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Parenting the Internet Generation

7 Potential Threats and 7 Habits for Internet Safety



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93% of boys and 62% of girls have been exposed to Internet pornography before the age of 18.

You may be thinking, "That's not my child!" Unfortunately, many of the precautions parents put in place aren't enough to block all exposure to pornography. Even if you're protecting your child, the statistics show that their friends are being exposed to inappropriate content online. This book will walk you through common Internet dangers and give you tips and tools to protect your children online.

Find more stats on teens and online pornography on page 6.

Foreword

I live in two worlds.

In one, I direct about 800 technology staff who support hundreds of critical systems in Michigan Government. We manage data centers, fix PCs and enable network access for over 50,000 state employees. Over the years, I've seen the best and worst of what the Internet brings us.

In the other world, I am a husband and father. Knowing what I know about the Internet from one world impacts how I raise my kids in the other.

As the old proverb says, "Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it" (Proverbs 22:6, NIV). As Christian parents with four children aged 5 to 19, my wife and I take this proverb very seriously. Our hearts' desire is to pass on our values to our kids. We pray that our children live out these values as they go out into the world—and that includes the online world.

But how can each member of our family be truly "safe" online? Many parents are looking for ways to guide and protect their kids in this Information Age. We want our children to be well educated and cyber-savvy, but there seem to be unending online dangers and digital distractions.

We constantly ask: What's appropriate and what's inappropriate in cyberspace? Who are our children's friends on Facebook? Where are they going inside virtual worlds? What are they really doing on the Net? How can we recover and learn

from the mistakes that are made? What good activities should we encourage online?

Parents must go beyond simplistic answers to these important questions. We need strategies to apply timeless parenting objectives that can stand up to the increasing virtual storms. We need to train ourselves and our children how to "surf our values."

So much is at stake. We are engaged in a battle for the hearts and minds of the next generation. While this is a hard fight in the 21st century, parents have always struggled with this great responsibility.

Without a doubt, technology is changing rapidly, and living with around-the-clock Internet access brings new opportunities and challenges. So what steps can parents take to help their kids appropriately engage the World Wide Web and social media? Reading and applying this booklet is certainly a good start.

You can also explore NetSafetyResources.com, an online resource helping Christians translate their offline values to an online world.

My prayer for your family is that you will safely navigate the brave new web and maintain virtual integrity—wherever you go and whatever you do online.

Dan Lohrmann

Michigan Chief Technology Officer & Author, *Virtual Integrity: Faithfully Navigating the Brave New Web*

What You Need to Know About... Cyberbullying

Bullies aren't found just on the playground anymore. They can also be found online. "Cyberbullying" is any targeted threat of offensive behavior done over the Internet.

Parents may be aware of the issue of cyberbullying because of well-publicized cases where teens became so distraught over certain incidents they fell into depression and suicide. While these tragic stories are not the norm, they do reflect the serious emotional damage and long-term impact cyberbullying can have. Young kids or teens that are targeted can turn their emotional pain inward, especially when they do not have positive coping skills.

There are many examples of cyberbullying. For instance, someone might instant message or e-mail someone else in a way that is hurtful. Someone might start a rumor about someone else online. Some have even created whole websites dedicated to slandering someone else. Some may pretend to be another person online. Some might try hacking into someone else's e-mail or online profile on MySpace or Facebook. Some put up incriminating or embarrassing photos of someone else online for the whole world to see.



Fast Facts¹:

- » 9% of online youth report being targets of harassment.
- » 32% of targeted youth report harassment three or more times within a year.
- » Boys and girls are equally likely to be harassers.
- » 25% of targets report aggressive offline contact (i.e. telephone calls, harasser coming to home, sending gifts, etc.).
- » 66% of targets report the incident to other people.

What you can do:

- » If you are concerned whether your child has been a target, look for emotional and behavioral warning signs. Is your kid spending dramatically more time or less time online than usual? Does your kid seem depressed or withdrawn? Start by talking to your kids and keeping the lines of communication open.
- » Go to google.com and type your children's names in the search bar to see what might come up. Make sure you also search for any screen names they might use on Instant Messenger, their e-mail addresses, nicknames, mobile numbers, or your home address. Remember to put quotes around your search. This will

narrow Google's search to exactly what you want.

- » Model your values for your kids so they know how to react when being bullied (online or off).
- » Teach your kids to ignore the bully and tell you immediately. Sometimes this will stop the bullying altogether. Teach them to log off when the person is targeting them. Bullies are often just trying to get a rise out of someone.
- » See to it that your kids change their passwords if they suspect someone has hacked into their social networking profiles.
- » Show your kids how to block the bully from contacting them online. Most instant message programs or social networking sites have some sort of security or privacy feature that allows you to do this.
- » If the harassment is in violation of an Internet policy or the law, report the incident to those who run the website.
- » Teach your kids the value of standing up for those who are being bullied online. Preventing cyberbullying is everyone's job.

1. Michele L. Ybarra, Kimberly J. Mitchell, Janis Wolak, and David Finkelhor, "Examining Characteristics and Associated Distress Related to Internet Harassment: Findings From the Second Youth Internet Safety Survey," <http://www.unh.edu/ccrc/pdf/CV141.pdf>,

Cyberbullying: Supervision required

Teens, even yours, can be tempted to cyberbully someone for reasons like revenge or attention. They need parental help and guidance whether they are the bully or the victim.

As with other online dangers, the tools used to bully in cyberspace are ever-changing and teens catch on quickly. So like other online issues, receiving a Covenant Eyes Accountability Report (see page 25) about how your kids use the Internet may help you know when your child is the victim or a bully.

Use reports to visit the sites your child sees. Regularly view their social networking pages on sites like Facebook and Myspace. Kids often take online quizzes on social networking sites that ask personal questions about themselves or others.

