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EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE

Staying safe on the Internet

For most of us, the Internet is an essential part of our lives – it's where we chat with friends, download music, play games and look up anything and everything we could ever want to know. It's impossible to imagine living without the Internet, but are you aware of the risks?

► BE AWARE OF THE RISKS

Though the Internet is an integral part of our everyday lives, there are also some risks we take every time we log on. We're not just talking about viruses, phishing and spyware; there are real people out there, of all ages, who go online with the intention of harming young people.

There's no need to panic, but you do need to understand the different dangers and how to protect yourself. Below are some tips for how to stay safe:

► TALK TO SOMEONE YOU TRUST

You can always talk to your parents, or to someone else you trust, about what you experience online. You can help each other get the most out of the Internet whilst making sure you stay safe.

► LIFE STUFF

While the Internet is great for making new friends and sharing interests, it's important not to reveal too much information about yourself. Some people will hide their real identity and try and approach young people for sexual purposes – perhaps sending sexual messages in a chat-room or by Instant Messenger, or by trying to persuade the person to meet in the 'real' world.

Stay in control of your information and actions:

- In social networks there is a privacy setting – use it!
- Don't post your full name, date of birth, address or school.
- Think about what messages and information you post online – if you don't want your parents or teacher to see it or read it then don't post it.
- You can't "unsay" what you say online, so think before you write.
- Use the 'print screen' function to record any content that you don't feel comfortable with, and show it to a parent or another grown-up that you trust. You can also report it – either online at www.virtualglobaltaskforce.com or to the police.
- Never meet a virtual friend without discussing it with an adult or bringing a real friend.
- Never make plans online.

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Don't take anything for granted:

- A friend in real life is a real friend. Is your online friend who you think they are?
- A person needs to have a legitimate reason to be in constant touch with you – if you're not comfortable talking to them, don't reply.
- If something sounds too good to be true, it probably is!
- There is no such thing as a free lunch. If you are receiving something, what are you expected to give in return?

Remember, all this advice applies in the same way to any device connected to the Internet: laptop computer, mobile phone, iPad or tablet, etc.

► TECHIE STUFF

To keep your computer safe from viruses and other technical problems you should use the following as a minimum – and make sure you keep them up to date:

- firewall
- anti-virus software
- OS Update (for security patches and bug fixes)

Other things you can do:

- Install anti-spyware tools and run them regularly.
- If you install file-sharing software, make sure it's done properly.
- If you have a wireless network, make sure it's encrypted.
- Block browser pop ups or try using different browsers.
- Ignore spam – just delete it, or mark it as 'spam' or 'junk' in your email client. Don't try to unsubscribe.
- If you get lots of spam, simply close down your email account and open another. There are lots of free ones available online.
- Open attachments only if they're sent by people you know and trust.
- Keep your passwords secret: never give them to anyone.
- Be alert to phishing. A trusted website or online payment processor will never ask you to confirm sensitive information like passwords or account details.

► IF YOU NEED MORE ADVICE

If you have any questions or if you're worried about something, don't be afraid to talk to a parent, a teacher, or a friend.

Read more about internet safety here:

www.thinkuknow.co.uk
www.virtualglobaltaskforce.com



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