



## A PARENT'S GUIDE TO SOCIAL NETWORKING



Comments | Info | Photos | Profile | Inbox

**Help! My child is on a social networking site!**  
While you may be concerned when your children join a social networking site, it doesn't mean they're in danger. Social networking sites are places online where young people go to socialize with their friends, talk to people with similar interests, and share what's going on in their lives. But these sites can also be places where kids post something inappropriate or meet the wrong people.

**How can I keep my child safe?**  
Check, check, check! The most important thing you can do to protect your child on these sites is to get involved and regularly check his/her profile.

**What do I look for?**  
Sometimes looking through your child's social networking profile can be overwhelming. Where are the privacy settings? What is a "wall"? Use this practical guide and check off each section when you're done. That way, you won't miss anything.



### 5 Positive Things Your Child Can Do On Social Networking Sites

- 1. Create family photo albums**  
What better way to keep your distant relatives up-to-date on your family's activities?
- 2. Champion a cause**  
From animal rights to bullying awareness, social networking sites are the place to go for social activists.
- 3. Join a group**  
Niche communities have found a home on social networking sites where people can connect and discuss their interests with like-minded people.
- 4. Market a talent**  
Stars are born every day online. No need to move to Hollywood to pursue that recording contract; with one hit video the producers will come to you!
- 5. Find a college**  
Social networking makes it easier to chat with college students and faculty, so your child can make an informed decision about where to go to school.

**POPULAR SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES FOR TEENS**  
Facebook | MySpace | myYearbook | Bebo | Gaia

This resource brought to you by



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**Profile Picture**

This is the picture that will appear next to your child's name. Is it too revealing? Is there anything inappropriate, like nudity, alcohol, or drugs? Make sure you approve before it goes public.

**Username**

This is either your child's real name or a nickname. Using a real name isn't bad; it just means you have to look more closely at the privacy settings and contacts.

**Account/Settings**

This is where you'll go to adjust your child's privacy settings. Go through each option slowly. Always ask yourself - what is on the profile and who can see it?

SOCIAL NETWORKING SITE

**Information/About Me**

Here your children can post personal information, including where they live, where they go to school, who they're dating, etc. Check what they're sharing and delete anything you think is too much information.



GeorgyD

Account

**Comments**

- Beach later!
- Sooooo jealous :(
- Worst Day Ever.
- hang in there!
- Awwww, sorry!
- Me too!!!!

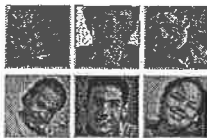
**Comments/Wall**

This is where your child's friends post messages. Delete any inappropriate comments, and don't forget to check what your child is posting on others' pages, too.

**Information**

Birthday: January 17, 1997  
Location: Virginia

**Friends**



**Photo Album**



**Advertisements**



**Friends/Contacts**

This is a list of everyone your child has accepted as a friend/contact. It may include people you don't know, or even people your child only knows online. Go through each contact together and decide if each is an appropriate friend for your child.

**Photos/Albums**

What kinds of photos is your child sharing? Who can see them? Check for anything inappropriate, like nudity, alcohol, or drugs.

**Ads/Apps**

Most social networks have ads and applications from 3rd parties, like games and fan pages. If your children click on these or add them to their profiles, they may be allowing access to their personal information. Have a discussion about what's OK to add and what's not.



# CYBERSECURITY MADE CLEAR

While the Internet can make your life easier, it can also expose you to cybersecurity threats like scams and identity theft. Here's what you need to know before you go online.

## PHARMING

A scheme that sends you to fake websites where hackers secretly collect personal information and passwords.

## PHISHING

Fake e-mails that appear to come from a legitimate source looking to "verify" personal or financial information.

## TROJANS

Programs that look useful, but actually cause damage to your computer.

## SPYWARE

Malicious code that secretly watches what you do on your computer and sends the information over the Internet.

## VIRUSES

Self-replicating programs that damage hard drives and affect the normal operation of your computer.



## Things You Can Do To Protect Yourself & Your Computer

1. Install firewall, anti-spyware, and antivirus software, and update them often.
2. Don't open e-mails from someone you don't know, download software from a source you don't trust, or enter "free" contests from companies you don't recognize.
3. Guard your passwords – don't share them over e-mail or instant message, and change them often.
4. Type in the website address instead of clicking on a link.
5. Look for "https" or a picture of a lock in your browser window before buying anything or opening an account on a website.