Sometimes kids open themselves to cyberbullying for the sake of attention. Sites like Formspring.me allow people to invite others to ask them questions. Often the questions are cruel, sexualized and degrading. Social media sites like Formspring are a mystery to many parents but middle school and high schools students are well-acquainted.

Here are a few websites that monitor trends and issues regarding cyberbullying:

- » Stop Bullying Now! - stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov
- » Wired Safety - wiredsafety.org
- » Cyberbullying Research Center - cyberbullying.us

What You Need to Know About... Gaming

The world of video games is rapidly changing. Improvements in graphical quality bring a sense of realism to the screen. Additionally, when we want to play a game on our home computer or console (such as the Wii, Xbox 360, or PlayStation 3) we are not limited to playing with merely those in the room with us. Because of the Internet we can play with dozens or (depending on the game) hundreds of players at the same time.

Parents need to be aware of the potential harms that can happen in the gaming world.

First there is the content of games themselves. Many of today's games are filled with foul language, violence, and sexual content. Many games' objectives include theft, stalking, and murder. Some games include sensual dialog, nudity, and the ability for characters to act out sexual fantasies. "Adult games" can be easily accessed online.

Second, there is the potential for harmful interactions with others. Online multiplayer games are ideal places for predators to connect with kids and begin building shared experiences with them. Predators can easily access information about a child's gaming history in order to build camaraderie. Webcams enable people to chat "face to face." Headsets enable voice to voice communication (and because of voice masking technology, some adult predators can be made to sound just like teenagers).

What you can do:

- » Understand that a game console should be treated as another computer. Many game consoles can access the Internet and perform the same functions that computers do. Know your system. Know what sort of parental controls or family settings are available for it. Read your user manual or visit the company's website to find out how you can limit which games are played and when the console is used.
- » Read game ratings and understand what they mean. For instance, you may have a teenager that wants a game rated T for Teen, but bear in mind these games may contain violence, suggestive themes, crude humor, simulated gambling, and/or infrequent use of strong language. Visit the Entertainment Software Rating Board (esrb.org) to find out more.



- » Know when to limit gaming features. For example, we recommend that webcams be used only under direct parent supervision.
- » Help your child generate an appropriate screen name (called a gamertag) when gaming. Gamertags should not incorporate your child's real name, nor should they insinuate profanity, sexual topics, hate speech, or unlawful activities.
- » Put the game console in a public space in the home, not a private area or child's bedroom.
- » Set time limits.
- » Discourage downloading free games from the Internet. Often these can come with harmful viruses that will damage your computer or game system.
- » See more information in this booklet about cyberbullies and predators.

1. Kris Graft, "NPD: 82% of U.S. Children are Gamers, as Older Teens Game Less." *Gamasutra*, December 3, 2009. http://www.gamasutra.com/view/news/26363/NPD_82_Of_US_Children_Are_Gamers_As_Older_Teens_Game_Less.php (accessed August 5, 2010).
2. Ibid.
3. A. Lenhart, J. Kahn, E. Middaugh, et al., "Teens, Video Games, and Civics: Teens' Gaming Experiences are Diverse and Include Significant Social Interaction and Civic Engagement." Pew Internet and American Life Project (Washington, D.C., 2008).
4. Carrie Heeter, R. Egidio, P. Mishra, Brian Winn, and Jill Winn, "Alien Games: Do Girls Prefer Games Designed by Girls?" *Games and Culture* 4 (2008): 74-100.
5. Chris Morris, "Best Selling Video Games (So Far)," *CNBC.com*, June 10, 2010. http://www.cnbc.com/id/37616179/The_Best_Selling_Video_Games_of_2010 (Accessed September 3, 2010).

Top 6 Best-Selling Video Games

January - June, 2010⁵

While there are many factors to consider in determining the appropriateness of a video game for your kids, the ESRB ratings and multiplayer modes are a good start. Here's a list of the top-selling video games from January to June, 2010. Which ones do your kids or their friends play? Are they playing ones that you would consider inappropriate?

Game	ESRB Rating	Multiplayer?
New Super Mario Bros. for Wii	Everyone	Yes
Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2	Mature	Yes (Online)
Battlefield: Bad Company 2	Mature	Yes (Online)
Final Fantasy XIII	Teen	No
Wii Fit Plus	Everyone	No
God of War III	Mature	No

Fast Facts:

- » 82% of children say they are "current gamers."¹
- » 51% of kid gamers play online games and "are more inclined to be male, ages 9-14."²
- » 47% of teens play online games with people they know offline.³
- » Middle school boys overwhelmingly pick games that involve fighting as their favorite. Girls overwhelmingly rank fighting games as their least favorite.⁴

TEENS AND PORN: 10 STATS YOU NEED TO KNOW



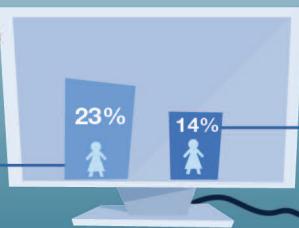
93% of boys and 62% of girls
are exposed to Internet porn before the age of 18.



70% of boys have spent more than **30** consecutive minutes looking at online porn on at least one occasion.

35% of boys have done this on more than ten occasions.

23% of girls have spent more than **30** minutes looking at online porn on at least one occasion.



14% have done this on more than one occasion.



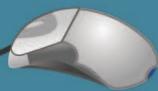
83% of boys and **57%** of girls have seen **group sex** on the Internet.



69% of boys and **55%** of girls have seen porn showing **same-sex intercourse**.



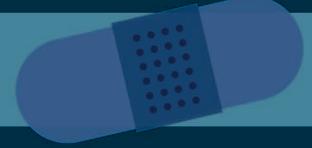
39% of boys and **23%** of girls have seen online sex acts involving **bondage**.



