



family guide to  
**Internet Safety**

**a Michigan Family Forum Resource**

Dear Parents, Teachers and Community Leaders:

The Internet is a powerful tool that can open the world to our children. Unfortunately, in the wrong hands, it is also an avenue for some individuals to put our children in harm's way.

For example, one in seven children who use computer chatrooms has been approached over the Internet by pedophiles. And nearly 90 percent of solicitations of youth were made in either chatrooms or through instant messaging.

These startling statistics illustrate the need to educate our youth about how to stay safe online. Michigan Family Forum's Family Guide to Internet Safety is an excellent resource to help you learn more about protecting your children. I am especially pleased that this guide references my office's newest project, the Michigan Cyber Safety Initiative (Michigan CSI).

Michigan CSI proactively combats the problem of Internet predators by educating students, teachers and parents about how to avoid dangers on the Internet. It is offered to all Michigan schools, public and private, as well as the home school community.

Thanks for your interest in safeguarding Michigan's most precious resource, our children.

Sincerely,

Mike Cox  
Attorney General

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This project was conducted by Nate Knapper, a senior at Calvin College. Nate served as principal researcher.

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# LIFE IN THE INTERNET AGE

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Modern American life has been dramatically shaped by the emergence of increasingly advanced computer technologies. The Internet has been a particularly influential innovation, serving as an effective electronic tool for completing everyday tasks in new and efficient ways. Its positive uses are numerous; those with Web access can now accomplish common personal activities like shopping, banking, voting, and researching without leaving their computer screens. Additionally, the Internet gives users the ability to connect with others, making it possible to communicate, share electronic files, and participate in online gaming sessions. Indeed, Internet technology is quickly becoming integrated into nearly every aspect of daily living.

## A Tool for the Next Generation

The efficient and entertaining advantages afforded by the Internet have made it a particularly attractive tool for America's youth. The Pew Internet and American Life Project estimates that 87% of those aged 12-17 are regular Web users, and as a growing number of wireless networks are established in homes, classrooms, libraries, and restaurants across the country, teens' access to the Internet is becoming increasingly unlimited and unsupervised.

## A Web of Potential Dangers

Unrestricted Internet access should be a cause for concern among parents. For years, we have taught our children to avoid obscenity and be wary of strangers on street corners and playgrounds. Today, however, cyberspace has the potential to expose kids to these and other dangers from inside their own homes. For all the advantages it affords, the Internet is permeated with harmful influences, including pornography, violent images, crude humor, gambling, and sexual predators. Thus, in a world where kids must acquire a certain level of computer competence to participate socially, economically and politically, parents must take precautions to ensure a more wholesome online experience for their children.

## The Purpose of this Guide

We at Michigan Family Forum are strongly committed to protecting children. The first half of this Internet Safety Guide provides a topical breakdown of the most common online activities in which today's kids are engaged, informing parents of the risks associated with such activities. The second half offers some practical tips for avoiding the risks detailed in the first half and teaches parents how to report dangers and violations in order to protect their families. The reason for this organizational structure is that several online risks might be addressed by one tip or resource we suggest. For example, the use of filtering software might prevent children from entering a chat room, downloading a file-sharing program, or accessing pornography.



While the tips and resources contained in this guide can be helpful in combating the risks of the Internet, this booklet does not provide the answer to every problem that kids encounter online. Rather, its purpose is to educate parents and encourage them to get involved. As parents become aware of the dangers of the Internet, they can set appropriate boundaries on their children's computer use. Ultimately, parental awareness and involvement will be the most effective deterrents against the dangers of the Web.

So, what are kids doing online today? The following pages provide the answer...



# ONLINE ACTIVITIES AND DANGERS

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## Communication Revolution: *E-mailing, Chatting, Instant Messaging*

One of the great advantages of the Internet is its ability to allow people to communicate electronically. The speed, ease, and convenience of e-mailing, chatting, and instant messaging have made them extremely popular forms of online communication among young people. Despite the benefits, however, there are risks associated with using the Internet as a communication medium.

### The Breakdown

#### *E-mailing*

E-mailing is a relatively well-known online activity which involves composing, sending, and receiving electronic messages across a computer network. The majority of Web-based e-mail services, including [Google Mail \(G-Mail\)](#), [Yahoo Mail](#), and [MSN Hotmail](#), require users to complete a personal profile in order to create an e-mail account.

#### *Chatting*

Similar to but distinct from e-mailing, chatting is electronic communication that takes place in real time, allowing messages to be sent and received instantaneously. It takes place within more open online forums called chat rooms. Much like actual group gatherings, chat rooms are open to multiple individuals (though some chat rooms have moderators that can deny access to unfriendly users), and conversations typically follow an “anything-goes” format.

#### *Instant Messaging*

Instant Messaging (“IMing”) is a variation of chatting that also takes place in real time. It is often viewed as a safer alternative to chat rooms because it is typically a conversation between just two people, and other parties must be invited in order to participate. Popular messaging programs include [AOL Instant Messenger \(AIM\)](#), [Yahoo Instant Messenger](#), and [Google Talk](#).