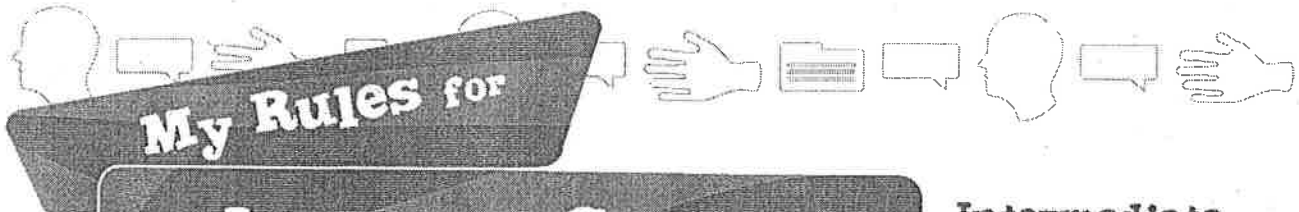
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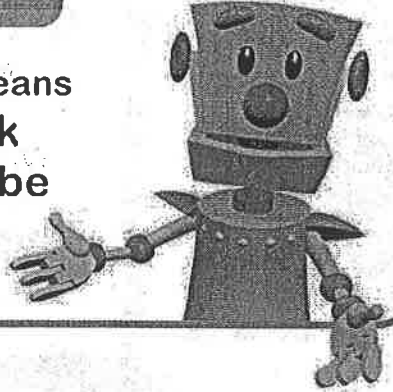
[NetSmartz.org/TipSheets](http://NetSmartz.org/TipSheets)



# Internet Safety

Intermediate

I will use the Internet responsibly. That means making smart decisions about what I look at, who I talk to, and what I say. I pledge to be safer online by following these rules:



**1** I will tell my trusted adult if anything makes me feel sad, scared, or confused.

**2** I will ask my trusted adult before sharing information like my name, address, and phone number.

**3** I won't meet face-to-face with anyone from the Internet.

**4** I will always use good netiquette and not be rude or mean online.



signed .....

signed .....

# INTERNET SAFETY RULES

Middle School ▪ High School

**1** I WILL THINK BEFORE I POST.

- I agree not to post information and images that could put me at risk, embarrass me, or damage my future, such as
- » cell & home phone numbers
  - » home address
  - » sexual messages
  - » inappropriate pictures and videos

**2** I WILL RESPECT OTHER PEOPLE ONLINE.

- I will not
- » post anything rude, offensive, or threatening
  - » send or forward images and information that might embarrass, hurt, or harass someone
  - » take anyone's personal information and use it to damage his or her reputation

**3** I WILL BE CAREFUL WHEN MEETING ONLINE FRIENDS IN PERSON.

- I agree to
- » ask my parent or guardian's permission
  - » have a parent or guardian accompany me
  - » meet in a public place

**4** I WILL PROTECT MYSELF ONLINE.

- If someone makes me feel uncomfortable or if someone is rude or offensive, I will
- » not respond
  - » save the evidence
  - » tell my parent, guardian, or another trusted adult
  - » report to the website, cell phone company, cybertipline.com, or the police

**NetSmartz Workshop**  
A PROGRAM OF THE  
NATIONAL CENTER FOR MISSING & EXPLOITED CHILDREN

Watch videos and play games at [NSTeens.org](http://NSTeens.org)

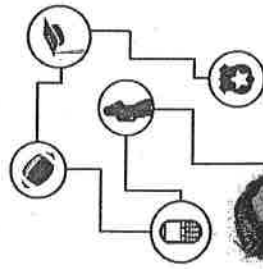
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SIGNED \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNED \_\_\_\_\_

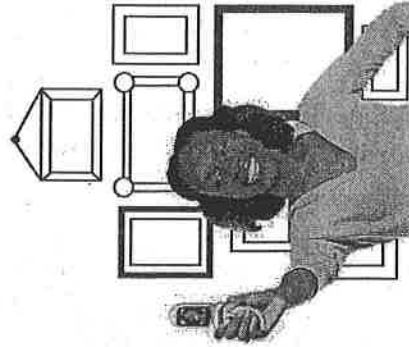
# tips to prevent SEXTING FOR TEENS

NetSmartz.org/TipSheets



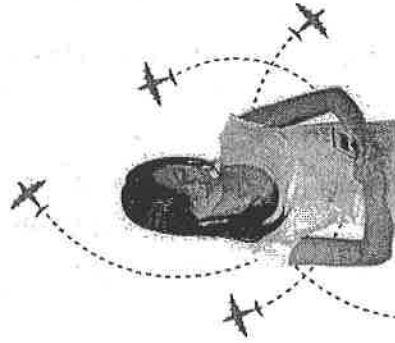
## THINK ABOUT THE CONSEQUENCES

of taking, sending, or forwarding a sexual picture of someone else, even if it's of you. You could get kicked off of sports teams, face humiliation, lose educational opportunities, and even face a police investigation.