32% of boys and **18%** of girls have viewed **bestiality** on the Internet.



18% of boys and **10%** of girls have seen **rape or sexual violence** online.



15% of boys and **9%** of girls have seen **child pornography**.



Only 3% of college males and 17% of females have never seen Internet pornography.

What You Need to Know About... Internet Pornography

“Never before in the history of telecommunications media in the United States has so much indecent (and obscene) material been so easily accessible by so many minors in so many American homes with so few restrictions.”
(U.S. Department of Justice)

At the click of a button, literally hundreds of millions of pornographic images and videos are available online, much of which requires no age verification—or even a credit card—to see. Now that the first of the Internet generation are rising into adulthood, the statistics are startling. Over half of today’s male college students and nearly a third of female students report being exposed to pornography *before* their teenage years (by age 12), and 35% of all students say their first exposure was Internet or computer-based.¹

Bear in mind, the sort of pornography accessible online isn’t merely the centerfolds or pin-up girls from a generation ago. Hardcore pornography is only a few clicks away. Moreover, because a child’s brain is still in critical stages of development even through the teen years, more and more psychiatrists are concerned about how early exposure to sexual media hinders healthy sexual development.²

In general, today’s young adults who have grown up with the Internet are more tolerant of pornography. About two-thirds of young men and half of young women surveyed say viewing pornography is acceptable.³ Several studies have shown there is a close association between frequent exposures to sexually explicit material and more

permissive attitudes about sex—having multiple sexual partners, “one night stands,” cynicism about the need for affection between sexual partners, casual sexual relations with friends, and mimicking behaviors seen in pornography, etc.⁴ Of course, this doesn’t mean pornography causes these attitudes, but that pornography is a part of an overall societal message that treats sex as a commodity and sees people as objects.



What you can do:

- » Remember: the pornography industry wants to rope you in and will use a number of tactics to do this. Innocent word searches might bring up pornographic sites alongside legitimate search results (this is the most common way youth unintentionally run across porn). Banner ads might show “teaser” images. Often pornographers will purchase Web addresses that are close in name, or are common misspellings, of popular websites (this is

Fast Facts:

- » The adult industry is estimated to be a \$13-billion-a-year business.⁵ Internet pornography brings in its share of about \$3 billion each year.⁶ It is believed the majority of pornographic websites are owned by fewer than 50 companies.⁷
- » About 80-90% of people in America who visit adult websites access only free material.⁸
- » According to a survey published in the *Journal of the American Psychological Association*, 86% of men are likely to click on Internet sex sites if given the opportunity.⁹
- » 79% of unwanted exposure to Internet pornography takes place in the home.¹⁰
- » 40% of unwanted exposure to Internet pornography is the result of an innocent word search.¹¹
- » 64% of male college students and 18% of female students spend time each week online for sexual purposes.¹²

known as “Porn-Napping”). Pornographic junk mail can also appear in your e-mail inbox. Train your child not to click on anything that is unfamiliar to him or her.

- » Safeguard your computer and mobile

devices to limit the possibility of unintentional exposure to pornography. Good blocking software and parental controls can be a great first line of defense against pornographic sites, but don’t rely solely on these. Move all computers to common areas of the home so as to discourage secretive online activities. Be aware of which mobile devices (phones, portable gaming devices, e-readers, etc.) can also access the Internet and take appropriate precautions.

- » Children and teens need to know their parents are safe people with whom to discuss sensitive or embarrassing topics. It is up to parents to create a *culture of accountability* in the home. A healthy, ongoing, age-appropriate dialogue with your children about sexuality not only prepares them for potential exposure to sexual media, it also gives them confidence that they can come to you when they have been exposed to something that confused or excited them. As your kids develop, they need a worldview that helps them to process the inevitable emotions connected to sexual arousal, and they need to be in the habit of discussing these topics with you.
- » Use a good Internet accountability service. Covenant Eyes Accountability monitors Internet use and rates each and every web address accessed for mature content. Parents can receive Internet accountability reports that are custom-made for healthy discussions about how the Internet is used at home.

1. Michael Leahy, *Porn University: What College Students Are Really Saying About Sex on Campus* (Chicago: Northfield Publishing, 2009).
2. Jill C. Manning, Pornography's Impact on Marriage & the Family, testimony to the Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights and Property Rights, Committee on Judiciary, United States Senate, November 10, 2005, <http://www.lightedcandle.org/pornstats/docs/jillmanning.pdf> (accessed June 24, 2010).
3. Jason S. Carroll, Laura M. Padilla-Walker, Larry J. Nelson, Chad D. Olson, Carolyn McNamara Barry, and Stephanie D. Madsen, "Generation XXX: Pornography Acceptance and Use among Emerging Adults," *Journal of Adolescent Research* 23, no. 1, 2008, <http://jar.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/23/1/6> (accessed June 24, 2010).
4. Patrick F. Fagan, Ph.D. *The Effects of Pornography on Individuals, Marriage, Family, and Community* (Washington, D.C.: Family Research Council, n.d.), <http://www.frc.org/pornography-effects> (accessed June 24, 2010).
5. David Cay Johnston, "Indications of a Slowdown in Sex Entertainment Trade," *New York Times*, January 4, 2007, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/01/04/business/media/04porn.html> (accessed June 24, 2010).
6. Jon Mooallem, "A Disciplined Business," *New York Times*, April 29, 2007, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/29/magazine/29kink.t.html> (accessed June 24, 2010).
7. Janet M. LaRue, "Obscenity and the First Amendment," Summit on Pornography, May, 19, 2005, <http://www.cwfa.org/images/content/larue051905.pdf> (accessed June 24, 2010).
8. Kirk Doran, *The Economics of Pornography* (2009), <http://pdfcast.org/pdf/the-economics-of-pornography> (accessed June 24, 2010).
9. Mark Kastleman, *The Drug of the New Millennium* (PowerThink, 2007), 3.
10. Janis Wolak, Kimberly Mitchell, and David Finkelhor, *Online Victimization of Youth: Five Years Later* (Alexandria, VA: National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, 2006), <http://www.unh.edu/ccrc/pdf/CV138.pdf> (accessed June 24, 2010).
11. Ibid.
12. Leahy, *Porn University*.