## The Risks

Parents should be aware of the following dangers their children may encounter while emailing, chatting, and instant messaging:

### *Sexual Exploitation*

Because electronic communication eliminates face-to-face interaction (though this is beginning to change with the growing popularity of webcams – see pages 12-13), children can never be sure with whom they are chatting, making them vulnerable to online sex predators. Such people are particularly prevalent in chat rooms, where they sometimes describe themselves in friendly yet deceptive ways in order to earn the trust of potential victims and set up meetings with them. This is a growing concern, as an increasing number of young people are turning to chat rooms to seek potential sexual partners.



### *Stunted Social Development*

Children who spend excessive amounts of time communicating electronically can fail to learn how to act appropriately in common social situations. In fact, they are at greater risk of developing negative social habits. For instance, because of the strong element of anonymity associated with online chatting, young people can be tempted to stretch the truth in their conversations, thereby forming deceptive tendencies which can damage their relationships with others.

### *Sedentary Lifestyle*

Excessive online communication can replace kids' participation in beneficial physical activities like team sports, bike riding, or fishing. It can also lead to a neglect of important intellectual activities such as homework or reading.

### *Slandering and Bullying*

Unfortunately, e-mailing, chatting, and instant messaging are convenient ways for bullies to harass others online. The most common forms of abuse include sharing private e-mails, spreading slanderous rumors, or posting threatening messages on social networking sites (which are discussed in the next section). The Pew Internet and American Life Project estimates that one-third of teens who frequent the Web fall prey to such "cyberbullying."

## **"Net" Working: *Social Networking or Personal Content Creation Sites***

The communication capabilities afforded by the Internet have transformed the computer into a significant networking tool. Functioning as a cross between a journal, a photo album, and an e-mail account, social networking (SN) websites like [MySpace](#), [Facebook](#), and [Xanga](#) allow users to share messages and pictures with their friends online. Dangers can arise, however, when personal information is viewed by the wrong people.

### **The Breakdown**

#### ***A Sweeping Trend***

Social networking sites have enjoyed a surge of popularity in recent years. According to Nielsen-NetRatings, the Internet's top ten social networking websites collectively grew 47% between 2005 and 2006 and are now used by an estimated 45% of active Web users. The Pew Internet and American Life Project further reports that young people are driving the popularity of these sites, approximating that more than half (55%) of all online American youths aged 12-17 have signed up with a SN site.

Registering with a SN site is a relatively simple process. After entering a valid e-mail address, a user is free to create a profile to share information such as his or her name, photograph, date of birth, likes and dislikes. Facebook requires the e-mail address to be from a high school, college, or company registered with the site, while MySpace and Xanga allow any valid e-mail address to register as long as the user is of a certain age (though there is no way to prevent users from lying about their age). Once registered, a user can interact with "friends" on the site by sharing messages, music, and pictures.

#### ***A Place to Blog***

Another activity that often takes place on social networking websites is "blogging." Short for "Web logging," blogging is essentially like keeping an online diary, allowing users to post information about their lives and experiences on the Internet. It is also common for users to post articles and links to other stories or videos. Blogging has become so popular, particularly among teens, that entire sites are now dedicated to the activity, including [blogger.com](#) and [blogit.com](#). According to Georgetown University researchers, more than half of the millions of blogs available online are run by teenagers.



## The Risks

While offering unique opportunities to keep in touch with friends, social networking and personal content creation sites present their own set of dangers to children:

### *Predators*

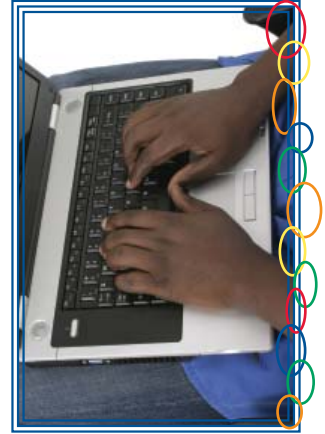
As with e-mailing, chatting, and instant messaging, blogging and online networking can lead kids to inadvertently disclose personal information that sexual predators can use to locate and abuse them. Even subtle details in photographs like license plates or school symbols can be used to determine a child's location.

### *Pornography*

Social networking sites often contain sexually explicit banner ads, teaser videos, and links – sometimes right on their homepages. In addition, many user profiles contain pictures of partially clothed individuals in inappropriate and seductive situations.

### *Public Scrutiny*

It has become common practice for college recruiters, employers, and even athletic coaches to examine online profiles in order to gauge the character of potential recruits. Thus, those who would hesitate to attach their blogs or online profiles to their college, job, internship, scholarship, or sports team application should exercise sound judgment before posting information publicly.



## Dangerous Play: *Online Videogaming and Gambling*

The Internet's ability to connect computer users across a network has profoundly impacted the way teens entertain themselves. For years, kids have enjoyed playing videogames and card games with their friends, and now, they can engage in these activities with others on the Web. Irresponsible online gaming, however, can have potentially life-altering consequences.