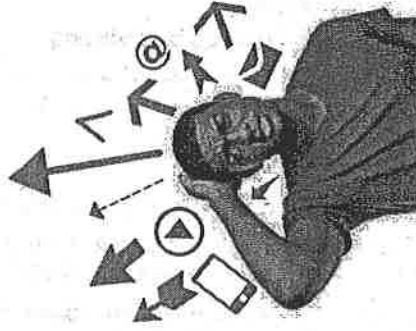
## NEVER TAKE

images of yourself that you wouldn't want everyone—your classmates, your teachers, your family, or your employer—to see.



## BEFORE HITTING SEND

remember that you can't control where this image may travel. What you send to a boyfriend or girlfriend could easily end up with their friends, and their friends' friends, and so on...



## IF YOU FORWARD

a sexual picture of someone without their consent, you are violating their trust and exposing them to potential ridicule. It's not up to you to decide who should see their body, so don't forward the image to anyone..



## IF ANYONE PRESSURES

you to send a sexual picture, don't give in and talk to an adult you trust. Remember that anyone who tries to get you to do something you are uncomfortable with is probably not trustworthy.



## Tips to Prevent **SEXTING** for Teens



### **THINK ABOUT THE CONSEQUENCES**

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### **Q: How do I know if my child is sexting?**

**A:** No parent or guardian wants to be the last one to know that their child is sexting. Try to maintain open lines of communication with your children so that they are not afraid to talk to you if they receive inappropriate photos or are being pressured to send them.

### **Here are some discussion starters to help you have the "sexting talk" with your child:**

- Have you ever received a naked picture on your cell phone?
- Has anyone ever asked or pressured you to send a nude or sexual picture?
- Do you think it's OK to send "sexy" messages or images? Why?
- What could happen to you if you send or forward a naked picture with your cell phone?
- How likely is it that images and messages intended for one person will be seen by others?

fold here

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# SEXTING

## Questions and Answers from NetSmartz® Workshop

Many teens believe that anything they want to do with their bodies and their phones is their business. Young people enjoy the privacy and freedom that cell phones give them from their parents or guardians, and sometimes they use that freedom to explore their budding sexuality. Amanda Lenhart of the Pew Internet & American Life Project calls the combination of cell phones and sexual exploration "a 'perfect storm' for sexting."<sup>1</sup> Youths who engage in sexting, the sending or posting of nude or partially nude images, expose themselves to a variety of social, emotional, and even legal risks. The good news is that most teens do not sext—only 4% of cell-owning teens (12-17) say they have sent these kinds of images.<sup>2</sup>—but those who do often face unexpected and unwanted consequences.

Help your children avoid these potentially life-changing consequences by learning more about the issue and talking to your children before they put themselves in a compromising position.

### Q: Why do teens sext?

**A:** Teens sext for many reasons. They may be trying to impress a crush or trying to be funny. Some are responding to a sexual text message they've received and others willingly send nude photos of themselves to a boyfriend or girlfriend. Occasionally teens are pressured into sending sexual pictures, and in extreme cases, they may be blackmailed by someone threatening to distribute an earlier sexting image if they do not send more. Teens make these decisions without thinking about how their futures may be affected. It's important for parents and guardians to understand that as technically savvy as their children are, they often don't think about the implications of how quickly and widely digital information can spread via cell phone and the Internet.

### Q: What are the consequences of sexting?

**A:** Sexting may profoundly affect the emotional and psychological development of a child. Trust is broken when an image is forwarded without the creator's consent, such as when a boyfriend takes revenge on an ex-girlfriend by forwarding images intended to be private. Once an image is spread via cell phone or posted online, it is impossible to get back and can potentially circulate to hundreds of people. Teens who engage in sexting risk reoccurring embarrassment, exploitation, and victimization, which could be psychologically devastating.

Teens who sext may also face social repercussions, such as being judged or excluded by their peers, communities, and families. They may become targets of mean comments, rumors, and harassment. Unfortunately, the image may follow them for a long time, damaging academic, social, and employment opportunities. For example, some teens caught sexting have lost their place on school sports teams, potentially impacting their college prospects.

In cases involving blackmail, bullying, or images being passed around without consent, law-enforcement officers may become involved, often at the request of anxious parents or school administrators. Although it is unlikely that teens will be charged with a serious crime for sexting, police investigations can be stressful for everyone, especially if there is media attention. Many teens have been ordered to attend an educational program or complete community service as a result of these investigations.

### Q: What can I do to help prevent my child from sexting?

**A:** Make sure to set house rules for Internet and cell phone use with your children and review them often. You should also discuss the consequences for breaking those rules. For example, you might consider disabling picture messaging. If children ignore the rules, consider removing cell phones altogether; however, this should be your last resort. Technology is not going anywhere, and it's important that children learn how to use it appropriately.

Talk to them early and often about how digital information and images may travel very far, very quickly. Make it absolutely clear to your children that the moment they send a digital image of themselves from their cell phone, they lose complete control of what happens to it next.

<sup>1</sup> Lenhart, Amanda. *Teens and Sexting*. Pew Internet & American Life Project, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*