

CONNECTED. 24-7.

Are you hip with the times and terms as much as your kids are? It's time to learn. The popularity of social networking has exploded into a teen phenomenon, creating a new world of freedom, anonymity and vulnerability for children today. It's important for parents to be up to speed with the latest activities and sites that command much of today's youth attention. Below are some of the Web sites and online teen terms for parents to be familiar with so they can stay in the driver's seat of their child's online experience.

Online Dictionary for Parents

Social Networking – While social networking Web sites have been around for some time now, today's youth have breathed new life and popularity into this way of communicating. Social networking sites offer an interactive, public forum in which any Internet user can share photos, videos, conversations and e-mails with millions of others on a global scale. Both the public and anonymity elements of social networking sites create a sense of vulnerability for those participating— people may pose as someone they're not, and personal information becomes easily accessible through chat rooms, shared photos and video.

Blogs – A blog is the shortened name of a Weblog, which is a type of Web site that houses entries similar to that of a journal or diary entry. Blogs often provide personal commentary or news on a particular subject, such as food, politics, or consumer products. A typical blog combines text and images, and links to other blogs, web pages or media related to its topic.

Vlog – A videoblog is a blog which uses video as the primary content. Regular entries are made and presented in reverse chronological order. A typical vlog entry combines an embedded video or video link with supporting text, images, and metadata. Many sites today offer access to viewing and posting video content.

Instant Messaging – Whether with friends or others in the online community, instant messaging allows users to communicate via text with one another in real-time. Most kids today have an already created list of friends with whom they regularly "IM."

Webcam – One step more than instant messaging, a Webcam is real-time communication with text and video. A webcam allows users to have virtual face-to-face communication, with very little restriction, over an Internet connection.

Popular Teen Sites

MySpace.com – Recognized as the most popular Web site in the United States, MySpace.com is a growing social networking site. MySpace.com offers an interactive network of blogs, user profiles, groups, videos, chat rooms and photos, and an internal e-mail system all within the same online community. Communities, such as MySpace.com, are composed of strangers and friends alike, creating a harbor space for masked identities – as some users pretend to be someone they're not.

AddictingGames.com – Known as a hub for online gamers, AddictingGames.com serves as a leading site for avid gamers of any age. Boasting over 10 million visitors a month, this site offers games relating to sports, action, adventure, arcade and board games. Visitors can game against one another, or download games for themselves.

YouTube.com – A free Web site that allows users to upload, view, and share and rate video clips with others around the world, YouTube.com continues to climb in popularity amongst teens and adults alike. Video content ranges from art to dance, to science, technology and travel. Viewers can "tag" or categorize video postings to their liking.

FaceBook.com – Ranked by some as the seventh most trafficked site in the United States, FaceBook.com is another popular social networking site among high school and college-aged students. To register, FaceBook.com asks for a valid e-mail address from a supported college, high school or company, creating an online community of information, photos, and a variety of interests.

Xanga.com – A Weblog community, Xanga.com, like MySpace and FaceBook, is a network of online diaries and journals. Xanga houses blogs and photos and serves as a forum for the thoughts and opinions of online users around the world.

Rules for the Home

As today's youth spend more time online, the first step is to teach, or remind them, that the Internet is, in fact, a public place accessed by millions of people around the world. It's important for children to understand that using the Internet in the privacy of their own home does not guarantee a protected, stranger-free environment. See other tips below to help create a safer online environment for children today.

1. Teach them **not to share their name**, address, phone number, school name or any information about their family over the Internet.

2. Teach them to **be cautious of strangers online**, as they would be of strangers in their neighborhood, the school yard or city park. "Chat rooms" and "forums" provide online anonymity and secret identities to all users, which means people could be pretending to be someone they are not.

3. **Place computers in public areas of the house and set parameters**, such as specific times and durations a child can use the computer, to invoke a stronger sense of supervision that can help monitor a child's online activity.

4. **Use Parental Controls** – like those provided by AT&T– to customize security settings for kids, teens and mature teens. With parental controls, adults can monitor and permit (or reject) Web browsing, e-mail, instant messaging and access to chat rooms.

Safety and Security 101

For a safe online experience, it's important for Internet users to know how to set and manage various security features, such as anti-spyware software, anti-virus protection, firewall software, parental controls and anti-spam protection tools; users should also be aware of consumer scams that seek to pry personal and sensitive information from Internet accounts. Though some users may already be up to speed on the latest security defenses, the below offers a quick overview of what can help to keep parents and kids safe online.

Firewall – The first line of defense against computer hackers or intruders. This helps protect your personal information.

Spam Protection Filters – Help block and filter unwanted e-mail and addresses. And, reduce the likelihood of receiving viruses from unknown senders.

Pop-Up Ad-Blocking – Help control the quantity and types of pop-ups you receive. Even opt to block them completely.

Anti-Spyware – Help block or rid hard drives of any unwanted cookies or applications.

Complete Anti-Virus Protection – Scans your computer for worms and viruses. Get alerts before they can cause damage.

AT&T Yahoo! Online Protection Suite and The Internet Security Suite

AT&T broadband customers benefit from a leading suite of safety and security features, offering comprehensive anti-virus protection for e-mail and the entire PC; anti-spyware software; industry-leading, award-winning Web-based parental controls and more.

This information was prepared as a public service by AT&T Inc. For more information, visit www.att.com/safety for additional tips on Internet safety.