Anonymizers: What You Need to Know

One of the biggest trends on the Internet is the use of anonymizer websites. Anonymizers have been used for years as a means of bypassing Internet firewalls and blocking software. By simply going to one site, your child could avoid security programs and easily browse pornographic sites at home or at school. Some of these sites have completely innocent names like workstudyplay.com and others have more obvious names such as concealme.com. Once logged into an anonymizer, your child can go wherever they want and it will look like the anonymizer was the only site they accessed. Each day new anonymizers are created.

A good filtering or monitoring program will be able to catch anonymizers. For instance, Covenant Eyes identifies these sites and blocks them. (The Accountability Report also shows when they've been blocked.) While there is currently no perfect solution to the problem of anonymizer sites, Covenant Eyes works to expose the threat anonymizers play to your family's Internet integrity.

What You Need to Know About... Online Predators

“[T]hese are not mostly violence sex crimes, but they are criminal seductions that take advantage of common teenage vulnerabilities. The offenders lure teens after weeks of conversations with them, they play on teens’ desires for romance, adventure, sexual information, understanding, and they lure them to encounters that the teens know are sexual in nature with people who are considerably older than themselves [...] What puts kids in danger is being willing to talk about sex online with strangers or having a pattern of multiple risky activities on the web like going to sex sites and chat rooms, meeting lots of people there, kind of behaving like an Internet daredevil.” - Dr. David Finkelhor, Director of the Crimes against Children Research Center

The Internet is an amazing tool for kids and teens to connect with people all over the world. But not everyone we meet online is safe. Is your child a likely target for an Internet predator?

It is important for us to distinguish between popular impressions and reality. It is often believed that predators pretend to be younger in order to lure children into meeting with them or try tricking them into giving away personal information. However, research indicates otherwise. Most Internet sex crimes against youth are committed by offenders who do *not* hide their age or sexual intentions, though a small minority do.¹

Most predators prey on a teen’s desire to be liked, their desire for romance, or their sexual curiosity. Often a predator “grooms” a child through flattery, sympathy, and by investing time in their online relationship. Predators are expert manipulators, able to foster a relationship of dependence with a teenager.²

Who is a likely target? In one way we can say *all* children online are potential targets. But which kids are the most likely to converse with

a predator online and then meet that predator offline? **The minor often:**

- » is a teenager (rarely a preteen);
- » fully understands they are going to meet an adult when they meet offline;
- » meets with the predator repeatedly over a period of time (in 70% of the cases); and
- » describes him/herself as “in love” with the predator.



While it is very common for children to receive messages from strangers, surveys show most teens ignore or delete these messages, and many of those messages are peer-to-peer, not from adult strangers. At-risk teens are those who are willing to talk about sex online, post seductive pictures (of themselves or others), or express an interest in romance. Girls are not the only ones at risk. Boys who are wrestling through sexual orientation issues, and who are not getting their questions answered in the home or at school, may also look to the Internet community for answers.

It is noteworthy that most sexual predation does not occur with total strangers through Internet communication. Young people have a much greater risk of sexual predation from their schoolmates, community, and family.

What you can do:

- » Don't become an alarmist. The Internet is still full of wonderful opportunities for your children to learn, connect with others, and express themselves. It is common for teens to post information about themselves online (through blogs or social networks like Facebook) at no practical risk to themselves. Becoming an alarmist often drives a wedge between parents and their kids.
- » Discuss what kind of personal information is appropriate for online dialogue. Often talking about one's deepest desires, giving contact information, or being flirtatious makes one an easy target.
- » For both teens and preteens, the tried and true "Don't Talk to Strangers" conversation can be very helpful, and applies to the Internet as much as it does the playground, and will stop most aggressive attempts from online predators. Sending personal information to strangers is to be avoided.
- » Be on the lookout for qualities in your child that put him or her at greater risk. It is natural for a teenager to be curious about sexuality or seek affirmation from others, but when these drives become obsessions it fuels risky behavior. Are your children becoming more secretive about their time on the computer? Are they "emotional" or fanatical about the time they get to spend or don't spend online? Are they becoming withdrawn from friends and family offline? These may be warning signs that your child has been interacting online with others in ways they should not be.
- » Remember, if your child is being groomed, the predator is not a "stranger" to her: she feels as if she knows him very well. Have frank and honest discussions about the type of interactions your child has had with these online "friends." Has the person talked about sex? Has he asked for personal information? Has he asked for pictures of you? Has he sent you gifts? If your child has been contacted by someone you believe to be a predator, contact local law enforcement or the CyberTipline (see www.CyberTipline.com or call 1-800-843-5678).

Fast Facts³:

- » 76% of victims are between 13 and 15 years old.
- » 75% of victims are girls.
- » 99% of offenders are male.
- » 76% of offenders are age 26 or older.
- » 47% of offenders are more than 20 years older than their victims.
- » 76% of first encounters happen in chat rooms.
- » 64% of offenders communicate online with their victims for more than one month.
- » 79% of interactions eventually include telephone conversations.
- » 48% of offenders send pictures online to victims.
- » 47% of offenders send or offer gifts or money (i.e. jewelry, teddy bears, clothing, cell phones, digital cameras, etc.).
- » 5% of offenders represent themselves online as peers of their victims.
- » 83% of victims who met their offender face-to-face willingly went somewhere with them (i.e. riding to the offender's home or to a hotel, mall, movie, or restaurant).