### The Breakdown

#### *Online Videogaming*

Though few are aware of it, the videogame industry is America's most profitable entertainment enterprise, generating a staggering \$10.5 billion in 2005, according to the New York Times. In the same year, online gaming subscriptions generated an estimated \$936 million, and trade publications expect this number to top \$3 billion by 2009. Online gaming allows players to compete in games with others around the world via the Web. The huge growth of the online gaming market is due, in part, to the major videogame console makers. While PC gamers have been playing on the Internet for years, each of the major next-generation consoles – including [Microsoft's Xbox 360](#), [Nintendo's Wii](#), and [Sony's Playstation 3](#) – also offer the ability to play online. The most popular online gaming service for consoles – [Microsoft's Xbox Live](#) – boasts over 6 million subscribers. Even portable devices like [Nintendo's DS](#) and [Sony's PSP \("Playstation Portable"\)](#) now allow players to surf the Web and compete with one another via wireless "hotspots." Adding to the easy accessibility, most modern cell phones also have Web browsing capabilities.

#### *Online Gambling*

Like online videogaming, Internet gambling is also a growing phenomenon. The game of Poker has become a mainstream activity, enjoying air time on ESPN and other major television networks. The growing popularity of the game is spelling major success for online casinos and gambling websites, and though most parents would never let their children enter a casino or play the lottery, many young people today are participating in real Poker tournaments in their homes, dorm rooms, and offices – where there is no age limit, dress code, or closing time. A National Gambling Impact Study Commission report estimates that 7.9 million teens are already addicted to online gambling.

## The Risks

Though it offers a deep level of competition, online gaming isn't always good clean fun. Parents should guard their kids against the following dangers of Internet videogaming and gambling:

### *Lewdness*

Kids' ability to download Web content directly onto their game consoles and cell phones makes them vulnerable to porn distributors, who attempt to format their explicit material for use on gaming devices. In addition, sex predators are, again, a risk – especially those with a preference for young boys. These people frequently play online games with children (sometimes posing as kids themselves) in order to “groom” potential victims over time before attempting to make direct contact.



### *Language*

Because voice chat has become a standard part of the online gaming experience (the idea being to promote teamwork among players), it is very common for kids to hear obscene language that parents would never allow to be spoken inside their homes.

### *Lawbreaking*

Online videogaming is a legal activity, but online gambling is not. The U.S. Department of Justice considers all online gambling illegal under the Interstate Wire Act. However, many Internet gambling sites operate from servers in foreign countries that are unsupervised by U.S. Government regulators.

### *Loss*

Unlike playing a videogame, the consequences of losing an online Poker match can ruin lives. Internet gambling often requires players to enter a valid credit card number, so when bets are placed, real money is on the line. There are countless stories of teens who used their parents' credit card to place a few bets – only to lose thousands of dollars and ruin their family's credit history.

## “Free” Market: *Internet File Sharing*

Just as the Internet has changed the nature of gaming, so has it redefined what it means to share one’s personal property. It is no longer necessary for kids to physically lend their CDs and DVDs to one another, as music and movie files can now be exchanged electronically. This practice, however, raises significant legal and moral questions that parents should help their children answer.

### The Breakdown

#### *Making the Transfer*

Internet file sharing involves making one’s personal files available for others to download over the Web. Often, this practice is facilitated through free downloadable “peer-to-peer” (P2P) programs such as [Limewire](#), [Kazaa](#), and [Morpheus](#). When a user downloads file sharing software, (s)he is able to connect to a central server and search for a particular file (s)he wishes to obtain. If another user connected to the server has this file, then the user who searched for it can make a transfer request by clicking on it. If the owner of the file grants permission, the file begins downloading on the searcher’s computer and is exchanged after the download is complete.

#### *It’s Stealing!*

The problem with Internet file sharing is that much of the material being transferred is copyrighted music and movie files. Distributing and acquiring such files without regard for industry royalties is tantamount to theft, and the major music and movie associations are cracking down. As of July 2006, for example, the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) has sued more than 20,000 individuals for sharing music files over the Internet. The Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) has also joined in the fight, bringing hundreds of its own lawsuits against those who obtain Hollywood films via illegal download.

## The Risks

While the moral implications of stealing another's intellectual property should be enough to dissuade music and movie pirating, there are other negatives associated with Internet file sharing:

### *Prosecution*

As alluded to already, those who engage in illegal file sharing are liable for copyright infringement, a serious criminal offense.

### *Pornography*

File sharing networks are packed with pornography. Porn distributors often intentionally mislabel their obscene files using innocent and deceptive key words that young people are more likely to search. In 2003, for example, the United States General Accounting Office (GAO) and the Customs CyberSmuggling Center (CCC) analyzed 177 images found on P2P networks using search terms like "Britney Spears," "Pokemon," and "Olsen Twins." They found that more than half of the results were in some way pornographic.

