

## Online Safety – A Family Affair!

Technology has changed the way we communicate and share information. This is evident with more than 500 million Face Book users across the world, the real time communication enabled through Twitter and Instant Messaging, the emerging social media sites created just for children, and online video games. We all share a responsibility to teach our youth how to engage online with their peers in a healthy and positive manner. The online world can be challenging for adults to navigate in addition to monitoring the social interactions of their youth. Questions often arise around issues that relate to privacy, appropriateness and the existing potential of misuse such as cyber bullying. We have included some helpful hints and practices to assist you and your family to be safe, wise and responsible when online.

It is always a good idea to put computers in areas where access and supervision are easily managed	Show an adult any message or website that contains inappropriate content.
When online always use an online name or a name that prevents other people online from knowing anything about you.	Practice responsible online behaviour – think before you send any messages to other people. Ask yourself, “Is this a message I would like to receive?”
Ask an adult first before opening any e-mail, files, links, pictures or games from people that you do not know or do not trust.	Never arrange to meet a friend alone that you have met online.
Make sure you leave any filtering software your parents have placed on the computer unaltered; unless you have your parents’ permission.	If you are being threatened or harassed online, do not respond directly. Leave the online area or stop the online activity you are involved in, and immediately tell an adult you trust.
Be cautious about giving out any personal information online. This includes your name, gender, telephone number, home or e-mail address, location of your school, your parents' work address, email addresses or telephone numbers, their credit card number information, and pictures of you or members of your family. It is always best to check with a parent first!	When creating a password make one up that is hard for someone else to guess but easy for you to remember. Never reveal it to anyone (except your parents or a trusted adult) - not even your best friend

Traditional “Stranger Danger” approaches are not enough. Youth need to become aware of the potential danger and harm that may result from hurtful or emotionally charged online interactions. Our youth need to understand that their digital footprint begins with their first Tweet, post or You Tube video.