- » In the end, a good relationship with your teen is the best preventative medicine. As one national study concluded, "Adolescent girls who report a high degree of conflict with their parents, boys who report low parental monitoring, and adolescents of both sexes who are troubled with depression and related problems are more likely than other youth to form close online relationships with people they meet online."

1. Janis Wolak, David Finkelhor, and Kimberly Mitchell, "Internet-initiated Sex Crimes Against Minors: Implications for Prevention Based on Findings from a National Study," *Journal of Adolescent Health* 35, no. 5 (2004), http://www.unh.edu/ccrc/NJOV_info_page.htm (accessed June 24, 2010).
2. Enough Is Enough, *Internet Safety 101: Empowering Parents* (September 2008), 51-72.
3. Wolak, Finkelhor, and Mitchell, "Internet-initiated Sex Crimes."

What You Need to Know About... Sexting

You've probably heard of texting—sending short messages to someone via some sort of mobile device. "Sexting" is a slang term for sending erotic or sexually suggestive messages, photos, or video.

The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy and *CosmoGirl.com* commissioned a survey of teens (ages 13-19) and young adults (ages 20-26) to explore the prevalence of sexting. The survey found that 20% of teens overall have sent or posted nude or semi-nude pictures or video of themselves, and 39% have sent or posted sexually suggestive messages.¹

The social pressure to send these sorts of messages comes mostly from a desire to be flirtatious, but the long-term ramifications are very serious.

First, digital messages and images can be easily distributed to those not intended to see them. Some may find that their sensual digital escapades can come back to bite them later. The sexting survey found 25% of teen girls and 33% of teen boys have had nude or semi-nude images—originally meant for someone else—shared with them. What happens when these photos are distributed around the school or to potential employers?

Second, sexting can have legal ramifications. Technically speaking, a nude or seminude image of a minor is considered child pornography. In some cases teens have been charged with a felony for sexting.²

Last, the trend reveals a deeper problem among youth. Sexting is just one part of the overall sex-on-tap culture in which we live. "Put out or get out" is the message of our culture. In their desire to be accepted by someone they like, teens and young adults give into the pressure to become someone else's pornography.



What you can do:

- » Understand the younger generation's concept of "privacy" might be different than your own, and help your teen see the risks involved in online communication. Dr. Judith Paphazy points out that teens and twenty-somethings who grow up on a steady diet of reality television and social networks easily conclude that a loss of privacy is not only normal, but that it offers rewards. Teens who share racy photos don't often see this activity in terms of "giving up their privacy."

Fast Facts:

» 20% of teens have sent or posted nude or seminude pictures or videos of themselves.

» 39% of teens have sent or posted sexually suggestive messages

Of those who have sent or posted sexually suggestive messages:

» 71% of teen girls and 67% of teen boys say they sent/posted this content to a boyfriend/girlfriend.

» 21% of teen girls and 39% of teen boys say they have sent such content to someone they wanted to date or hook up with.

» 66% of teen girls and 60% of teen boys say they did so to be “fun or flirtatious.”

» 40% of teen girls said they sent sexually suggestive messages or images as “a joke.”

» 34% of teen girls say they sent/posted sexually suggestive content to “feel sexy.”

Adolescents feel that their online networks are their “private” space for their friends to congregate.³ With this in mind, educate your teen about why the digital world makes things impossible—or very difficult, at least—to erase.

» Talk to your teen about sexual values. Modern culture makes sex into a commodity. People are no longer whole persons but avatars and pixels on a screen, something to be distributed en masse, bought and sold. Teach your teen to value their sexuality more than this. Take note of their “media diet” and help them to identify the subtle (or not so subtle) messages about sexuality.

1. The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy and CosmoGirl.com, Sex and Tech: Results from a Survey of Teens and Young Adults (n.d.), http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/sextech/PDF/SexTech_Summary.pdf (accessed June 24, 2010).
2. Martha Irvine, “Porn Charges for ‘Sexting’ Stir Debate,” MSNBC.com, February 4, 2009, <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/29017808/> (accessed June 24, 2010).
3. Liz Porter, “Malice in Wonderland,” *The Age*, August 10, 2008. <http://www.theage.com.au/news/technology/malice-in-wonderland/2008/08/09/1218139163632.html?page=fullpage#contentSwap1> (accessed June 24, 2010).

What You Need to Know About... Social Networks

The Internet is no longer a place for just professional website developers to share information. It is a place for everyone to share information, collaborate, design, and create community. One way is through social networking sites like Facebook, Myspace, Twitter, or Bebo.

On these sites you can create personal public profiles as a little corner of the Web to express yourself, your interests, your thoughts, pictures, or videos—anything you want to share. These sites also allow you to create a visible list of people with whom you are connected, often called a “friends list,” a contact list, fans, or followers. These sites allow people to make their profiles and friends lists available for others in their network to see.

Much like the telephone a generation ago, social networks have become an important means of communication within youth culture. Tweens and teens often use sites like Facebook to have conversations, chat, share stories, plan events, or share links to favorite websites. Social networks help people stay connected over long distances and connect to old friends or classmates.

Teens often treat social networks like the clothing they wear: as a means of self-expression. Online they feel free to broadcast their points of view, journal, share their feelings about different topics, and “present” themselves to the world in a certain light. Social networks are places to “reinvent” yourself in an online space.

There are many benefits to social networks, but using them should be tempered with common

sense. It is easy to lie about yourself online. It is difficult to take something back once it has been posted online. It is possible to interact with strangers with bad intentions. It is easy to connect to online communities that are unhealthy.