### *Personal Computer Problems*

File sharing networks also contain a great deal of "spyware" and "adware." If spyware is inadvertently downloaded, it can cause a computer to slow down and lose processing power. It can also transmit personal information over the Internet to third parties, including credit card information. Finally, spyware and adware can both cause pop-up advertisements and other annoying hassles to occur while surfing the Web.



*There are a variety of legal alternatives which allow you to download music online for a small fee. See the following websites for more information:*

[www.itunes.com](http://www.itunes.com)

[www.napster.com](http://www.napster.com)

[www.songtouch.com](http://www.songtouch.com)

## Now You See Me: *Video Sharing Websites*

Peer-to-peer networks are not the only places to find video clips online. Now, websites like [YouTube](#) and [Revver](#) allow users to search for and watch a wide range of videos without having to download any file-sharing software. And while these sites typically do not contain full-length television programs or movies, they still provide access to content that is highly inappropriate for children.

### The Breakdown

#### *Fast Track to Success*

Much like personal content creation websites, video sharing sites have become hugely successful in recent years. According to Nielsen-NetRatings, YouTube was the fastest growing website during the first six months of 2006, increasing its unique audience by 297% from January to June. Such staggering growth rates prompted Time Magazine to name the site as its 2006 invention of the year.

#### *Becoming the Star*

Sites like YouTube are attractive because they give users the ability to “broadcast themselves.” While certain video sharing sites (including YouTube) make it possible to watch edited movie and television clips, the real fun is found in uploading one’s own video files to the site so others can view them. The process is relatively simple: provided one has a computer-compatible recording device (a webcam, digital camera, or cell phone, for example), (s)he can record a video, plug the recording device into the computer, save the file in a format the website can recognize, and post it online.

#### *A Word on Webcams*

As the name implies, a webcam is a real-time video camera whose images can be accessed on the Internet. Such cameras are often bought as peripherals and attached to one’s personal computer, though some computers, like Apple’s iMac series, now have them built right into the hardware. Webcams serve a variety of purposes. As previously stated, they can be used to record video files, which can be e-mailed to friends and family, linked to a blog, or posted on a video sharing site. They can also be used to set up video chats and take pictures of oneself.



## The Risks

The fun of broadcasting oneself on the Internet can be overshadowed by the following pitfalls of video sharing websites:

### *Crass and Obscene Clips*

Similar to file sharing networks, kids can intentionally search for or mistakenly view video files that are disturbing, vulgar, and pornographic. Searches for fights, raves, broken limbs, supermodels, and other questionable topics can all produce results that are harmful for children to watch.



### *Cyberbullying*

Unfortunately, some kids use the Internet to degrade their peers. Sometimes, a child will secretly record or take a picture of another in a sensitive situation (such as in a locker room) using a cell phone or digital camera and then post the file online for the purpose of embarrassing the individual.

### *Child Sex Predators*

Posting personal videos and/or images online is yet another way for predators to glean small yet significant details that can be used to locate and abuse potential victims.

## Paying the Price: *Online Shopping and Auctions*

In today's high-tech world, it is becoming increasingly unnecessary for teens to leave the house in order to acquire the merchandise they desire. From CDs to computers to clothing, virtually everything can now be purchased online. But, as with so many of the other Web-based activities examined in this guide, carelessly exchanging financial information over the Internet can leave customers vulnerable to a variety of risks.

### The Breakdown

#### *Online Shopping*

While most teens still prefer the mall to online shopping, it is important for parents to understand the process by which electronic transactions are made. Essentially, a debit or credit card is the only requirement. Many of the largest retailers have established online stores where customers can search for products they wish to buy. Once an item is selected (i.e., placed in the buyer's online "shopping cart"), the customer can proceed to "check-out," provide his or her personal shipping and payment information (again, usually a debit or credit card number), and purchase the selected items.



#### *Online Auctions*

Online auctions on sites like [eBay](#) work in a similar fashion. When a customer finds an item of interest, he or she bids on it, thereby legally agreeing to pay the seller for the item if the auction is won. Once a customer wins the auction, he or she must provide his or her shipping and payment information to the site's payment processing system ([PayPal](#) is an example of such a system). Once the system has confirmed that payment has been made, the seller is expected to ship the item to the buyer before the funds can be accessed.

## The Risks

Many online retailers and sellers offer a secure and convenient shopping experience, though it can be a hassle to return or exchange an item if it is unsatisfactory. However, Web users should not be too quick to disclose personal financial information on the Internet. Here's why:

### *Internet Fraud*

While some online "businesses" may have fancy websites to make them appear legitimate, sometimes their goal is to take your money and run. As of June 2007, the Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3), a joint partnership between the FBI and the National White Collar Crime Center, has logged over one million complaints about alleged online fraud and cyber crime. Online customers should be careful to only do business with sellers that are secure and reputable.

### *Identity Theft*

This all-too-common problem mainly occurs when hackers gain access to large databases of personal information collected by financial or health care institutions. It can also occur when a customer gives his or her credit card information to the wrong online vendor.

