be educated about how people can phish for their information. Parents should make sure that children know that they should not open emails from people they do not know.

How to Report a Scam

If you or your children are the victim of a phishing scam, there are some actions that you can take. For example, if your child goes to a copycat Amazon website to order a cd, you can immediately contact your banking institution to let them know that you believe you are involved in a phishing scam. They can monitor your account or close your account so that fraudulent charges do not occur. Also, it is helpful to notify the contact people at the website that you thought you were using, so that they can try and prevent this from occurring again.

Also, if you want to, you can report the attack to the Federal Trade Commission. By doing this you can possibly save someone else from a similar fate.