What you can do:

- » Decide the appropriate age for your child to establish an online profile. Many social networks have a minimum age of 13, but there are no means of age-verification. If you are involved in the formation of your child’s online profile, they will be less likely to treat their time in social networks as a secret activity.
- » If you allow your child to use a social networking site, you should also be a member of that site. Make sure you and your child have added each other as friends so that you know what is being posted to your child’s profile page.

- » If you don't know whether your child has an online profile, do a quick search of your computer's Internet history to see if they have visited a social network recently.
- » Run a search of your child's name on Google.com to see if there are any "digital footprints" you can find. (Make sure to put the name in quotes.) You can also search for any nicknames, e-mail addresses, mobile numbers, or your home address—any personal information they might be likely to use.
- » Better yet, install Covenant Eyes Internet Accountability software, which provides you a report of the websites your kids visit. It will also help keep you informed about the surveys, videos and other items that your child interacts with on social networking sites.
- » Like any place online, social networks can be littered with tempting images. Before you allow your child to create an online profile, see what sort of advertisements are typically posted on the site.
- » Learn about the privacy settings in the social network. Usually by going to the "account settings" you can limit who has access to the online profile. Even with secure privacy settings, teens should remember that their "friends list" still has access to their information.
- » Talk about what is appropriate and inappropriate information to post online. Remind them that messages, photos, and videos can be seen by many people online and can be difficult or impossible

Fast Facts:

- » 71% of teens have a profile on a social network.
- » 47% of teens have an Internet profile that is public and viewable by anyone.
- » 69% of teens with online profiles include their real age.
- » 64% of teens with online profiles include photos or videos of themselves.
- » 58% of teens with online profiles include the city in which they live.¹
- » 4% of youth report receiving an unwanted sexual solicitation through social networks.²

to erase. Teach them the value of having a good "Internet reputation."

1. Cox Communications, *Research Findings, Teen Internet Safety Survey, Wave II*, March 2007, http://multivu.prnewswire.com/player/44526-cox-teen-summit-internet-safety/docs/44526-2007_Cox_Teen_Internet_Safety_Survey_Results.ppt (accessed June 24, 2010).
2. Michele L. Ybarra and Kimberly J. Mitchell, "How Risky are Social Networking Sites? A Comparison of Places Online Where Youth Sexual Solicitation and Harassment Occurs," *Pediatrics* 121, 2 2008, <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/cgi/reprint/121/2/e350> (accessed June 24, 2010).

What You Need to Know About... YouTube

YouTube.com has become one of the most popular sites on the Web. It is the most used video sharing website, and has actually become one of the most popular online *search engines*.¹ People can easily upload short video clips online to share with friends, family, or anyone online. In a given day, 2 billion videos are being watched on YouTube around the globe.² YouTube has an enormous impact on Internet culture.

The main concerns a parent should have about YouTube are (1) children *seeing* inappropriate video content, and (2) children *posting* inappropriate content.

YouTube hosts mostly “user generated” content, meaning anyone can theoretically post any sort of videos they want. In order to monitor this content, YouTube has posted “Community Guidelines” that prohibit sex, nudity, hate speech, harassment, illegal acts, gory content, and other sorts of inappropriate videos. Under each video is a “flag” icon that can be used by anyone with a username and password. If someone feels a particular video does not meet the Community Guidelines, it can be flagged, and in most cases YouTube staff will review the video within an hour.

Even if a video technically meets Community Guidelines, this does not mean all content on YouTube will match with your family’s values. In 2009 the Media Research Center published an official report about the volume of sexually suggestive content on YouTube. They searched

the word “porn” on YouTube and studied the 157 most popular search results. Each of these 157 videos had been viewed more than 1 million times. Two-thirds of these videos advertised themselves as being actual pornography, and many briefly showed clips from porn films, interviewed porn stars, or advertised for porn sites or phone sex lines.³

In addition, users can leave comments under videos which may contain foul or sexually suggestive language.

In 2010 YouTube added the “Safety mode” feature which blocks potentially objectionable material on YouTube, but as with many filters, it is not 100% accurate.



What you can do:

- » Evaluate whether YouTube is appropriate for your children at all. If you feel YouTube presents too high a risk, consider blocking YouTube altogether with the Covenant Eyes Filter or your computer's parental controls. If your child has a mobile device, check to see if it has a separate "YouTube app" and block the use of that app.
- » Use blocking features to selectively limit how much your child can see on YouTube. To use YouTube's "Safety mode" feature, create a YouTube account (look in the top, right-hand corner of YouTube.com and follow the prompts) and then turn the "Safety mode" to the "On" position (found at the bottom of YouTube's home page). Choose to lock the Safety mode for your Internet browser (Safari, Internet Explorer, Firefox, etc.). This will block inappropriate videos on YouTube every time the browser is used on that computer. If you have more than one Internet browser, activate this feature in each one. Remember, this tool is not 100% accurate. In addition, consider using a good Internet filter that can selectively block YouTube content.
- » Remind your children about the importance of not posting information on YouTube they will later regret. Once a video, comment, or personal information is posted, it may be impossible to erase.

Fast Facts⁴:

- » In March 2010, it was measured that 24 hours of video are uploaded to YouTube *every minute*.
- » In October 2009, YouTube announced more than one billion views *per day*.
- » More video is uploaded to YouTube in 60 days than all three major US networks created in 60 years.

1. comScore.com, comScore Releases June 2009 U.S. Search Engine Rankings, July 16, 2009, http://www.comscore.com/Press_Events/Press_Releases/2009/7/comScore_Releases_June_2009_U.S._Search_Engine_Rankings (accessed June 24, 2010).
2. YouTube.com, *Fact Sheet*, http://www.youtube.com/t/fact_sheet (accessed June 24, 2010).
3. Matthew Philbin and Dan Gainor, *BlueTube: Four Reasons to Keep Your Kids Away from YouTube This Summer* (Alexandria, VA: Culture and Media Institute, 2009), <http://www.cultureandmediainstitute.org/specialreports/2009/BlueTube/BlueTube-WebVersion.pdf> (accessed June 24, 2010).
4. Website Monitoring Blog, *YouTube Facts & Figures*, May 17, 2010, <http://www.website-monitoring.com/blog/2010/05/17/youtube-facts-and-figures-history-statistics/> (accessed June 24, 2010).