### *Imitations*

A common tactic that scammers use to commit both online fraud and identity theft is called "phishing." Scammers often illegally request personal information (Social Security numbers, credit card numbers, etc.) from computer users by sending them spam (unsolicited commercial e-mail) under legitimate pretenses. Often, the spam will appear to be from an ISP, a bank, or an online payment service that is requesting the reader to update his or her personal or financial account information. Once customers provide this information, scammers are able to use it for their own illegal ends.

### *Incurring Debt*

Because no physical money is immediately exchanged in credit card transactions, sometimes cardholders - particularly young, inexperienced ones - mistakenly believe that they have an unlimited amount of money to spend. This can cause them to engage in online shopping sprees and plunge themselves or their parents into deep financial debt.

*See pages 22-23 for specific information on how to protect your family against Internet fraud and identity theft.*

# TIPS AND RESOURCES FOR PARENTS

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As technology has advanced, it has become increasingly difficult for parents to understand the risks of the Internet and safeguard their tech-savvy children against online threats. Yet, in order to cultivate healthy family relationships, moms and dads must be informed of some practical ways to protect their kids on the Web.

This section provides such information. The pages that follow provide parents with some valuable tips and resources for securing children in cyberspace. From file searching to filtering software, we try to cover a variety of simple yet practical ways to make Web browsing a more wholesome, enriching experience for all members of the family.

## ***Remember!***

While the tips and resources detailed in this section may help prevent children from being exposed to some harmful Internet influences, concerned parents are still the most effective protectors of their children. It is our hope that this guide will equip parents to talk more intelligently with their children about the pitfalls of the Internet. However, it is not a substitute for parental involvement. Remember that open and honest communication between parents and children will go a long way in deterring kids from participating in harmful online activities.



## File Searching

One of the most important responsibilities of parents is to supervise their children and protect them from harmful influences. When it comes to the Internet, this involves monitoring the websites they visit and the files they download. There are two relatively simple ways for parents to view what their children have been looking at on the computer.

\*Note: This section will only describe how to view files using the most common operating system (Windows) and Web browser (Internet Explorer).

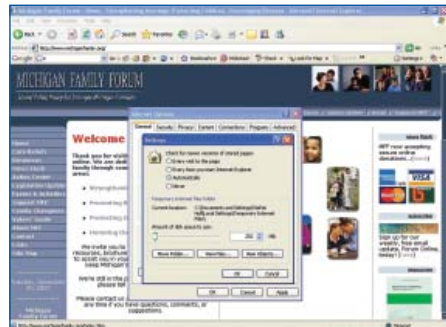
### *Viewing the Temporary Internet Files Cache*

Parents can see what their kids have been doing online by examining their computer's Temporary Internet Files cache. From here, parents can examine the kinds of websites that have been viewed on the computer, as well as the dates and times they were accessed. Here's how:

1. Log onto the Internet using Internet Explorer. From the menu bar, choose Tools > Internet Options. The dialog box to the right appears:



2. Be sure the “General” tab is selected at the top of the box. Under “Temporary Internet Files”, click “Settings,” and the dialog box to the lower right appears:



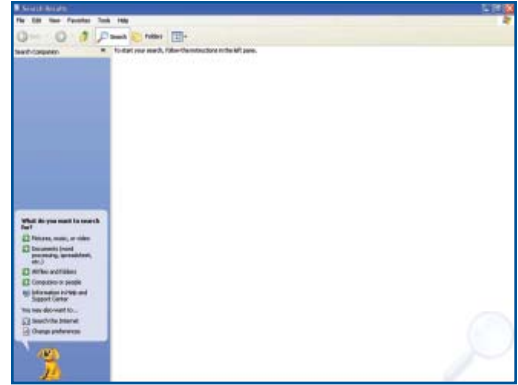
3. Click the “View Files” button. A “Temporary Internet Files” folder appears with a list of websites, dates and times.

A browser's internal history of activities is usually saved automatically for user reference. However, Internet histories can be wiped clean by a user wishing to mask his or her online activities. Beware of empty or very limited histories: this could be the sign of a computer-savvy user covering up online indiscretions.

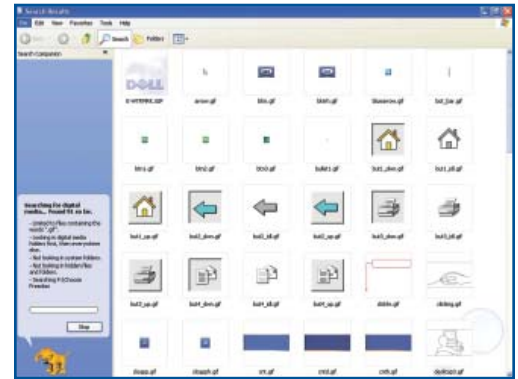
## Searching the System

Parents can also search a computer's memory for files by performing a standard system search. Here's how it's done:

1. Click on the Windows Start button at the lower left-hand portion of the screen or push the Windows button on your keyboard. Click on the "Search" option, and you can specify what type of content you want to search for. If you're not sure what to select, click on "All files and folders."



