



Parry Aftab's Guide to Keeping Your Kids Safe Online

MySpace, Facebook and Xanga, Oh! My!

Keeping yourself and your kids safe on social networks

The quick tips for teens:

- Put everything behind password protected walls, where only friends can see
- Protect your password and make sure you really know who someone is before you allow them onto your friends list
- Blur or morph your photos a bit so they won't be abused by cyberbullies or predators
- Don't post anything your parents, principal or a predator couldn't see
- What you post online stays online - forever!!!! So thinkb4uClick!
- Don't do or say anything online you wouldn't say offline
- Protect your privacy and your friends' privacy too...get their okay before posting something about them or their pic online
- Check what your friends are posting/saying about you. Even if you are careful, they may not be and may be putting you at risk.
- That cute 14-year old boy may not be cute, may not be 14 and may not be a boy! You never know!
- And, unless you're prepared to attach your MySpace to your college/job/internship/scholarship or sports team application...don't post it publicly!

And for parents:

- Talk to your kids – ask questions (and then confirm to make sure they are telling you the truth!)
- Ask to see their profile page (for the first time)...tomorrow! (It gives them a chance to remove everything that isn't appropriate or safe...and it becomes a way to teach them what not to post instead of being a gotcha moment! Think of it as the loud announcement before walking downstairs to a teen party you're hosting.)
- Don't panic...there are ways of keeping your kids safe online. It's easier than you think!
- Be involved and work with others in your community. (Think about joining WiredSafety.org and help create a local cyber-neighborhood watch program in your community.)
- Remember what you did that your parents would have killed you had they known, when you were fifteen.
- This too will pass! Most kids really do use social networks just to communicate with their friends. Take a breath, gather your thoughts and get help when you need it. (You can reach out to WiredSafety.org.)
- It's not an invasion of their privacy if strangers can see it. There is a difference between reading their paper diary that is tucked away in their sock drawer...and reading their MySpace. One is between them and the paper it's written on; the other between them and 700 million people online!
- Don't believe everything you read online – especially if your teen posts it on her MySpace!
- And, finally....repeat after me – “I'm still the parent!” If they don't listen or follow your rules, unplug the computer...the walk to the library will do them good. ☺

For more information, visit WiredSafety.org.