The Seven Habits of Online Integrity¹

We live in a wired culture. The Internet is changing the way people interact, shop, conduct research, and find entertainment. The whole world lies at our fingertips.

The big question for parents is not simply, “How do I keep my family safe on the Internet?” The big question is rather, “How do I parent my kids well in a cyber-culture?” It’s not merely about reacting to online dangers with a few tips and tricks. It’s about instilling in our kids the values they need to make wise and moral choices in the online world.

In his book *Virtual Integrity*, computer security expert Dan Lohrmann has coined what he calls the “Seven Habits of Online Integrity.” These are meant to be regular practices in your home that establish a basic framework for individuals to “surf their values.” These habits apply to how you parent your kids and how you grow in integrity yourself.

What does it mean to use the Internet with integrity?

Having integrity means being undivided. When we have integrity it means we firmly adhere to the same code of conduct everywhere we go. Integrity is who we are when no one else is looking.

The trouble with having integrity online is the anonymity of the Internet. It is easy to live one way online and another way offline. Much of our surfing is done alone. When we go online we can

be whoever we want, say whatever we want, and do whatever we want and feel somewhat disconnected from the consequences.

As parents our goal is not merely about blocking the “bad stuff” from our children, but instilling in them the importance of living with integrity.

Habit #1: Refresh your values in cyberspace

Online integrity starts by reexamining our offline or “real life” values and beliefs. We must remember what our values are and help our kids to see that they apply to the online world as well.

The big question for parents is not simply, “How do I keep my family safe on the Internet?” The big question is rather, “How do I parent my kids well in cyber-culture?”

What are your values?

What would you label a “good” character quality? Do they include qualities such as compassion, humility, honesty, and generosity? Do they include faithfulness in marriage? What values do you want to guide your children’s decisions?

How do we apply our values online? How do we help our kids to do the same? It starts by refreshing your values as a family.

- » Do you value time with your family and close friends? If so, do you waste

hours online in mindless games and entertainment?

- » Do you believe truthfulness is a virtue? If so, do you portray yourself as someone you're not online?
- » Do you value sexual purity? If so, do you look for pornographic images on the Internet or act flirtatious or suggestive online?
- » Is it important to maintain a good reputation? If so, do you post videos or photos of yourself that could be incriminating later on?
- » Is stealing wrong? If so, do you download material which is protected by copyright laws?

Often the reason software and Internet rules do not work in the home is because this first habit is skipped. Kids need to be instructed about values, buy into them, and own these values for themselves. Rather than merely policing the Internet, parents need to model and teach offline values in the home, showing how they apply to online life.

Habit #2: Pledge personal online integrity

After refreshing our values we need to make an initial commitment to integrity. This is where we draw the line in the sand for ourselves and our families.

This personal pledge doesn't need to be complicated or overly detailed. See the end of this chapter to get some ideas about Internet pledges.

Some families may find it helpful to post their pledge near their computer, but remember it should be understood that this commitment applies not only to what we do at home. It applies to cell phones, computers at school, and where we work as well.

Remember, creating a pledge for Internet use is not just for protecting children: we must also model the same pledge in how we live our lives as parents. While Internet rules in the home may differ for each person based on age and sensitivity, children need to see that their parents also care about their own Internet use.

Modeling our values is a lifetime process.

The most important thing to do for our children is model our values. Children don't just need teaching about the principles that should guide their life; they need to see their parents living out those principles. Children must not only see *that* their parents have values. They must also see *why* their parents have them.

Be very specific with your family about what your values are when it comes to online life. As you're starting this process of educating your children, be specific about the behaviors you want to encourage.

This is not a one-time conversation. Modeling our values is a lifetime process.

Suggested Internet Integrity Pledge (For Tweens and Teens)

- » I will obey my parents and the rules they set for my Internet use.
- » I will treat others online with respect. I will treat others the way I would want to be treated.
- » If I am being harassed or bullied online I will ignore the harasser and tell my parents.
- » If I notice anyone else being harassed or bullied online I will tell my parents.
- » I will not click on tempting or offensive images.
- » I will not search for sexually explicit content.
- » I will be accountable to my parents about where I go and what I see online.
- » I will be careful about who I befriend online and how I share personal information (name, address, phone number, pictures, information about family, etc.). Before I start or update an online profile, I will ask my parents about what is appropriate.
- » I will not meet in person with anyone I've met online.

Suggested Internet Integrity Pledge (Younger Children)

- » I will tell my parents if I see anything on the computer that makes me feel confused, sad, or scared.
- » I will always treat others online the way I want to be treated.
- » I always ask permission to share any information about myself or my family with others online.
- » I will never meet in person with anyone I have met on the Internet.

Habit #3: Seek trusted accountability

Once we've committed to online integrity, it only

makes sense that we set up some system of accountability at home. Accountability means that we share the details of our pledge with our family and then begin monitoring how the Internet is used in the home.

Accountability for Internet use isn't just for kids. It is important for adults as well. When we know we are going to give an account to someone else about our activities, it changes the way we perform. We see firsthand the value of accountability all around us—employee performance reviews in the workplace, financial accountability on Wall Street, governmental accountability to its citizens, and personal accountability for weight loss.

Seek trusted accountability from those who agree with your values and are willing to ask

you how you are doing in your commitment to have integrity online. This may be between you and your spouse. It may be between you and a friend with whom you drink coffee once a week. It may be a group of men or women from your church that has expressed a desire for online integrity. Whatever you do, involve

someone else in your pledge who will always challenge you to the standards you have set.

