




[home](#) | [parents](#) | [pastors](#) | [non-profits](#) | [software](#) | [resources](#) | [recovery](#) | [about](#)

parents

[home](#) : [parents](#) : [Social Networking Site Guidelines](#)

Online Safety on MySpace and Other Social Networking Sites

SAFETY TIPS FOR SOCIAL NETWORKING

Social Networks or Online Communities have become an integral part of the lives of many teenagers today. There are some real dangers involved, as there are in off-line aspects of a young person's life. But rather than attempting to deny access and participation in this form of online socializing, we suggest that with some common sense, open, calm dialogue, and simple guidelines, participation in an online community can be a safe and enriching experience. Here are our tips for making this happen. (More information about social networking is available by scrolling down this page.):

For Parents:

1. We recommend a minimum age of 16 for participation in on online community. Generally, children younger than 16 are not mature enough to handle the opportunities and challenges of social networking.
2. Begin an open conversation about your teens' social networking experience. Try to establish a context for discussion that is not combative or accusing.
3. Create your own account on MySpace or another social network. Spend some time browsing the network's site. This will give you familiarity with the world that is so essential to your teen(s) and their friends and will facilitate future conversations.
4. If your child has an account, require that they show it to you. Periodically monitor/read it.
5. Set the expectation that only people they know in real life should be on their "friends" list.
6. Know your children's passwords, screen names and account information. This will enable you to view their pages even if they set their profile to "private". (Private profiles are accounts that can only be viewed by others given explicit permission to view it. This is a double-edged sword, in that it means strangers [like sexual predators] don't have an easy way to learn about or harass the private account owner. However, it also means that without being granted access, parents and other adults in positions of authority or care-giving cannot view the online activity of the owner either.)
7. Remove online privileges if it becomes a problem. This is only as a last resort and keep it mind that a young person can establish an account and access it school, the library, or a friend's house. Clearly, open dialog and trust is best.
8. As another last resort, consider installing keystroke capturing software on your family computer from www.getnetwise.org. Again, this won't deal with your child's using computers away from home.
9. Talk with other parents, with teachers, and other adults who work with kids. Also, check out the links to other helpful websites below.

For Children:

1. Talk with your parents. Let them learn and understand the role of social networking in your life.
2. Never post anything you wouldn't want your parents, teachers, or future employers to see.
3. Never post personal information (phone number, E-mail or address) on the web. The same applies for your friends' information. Be aware that information you post could put you at risk of victimization
4. **Never** meet with anyone you first "met" online and tell your parent if anyone requests a meeting.
5. Only add people as friends if you know then in real life. Set privacy settings so that you have to approve people to be added as a friend.
6. Include your parents and other trusted adults as friends. If your parents do not have an account, give them access to your profile.

WHAT IS SOCIAL NETWORKING ?

Social Networking is a term used to describe the fairly recent breed of websites, also referred to as online communities. These sites generally enable their subscribers to post a journal and

in this section

[Parent's Page](#)
[Parent's Training](#)
[Info for Online Teens](#)
[Rules for Parents](#)
[Family Safety Pledge](#)
[Software Tools](#)
[Guidelines on Social Networks \(MySpace, etc.\)](#)
[Recovery Resources](#)
[Online Safety Manual \(pdf\)](#)
[Download Software](#)

various forms of media content, to generate and maintain relationships with other participants, and to engage in discussions around common interests with others. Some of the most popular social networks are in the U.S. are MySpace, Xanga, LiveJournal, BlackPlanet, MiGente, AsianAvenue, Bolt, Hi5, Facebook, and Friendster.

These sites are immensely popular with teens and young adults and have become an integral part of their lives, much like television was for their parents. Social networks or online communities offer great opportunities for self-expression, relational support, new experiences, helpful information and just plain fun.

WHAT ARE RISKS?

Objectionable Content: On many online communities, users post material that is not appropriate for children or that many parents would find objectionable. This can include obscene language, racist or violent text or images, and a wide range of sexual content including pornography.

Overexposure: Parents need to be concerned not only with what their children might see and hear, but also what they may present. Teens can make unwise decisions about what they post online. This includes posting pictures of himself or herself or of friends in a sexually provocative or incriminating manner; publishing personal information that sexual predators could use to learn more about a child or their friends; or bragging about exploits (real or made-up) or making threatening and harassing remarks that could have negative consequences.

Contact with predators: Much publicity has been generated around sexual predators (mainly adults) looking for minors to exploit. There are such individuals who frequent online communities that teens use. Sometimes, these adults will pretend to be teens themselves, but often they will be quite clear about their age and intent.

Contact with other inappropriate adults and businesses: Various segments of the sex industry (legal and otherwise) have a presence on social networking sites, often to recruit customers and workers. Minors should not have direct contact with such sex professionals and organizations, but it does happen. In some cases, teens could become victims of sex-trafficking or be persuaded to provide sexually explicit pictures or video for pay.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Here are some links to other organizations for more on safe social networking:

[BlogSafety](#)

[WiredSafety](#)

[MySpace Safety Tips](#)

The folks at [BlogSafety](#) have also written an excellent book, [MySpace Unraveled](#).

[Back to Parent Page](#)