

# INTERNET SAFETY STRATEGIES FOR YOUTH

## Before going online...

- Make some rules with your parents/guardians before you go online, like the time of day and length of time you can be online, and sites you are allowed to visit. Don't bend the rules or visit other Web sites without their permission.
- Try to limit your cell phone and Internet use to a reasonable amount of time, and make sure you are keeping a healthy balance between online and in-person activities.
- Keep in mind that no message is completely private, including texts and e-mail. Your school and adult family members may be watching your online activity, and the police can recover all messages—even if you deleted them. If you are using the Internet to embarrass, threaten, harass or hurt others, chances are you will be caught.
- Be aware that many Internet and cell phone service providers have rules about behavior. If you break them, your account—and every account in your home—could be canceled. If you break the law, you may also be reported to the police.

## While online...

- Never share private information about others and never say things that might make them feel unsafe or uncomfortable, even if you mean it as a "joke."
- Don't share personal or private information online—like your full name, school name, home address, phone number and personal photos—in places where strangers or people you don't trust can find them.
- Keep passwords and PINs to yourself—don't even tell your best friend—but never hide this information from your parents/guardians. They'll trust you more if you're open with them, and if a serious problem occurs, they may need this information to help you.
- Don't leave cell phones or other electronics out of sight. Keep them where you can see them at all times.
- Don't talk to strangers online, where it is easier for people to lie about their identity. A friend you meet online may not be the best person to talk to if you are having problems.
- Don't send your picture or personal information to strangers or people you only know

online, and don't arrange to meet them without a parent's/guardian's permission.

- Don't open messages or attachments from people you don't know.

### **If you experience online bullying...**

- Don't respond to bullying or inappropriate messages, but save them as evidence.
- Talk about problems you experience online with an adult that you trust, like a family member, teacher or school counselor.
- Always report online bullying, hate messages, inappropriate sexual activity and physical threats (including possible suicide attempts) to an adult family member, school authorities or the police.
- Block the e-mail addresses and cell phone numbers of people who are sending unwanted messages; change your phone numbers, e-mail addresses, screen names and other online information if necessary.
- For serious or continuing problems, file complaints with e-mail services, Internet Service Providers, Web sites, cell phone companies, etc. They can find the offenders, cancel their service and report them to the police if necessary.
- If you don't feel comfortable reporting problems yourself, ask a friend or adult to do it for you. Keeping the people close to you aware of what's going on will make you feel safe and supported.
- When in doubt about what to do, log off the computer and ask for help from a trusted adult.

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