



While the majority of people use computers for lawful purposes, there is a small minority who use this technology to commit criminal acts. It is important that everyone *TakeAction* to protect themselves from people who would misuse this important new technology.

**The Internet** – a global “network of computers” which is not governed by any entity. Although it contains information on nearly every topic imaginable, there are no limits or checks on the kind of information that is maintained and accessible to Internet users.

**E-mail** – is electronic mail that can be transmitted from one computer to another via the Internet. Documents and pictures can be “attached” to this e-mail and sent to the receiving computer where they can be viewed and/or printed.

**Usenet Groups** – also called News Groups, these are postings on specific topics, where the comments and/or pictures follow one another in a bulletin board style.

**Chat Rooms** – Also called Internet Relay Chat (IRC), these areas are where participants can talk to each other in “real time” with their remarks appearing as they enter them.

**Instant Messaging Services**-this service allows for individuals to communicate with other members of the service in real time text format or via microphones or digital cameras.

---

### ***CHILDREN & THE INTERNET: THE RISKS***

Some of the risks to children include:

- *Exposure to inappropriate material of a sexual or violent nature*
- *Unwanted Sexual Solicitations and Approaches* – while online, a child might provide information or arrange an encounter that could risk his or her safety. Pedophiles have used online contacts to gain a child’s confidence and then arranged a face-to-face meeting. This may start as harmless conversation and progress to danger and risky requests.
- *Harassment* – a child might encounter e-mail, websites or other material that are harassing, demeaning, belligerent, suggestive or threatening.
- Invitation to sexual touching
- Luring for a sexual purpose



---

### ***PROTECTING YOUR CHILDREN***

- Learn about computers. Take a computer course and/or ask your children to teach you how to operate the computer.
- Talk to your children about their use of the computer and discuss the dangers they may encounter online. Create a list of online rules and post them by the computer. (*see below*)
- Keep the computer in a common area of your home, so that children’s activities can be easily monitored.

---

## ***PROTECTING YOUR CHILDREN (continued)***

- Limit time allotted on a computer. Watch to see if your child is withdrawing from friends and family. Excessive computer usage may indicate a problem.
- Accompany your child when they are in chat rooms, or consider blocking out chat entirely. You can also consider routing your child's e-mail into your own account first – so you can screen the e-mail for any undesirable messages.
- Obtain a software-filtering package that can block access to Internet sites or e-mail messages that you deem inappropriate for your children. This software can also log all of your child's activity on the Internet so you can review it later. Remember though, this software is not foolproof and cannot take the place of parental involvement and supervision.
- Find out from your Internet Service Provider whether you have a filtered or unfiltered feed. The filtered feed will not allow access to the majority of sex-related Usenet Groups. However, as a parent you should be aware that this is *not* foolproof, and there are other ways for your child to access this information.
- Watch for the storing of computer files that end with GIF, JPG, MPG, AVI, MOV, BMP, TIF, PCX, DL or GL as these contain photographic or movie images which could contain unsuitable content.

---

## ***A CHILD'S RULES FOR SAFE COMPUTING***

The following are excellent family safety rules for online computing. Encourage your children to acknowledge and follow these rules:

- Children should always ask for their parents' permission before giving out their full name, address, age, sex, telephone number or school name. Children should be made aware that people could pose as someone else while they are online.
- If they come across any information that makes them feel uncomfortable or scared, they should hit the "back" key, log off and tell a trusted adult as soon as possible.
- They should never respond to any obnoxious, sexual or menacing e-mail messages they receive. All electronic harassment and/or abuse should be reported to the company responsible for your Internet access. The police should be notified of all attempts by adults to set up meetings with children, or if you become aware of the transmission, use, or viewing of child pornography.
- Children should never agree to meet in person with someone they've met online unless they have discussed it with their parents first. If they get permission to meet someone, an adult should always accompany them and the meeting should be arranged for a public place.

---

## ***COMPUTER CRIME: WARNING SIGNS***

The following are warning signs that your child *may* be involved in computer-related crime, and not necessarily evidence of a problem:

- Computer addiction. The child withdraws from friends, family and spends all their time on the computer. Computer and modem running late at night, even when unattended. If the computer is showing a series of changing numbers, the computer may be running a hacking program trying to identify calling card "pin" numbers or long distance telephone numbers. If the computer is showing sixteen digit numbers, the computer may be trying to validate credit card numbers.
- Computer related doodling or writing using words such as "Hacking", "Phreaking" or any words with the letters "ph" replacing the letter "f".

---

## ***OTHER INFORMATION***

*If you wish more information or have any questions about Computer & Internet Safety, please contact the Winnipeg Police Service Community Relations Unit at 986-6322.*