2. You are now offered a variety of search options. You can search for files by name and/or extension. (Note: The types of files most commonly used for pornography are "JPEG" and "GIF" files, which contain the extensions .jpg and .gif, respectively. Movie files typically contain the extension .mpeg, .avi, or .mov.) You can also search for files using key words or phrases that may be contained within a file's name. Your search results will display as they appear in the dialog box to the right.





# Content Filtering

In addition to the file searching methods already described, another way for parents to protect children online is to set up a “screen” through which inappropriate material is not supposed to pass. Content filtering provides such a screen, and while no amount of filtering is going to completely eliminate exposure to objectionable material, it does provide some control over which sites children can access.

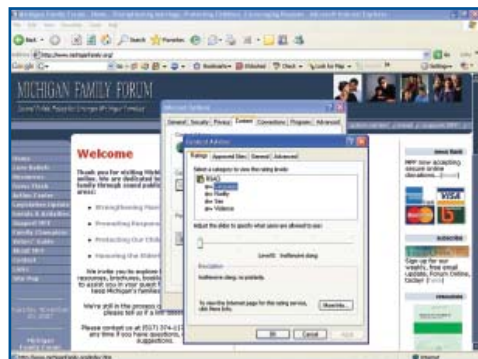
## *Four Ways to Filter*

1. A first line of defense is to set parental controls in your existing Web browser to filter inappropriate material. For example, browsers like Internet Explorer and AOL allow users to set appropriate levels of language, violence, and nudity. These options give users some personal control over the level of filtering, and they’re free. Here’s how to filter content using Internet Explorer:

A. Log onto the Internet using Internet Explorer. From the menu bar, choose Tools > Internet Options. The following dialog box appears:



B. Select the “Content” tab at the top of the box. Under the heading “Content Advisor,” click “Enable.” The dialog box pictured at the right appears. In this box, you can view a variety of categories describing harmful content that can be filtered. To adjust the level of questionable content that users are allowed to see, simply select a category, drag the slider along the continuum to the desired level, and click the “Apply” button at the lower right-hand portion of the box.



2. A second line of defense may be to purchase a filtering software program for your computer or to subscribe to an online filtering service. These products are generally effective and cost approximately \$30 to \$50 for initial start-up fees. Fees for annual renewals and updates vary. In addition to screening for pornography, many of these products filter viruses and spam and also monitor the amount of time spent on the computer. Listed below are some of the more popular filtering products:

<i>Company</i>	<i>Website Address</i>
Cyberpatrol	<a href="http://www.cyberpatrol.com">www.cyberpatrol.com</a>
Cyber Sentinel	<a href="http://www.securitysoft.com">www.securitysoft.com</a>
Cybersitter	<a href="http://www.cybersitter.com">www.cybersitter.com</a>
Kidsnet	<a href="http://www.kidsnet.com">www.kidsnet.com</a>
Net Nanny	<a href="http://www.netnanny.com">www.netnanny.com</a>
Wise Choice	<a href="http://www.wisechoice.net">www.wisechoice.net</a>

3. A third line of defense may be to subscribe to an Internet Service Provider (ISP) that automatically filters material for you. This is probably the least flexible option since the ISP does all of the filtering, and you often cannot reverse a block on material that you may consider acceptable. Here are a few ISPs that automatically filter material when used:

<i>ISP</i>	<i>Website Address</i>
Integrity Online	<a href="http://ww.integrity.com">ww.integrity.com</a>
Internet 4 Families	<a href="http://www.i4f.com">www.i4f.com</a>
Mayberry America	<a href="http://www.mayberryamerica.com">www.mayberryamerica.com</a>
PaxWay (Pax TV)	<a href="http://www.paxway.com">www.paxway.com</a>

4. Fourth, in order to avoid finding objectionable sites during searches, we recommend the following search engines, which are filtered for inappropriate content:

<i>Search Engine</i>	<i>Website Address</i>
Ask Jeeves for Kids	<a href="http://www.ajkids.com">www.ajkids.com</a>
Onekey	<a href="http://www.onekey.com">www.onekey.com</a>
Yahooligans	<a href="http://www.yahooligans.com">www.yahooligans.com</a>

## Additional Safety Tips

### *Accountability*

Some Internet users may want to avoid filters but implement an accountability system. This approach allows your children to police their own unlimited access to the Internet with the knowledge that you or another family member has the ability to review the sites they visit and the time they spend online. The following website can help facilitate the establishment of such an accountability system:

<i>Search Engine</i>	<i>Website Address</i>
Covenant Eyes	<a href="http://www.covenanteyes.com">www.covenanteyes.com</a>

### *Computer Placement*

Finally, a simple yet effective way to prevent children from accessing objectionable material is to place the computer in a central location within the home - where anyone can see its onscreen contents. Avoid placing computers in your children's bedrooms, as greater privacy often leads to greater temptation. Also, it is a good idea to regulate and monitor the amount of time your children spend online.