In our increasingly individualistic culture many see accountability as highly intrusive. If the concept of accountability seems uncomfortable, revisit your desire to surf the Web with integrity and humbly admit you need others to continually raise the bar for you. It is simply human nature to lower our standards and make exceptions. Trusted friends who love us and want the best for us won't let us off the hook.

Unchecked Internet use at home isolates members of the same household from one another, limiting our meaningful interactions with the people we love.

Habit #4: Apply helpful technology

People often start with technology, but we shouldn't miss the first three habits. They are foundational.

Technology is vital when it comes to helping us have a safe experience online. Parents should put some sort of filter or parental controls in place on their home computer. However, the best kind of "filter" is not just software that blocks bad content from coming in—it's software that helps us *enhance* our communication and relationships with our kids.

This is what accountability software is designed to do. Dan Lohrmann writes,

[T]he majority of Americans have never been introduced to accountability software [...] Put simply, this software sends a report of all your Internet activities to your trusted accountability partner(s) to check up and provide metrics on. If this software is used by choice and not force, it can provide a powerful disincentive to viewing unacceptable material and surfing your values.

Parents use accountability software to help monitor where their children go online. Good accountability software will provide easy-to-read reports about what sites were accessed and the nature of those sites. These reports enable parents to have good discussions with their kids about their Internet activities.

Covenant Eyes provides both Accountability and Filtering services. The state-of-the-art filter scans websites for bad content in real-time and blocks that content from being accessed. Accountability reports are custom-made for good accountability conversations.

When it comes to computer threats, we often use technology to help us. Against spam we set up spam blockers. Against viruses we set up anti-virus software. To guard against losing our documents or pictures we create back-up systems. Why not also guard from threats to our integrity or our children's integrity?

Habit #5: Balance online and offline life

Because we live in this Internet age, there is always the risk of spending too much time online in a way that hinders our relationships. Living in our wired culture it is easy to be drawn into time-consuming, compulsive, and unbalanced Internet habits.

Unchecked Internet use at home isolates members of the same household from one another, limiting our meaningful interactions with the people we love. When it comes to having virtual integrity, we need to help our kids practice good time management and find ways to “unplug.”

- » Set parameters for your Internet surfing tasks. Don't get lost in cyberspace. Schedule computer time: this will ensure you don't use all your spare time surfing.
- » If possible, limit your time online to certain times of day. Use technology that limits

the times of day and the amount of time spent online.

- » Close your e-mail and turn off your IM and RSS feeds if you don't need them to be open.
- » When doing Internet searches, have a goal in mind.
- » Keep a running list of interesting links you uncover and return to them later.
- » If you are easily tempted by things like Internet pornography, choose not to go online at vulnerable times (when you are hungry, angry, lonely, or tired). Find someone to hang out with instead.
- » Schedule quality time with the people you love. Choose activities away from the gadgets and devices.
- » Beware of how vacations and holidays can be eaten up by time online. Make plans to do something with others during these times.

Habit #6: Practice humble authenticity

Too often we buy into the lie that science and technology will eventually solve all our moral problems, we continue to engage in immoral activities while waiting for the next round of innovation to somehow help—or even to bring salvation.—Dan Lohrmann

It is important for parents to understand that cyber dangers aren't merely caused by “the bad guys” out there. Often, the biggest threat to a

child's Internet integrity is him/herself. As kids get older, they don't merely need guidelines and rules to help them use the Internet safely. They need to be able to recognize when they are being tempted to push the boundaries, and they must purposefully avoid venturing into the "gray areas."

Pride often precedes problems regarding cyber ethics and Internet dangers. It's when someone says, "I know this behavior can be a problem, but I'm different. I'm not like other people. I won't let this get out of hand." Believing we are the exception to the rule is a form of pride, and it is often where cyber mishaps begin.

As parents we have the responsibility to prepare our kids for the day when the fences will no longer be there—prepare children to have a good moral compass. As we parent our children, we must prepare them to be honest with themselves about the things that are tempting online. Is it spending too much time? Looking

at pornography? Questionable chat conversations? We must also prepare them to know where the "gray areas" are online. Big problems often start small. Small compromises to our values can lead to larger compromises later on.

Habit #7: Become a cyber ambassador for good

The best defense is a good offense. We are all cyber citizens and kids should be equipped to see the tremendous good the Internet can bring. Find creative ways to use the Internet for good. Learn. Connect. Join worthy causes. Take advantage of all the good the Web has to offer. Choose to saturate the Internet with content that promotes your values.

1. Adapted from Dan Lohrmann, *Virtual Integrity: Faithfully Navigating the Brave New Web* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2008)

Covenant Eyes: Changing the Way You Protect Your Family

The Internet has introduced parents to challenges no other generation has encountered and the potential threats can change daily. Regardless of whether your child or teen is a “good kid,” they are likely navigating websites and online activities that you might not know about.

Covenant Eyes helps you gain more insight and control into your child or teen’s online world. Covenant Eyes Filtering and Accountability provides you tools to block potential threats and gain an understanding of how they use the Web.

The **Covenant Eyes Filter service** blocks mature content using age-based sensitivity settings that you may select for each member of your family. You may also create specific lists of websites that should be blocked for individual

members of your household. We empower you to choose the times of day and the amount of time per day that each person in your home may access the Web.

The **Covenant Eyes Accountability service** monitors all websites visited and rates each one for mature content. This information is provided in an easy-to-read report, removing the secrecy of how the Internet is used in your home.

These reports allow you to have specific and informed conversations with your kids about how they use the Internet, helping you discuss the videos, games, images and other items that your kids interact with online. We keep you informed and bring peace of mind. For more information, visit www.CovenantEyes.com.