### *Warning Signs*

The FBI lists the following as signs that your child may be at risk on the Internet:

- Your child turns the computer monitor off or quickly changes the screen on the monitor when you come into the room.
- Your child is using an online account belonging to someone else.
- Your child spends large amounts of time online, especially at night.
- You find pornography on your child's computer.
- Your child receives phone calls from men and/or women you don't know or is making calls, sometimes long distance, to numbers you don't recognize.
- Your child receives mail, gifts, or packages from someone you don't know.
- Your child becomes withdrawn from the family.

*For additional information:*

[www.fbi.gov/publications/pguide/pguidee.htm](http://www.fbi.gov/publications/pguide/pguidee.htm)

## Purchasing Precautions

Online shopping requires the exchange of a good deal of personal information, so it is important that parents help their children discern who to do business with on the Web. Here are some tips to promote secure purchasing:

### *Recommendations*

- Deal only with reliable companies and sellers - Don't give out your credit card number online unless the site is secure and reputable. Sometimes, secure sites change the first address letters from "http" to either "shttp" or "https." Additionally, most online auctions will provide a "Comments" section where other people who have made transactions with a company or individual can post feedback. You should also check with the Better Business Bureau in the area where the company is located.
- Provide only essential information - You should never need to give out your social security number or driver's license number to anyone selling items on the Internet.
- Do your research - Don't make investments based on appearances. Just because an individual or company has a flashy website doesn't mean it's legitimate. Websites can be created in just a few days and disappear without a trace. Research investment opportunities to make sure that they are sound and that the company you are working with is reputable. If an investment sounds too good to be true, it probably is.
- Understand company policies - Find and read the privacy policy to learn what information the company or individual is gathering and how it will be used.
- Keep Records - When purchasing an item, print out the following documents:
  1. Web pages indicating the name, postal address, and telephone number of the company from which you bought the product
  2. Web pages describing the item(s) you ordered
  3. Web pages or pop-up screens that provide the seller's legal terms
  4. Any notes, e-mails, or confirmation messages sent to or received from the seller

### ***For Fraud Victims***

1. File a complaint with the Internet Crimes Complaint Center: [www.ic3.gov](http://www.ic3.gov).
2. File a complaint with the Michigan Attorney General: The toll-free number for the Consumer Protection Division is 1.877.765.8388. You can also file an online complaint. Go to [www.michigan.gov/ag](http://www.michigan.gov/ag), click on the “File a Complaint” button on the homepage, and click the link entitled “Computer Crime Complaint Filing Information.”
3. File a complaint with the Better Business Bureau at [www.bbb.org](http://www.bbb.org) or the Federal Trade Commission at [www.ftc.gov](http://www.ftc.gov).
4. We highly recommend that you visit [www.pueblo.gsa.gov/scamsdesc.htm](http://www.pueblo.gsa.gov/scamsdesc.htm) to review a list of the latest scams and frauds announced by federal agencies and consumer groups. The site gives a brief description of each scam and contact information if you suspect you have been a victim.

### ***For additional information:***

[www.safeshopping.org](http://www.safeshopping.org)

[www.idtheftcenter.org](http://www.idtheftcenter.org)

[www.fraud.org](http://www.fraud.org)

## Additional Resources

There is help available for those who have been exploited on the Internet. Contact these organizations to report a problem and seek assistance:

FBI Tips and Public Leads:  
<http://tips.fbi.gov>

Michigan State Police:  
Information: 517.332.2521  
Internet Safety Tip Line: 1.877.5CYBER3

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children:  
1.800.843.5678  
[www.missingkids.org](http://www.missingkids.org)

Your Internet Service Provider (ISP):  
Comcast, AOL, etc.

Visit these websites for additional information on Internet safety:

[www.besafeonline.org](http://www.besafeonline.org)  
[www.cyberangels.org](http://www.cyberangels.org)  
[www.filterreview.com](http://www.filterreview.com)  
[www.getnetwise.org](http://www.getnetwise.org)  
[www.kidsmart.org.uk](http://www.kidsmart.org.uk)

[www.nationalcoalition.org](http://www.nationalcoalition.org)  
[www.obscenitycrimes.org](http://www.obscenitycrimes.org)  
[www.privacyrights.org](http://www.privacyrights.org)  
[www.safekids.com](http://www.safekids.com)  
[www.wiredsafety.org](http://www.wiredsafety.org)



## Michigan Cyber Safety Initiative

The Michigan CSI is a program of Attorney General Mike Cox and consists of customized presentations for kindergarten through eighth-grade students and a community seminar. The program was piloted to over 8,500 students and is recommended by all three pilot district superintendents. The kindergarten through third grade presentation includes a video of the acclaimed book *Faux Paw's Adventures on the Internet*. The book and seminar material are being presented in cooperation with the Internet Keep Safe Coalition. The primary focus is to emphasize students should: keep safe by not sharing any personal information, keep away from Internet strangers, and keep telling parents or a trusted adult about anything that makes them feel uncomfortable.

In addition to the keep safe, keep away, and keep telling messages, students in fourth grade and above also learn about common Internet predator grooming techniques and appropriate responses to cyber harassment. Fourth and fifth grade students watch a realistic fiction video entitled "Predator" provided compliments of the non-profit group i-SAFE Inc.

Sixth through eighth grade students additionally are cautioned about revealing personal information on social networking sites and watch an i-SAFE Inc. video about a female Internet predator victim. The sixth grade through eighth grade students also watch an i-SAFE Inc. video about a male cyber-bullying victim.

All students are provided with age-appropriate handouts and an Online Safety Contract to discuss with parent(s) or guardian(s). (See Page 26)

The community seminar provides practical tools, including a PowerPoint handout of slides covered during the seminar, to help adults employ these new skills at home. The seminar provides concrete tools, including a demonstration of how to access the Michigan Sex Offender Registry and sign up for e-mail updates. The seminar also demonstrates how to access online tutorials to:

- search and access a child's social networking site(s) (i.e., MySpace and Facebook)
- view Internet history logs to determine where a child has been online
- turn on safe surfing filters.

All handouts and more information are available on the website of Attorney General Mike Cox ([www.michigan.gov/ag](http://www.michigan.gov/ag)). Michigan CSI is offered in cooperation with Comcast and is offered free of charge.

## Online Safety Contract\*

- 1) I will not give out any personal information online without my parents' permission. This includes my name, phone number, address, e-mail, location of my school, my parents' work address/telephone numbers and credit card numbers, and my picture. This goes for anywhere on the Internet, including e-mail, chat rooms, newsgroups - even websites that promise me free stuff or prizes, or on Web pages that I make myself.
- 2) When using the Internet, I will always use a pretend name or nickname that doesn't reveal my name, age, or whether I'm a boy or a girl.
- 3) When creating a password, I will make one up that is hard to guess but easy for me to remember. To avoid having it stolen, I will never reveal it to anyone (except my parents) - not even my best friend.
- 4) I will not respond to any message that makes me uncomfortable. I will show an adult right away.
- 5) I will never meet in person with someone I've connected with online.
- 6) I will not send an insulting or rude message to anyone online.
- 7) I will not disable any filtering software my parents have put on the computer.
- 8) I will not open e-mail, files, links, pictures or games from people that I don't know or trust. I will always ask an adult first.
- 9) I will not take words, pictures or sounds from someone else's Web site without their permission.
- 10) I will not believe everything I read on the Internet. I will always check the source of the information and confirm it with my teacher, parent or librarian.
- 11) I will only use the Internet on these days/times \_\_\_\_\_.
- 12) I will only use the Internet for \_\_\_\_\_ minutes and then I have to do something else.
- 13) I will respect these rules as established between my parents and myself and if I have any questions about them I will ask my parents before challenging the rules.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
*Child – I will follow these rules.*

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
*Parent – I will not overreact when my child tells me about bad things that happen in cyberspace. I will calmly work with my child to ensure safer Internet experiences.*

*\*from [www.michigan.gov/ag](http://www.michigan.gov/ag)*

## 20 Acronyms Every Parent Should Know\*

ADR - Address

ASL – Age/Sex/Location

GYPO – Get Your Pants Off

IWSN – I Want Sex Now

KFY – Kiss For You

KPC – Keeping Parents Clueless

LMIRL – Let’s Meet In Real Life

MorF – Male or Female

MOOS – Member(s) Of The Opposite Sex

MOSS or MOTSS – Member(s) Of The Same Sex

NALOPKT – Not A Lot Of People Know That

NIFOC – Nude In Front Of Computer

P911 – Parent Alert

PAL – Parents Are Listening

PAW – Parents Are Watching

PIR – Parent In Room

POS – Parent Over Shoulder

SorG – Straight or Gay

TDTM – Talk Dirty To Me

WYCM – Will You Call Me?

*\*from [www.michigan.gov/ag](http://www.michigan.gov/ag)*

# Notes



# About Michigan Family Forum

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## OUR CORE VALUES

- The family is the fundamental institution in a civil society.
- Healthy marriages are beneficial to adults and offer the best environment in which to raise children and care for our elders.
- The involvement of responsible fathers is essential to the economic, emotional, and social health of our children.
- Our children need the protection of stable families and a healthy understanding of human sexuality.
- Our elders deserve to have security and care provided by loving family members in a comfortable home environment.

## OTHER RESOURCES AVAILABLE

Forum Online, free weekly electronic newsletter

Subscribe at [www.michiganfamily.org](http://www.michiganfamily.org)

Sex Education: Rights and Responsibilities

Michigan Adoption Resource Guide

Redefining Parenthood: Adult Rights Versus Children's Needs

Michigan Guide to Abstinence Resources

Promoting Fatherhood In Michigan:

A Resource for Civic, Business, and Non-Profit Leaders

What Every Child Needs:

The Unique Contributions of Fathers and Mothers

Family Policy Briefs:

The Harmful Consequences of Teen Sex

Out-of-Wedlock Births

Family Planning Funding

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