

Being a Parent in the Internet Age

A guide to help parents "take a bite out of Internet danger."



McGruff SAFEGUARD
Take a bite out of Internet danger



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SECTION ONE

HOW IS MY CHILD AT RISK?

In your own neighborhood, your child meets risks everyday—risks that you are careful to protect them from. You probably know the troublemakers, the bad influences, the bullies, and possibly even predators to look out for. You have set rules and boundaries to protect your children as they venture out your door into the neighborhood that surrounds you.

But there is another neighborhood where your child plays. It's a much bigger neighborhood with more dangers and bigger risks. Yet many parents are not informed nor equipped on how they can protect their children in this neighborhood. The neighborhood is called the Internet, and 74% of children ages 8 to 18 go and play in this gigantic neighborhood without ever leaving home.¹

There are two primary dangers that face your child on the internet—and they are not unlike the dangers you protect them from each day in your own neighborhood, at school, and with friends.

1. Your child's own behavior.
2. The predatory behavior of others.

“ 74% of children ages 8 to 18 go and play in this gigantic neighborhood without ever leaving home. ”



Your child's own behavior

Parents set boundaries for their children every day. Children need boundaries, not for restriction alone, but simply to keep them safe. Play in the yard, stay away from power lines, don't talk to strangers—these are all boundaries we set to protect our children.

Whether your child is at school or play, there are also social behaviors you do and do not permit. Swearing, lying, telling off-color jokes, using inappropriate remarks, and even casual comments about drugs or criminal activity are just some examples of the boundaries many parents set to protect their children. So, how can you help your child to stay within the boundaries and stay safe online?

Many parents have already enacted measures such as site blocking—restricting their child's access to known sites with illicit content. This is a vital first step to protecting children online. But content blocking is only the beginning. Setting boundaries on content can only prevent your child's exposure to such content. What if your child is engaging in dangerous behavior with friends on Facebook or Myspace, reading about it in emails, chatting about it over IM?

Moreover, dangerous behavior is not always the obvious rule-breaking we first think of. Troubled children who may endanger themselves or others are turning to the Internet to express their feelings. In the aftermath of recent tragedies—crime, violence, and suicide—investigations have uncovered online activity that could have alerted parents to their child's need if only it had been discovered.

“ protection is not just about where your child may go, but what your child is doing while there. ”

The first and most important realization about protecting your child on the Internet is that protection is not just about where your child may go, but what your child is doing while there. In order to protect your child online the same way you would offline, you need to be able to monitor your child's behavior in an ever-increasing network of cyber-communities such as email, IM, social media, and chat rooms.

¹ *Generation M: Media in the Lives of 8-18 Year-olds* – Kaiser Family Foundation (www.kff.org)



The predatory behavior of others

With each new headline, parents are reminded again and again that serious dangers loom from even the most unsuspecting people interacting with their children daily. Wherever children gather—at school, at playgrounds, at parks, and even religious gatherings—more and more care is being taken to prevent the unthinkable predatory behavior of ill-intending predators. Even so, the place where children are most vulnerable is not in any of these environments. The greatest danger posed to children lurks in the unseen corners of the vast Internet world.

Thanks to the National Sex Offender Registry, parents can take great steps to protect their children from known predators in their neighborhoods and schools. But what about those who have not yet been found and prosecuted? What about the would-be predators with assumed online identities? What about the predators who fail to register as the law requires?

In addition, there is another kind of predator placing children at risk on the Internet. In October, 2006, a harassing behavior called “cyberbullying” led to a thirteen-year-old’s eventual suicide. And, while most cases do not end with such tragic results, parents are realizing that the same bullying behavior that plagues playgrounds can become even more dangerous in the unrestricted world of cyber communities.

Protecting your child online today means taking the time to know who your child is friends with—just as you already do in the offline world. With the advent of social media, adults and children alike have the opportunity like never before to foster relationships with a whole host of people online—most are harmless, but some are not. As a parent, you want to encourage your child to develop socially with the latest mediums available, but knowing they are safe as they do so is of chief importance.

² ABC News (2007, November 19). *Parents: Cyber Bullying Led to Teen’s Suicide*. (<http://abcnews.go.com/GMA/Story?id=3882520>)



SECTION TWO

HOW CAN MCGRUFF SAFEGUARD HELP?

McGruff, the well-known icon of the National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC), has been taking a bite out of crime for generations. Today, McGruff SafeGuard helps parents to protect their children online by monitoring activity, keeping parent's informed, and even preventing potentially dangerous relationships from forming. McGruff SafeGuard is designed not only around where your children go on the Internet, but also what your child does—what activities they engage in, conversations they have, and people they interact with—once they arrive. And, through a partnership with the NCPC, the McGruff SafeGuard software is made available to all parents free of charge.

Monitoring your child's activity

First and foremost, McGruff SafeGuard is a monitoring tool. The first obstacle to parenting your child in the Internet age is simply knowing what your child is doing. McGruff Safeguard is a parenting tool that gives you the insight you need into your child's daily activity in order to keep him/her safe from Internet danger.

McGruff SafeGuard monitors your child's communication in a wide range of mediums—including email, instant messaging, and chat. More importantly, McGruff SafeGuard will even monitor your child's activity on popular social media sites such as MySpace and Facebook, which offer kids more varied ways to interact and communicate with friends than ever before.

“ a library of thousands of known acronyms and code-names for drugs, criminal behaviors, expletive terms, etc. ”



Understand your child's activity

As McGruff SafeGuard helps you monitor the flood of emails, posts, tweets, chats, IM's, status updates, and other online activity that your child is having, we can also make sure you understand what you read. McGruff SafeGuard will analyze text not only using traditional keywords, but also a library of thousands of known acronyms and code-names for drugs, criminal behaviors, expletive terms, etc.

As a parent using McGruff SafeGuard, you will also have access to this acronym library. Does your child use words like "POS" or "LMIRL" in his/her chat? McGruff SafeGuard's "KidSaurus" translates these acronyms, as well as emoticons (smiley faces), into real words such as "Parent over shoulder" or "Let's meet in real life."

Prevent dangerous relationships

Another unique way that McGruff SafeGuard helps you to protect your child from Internet danger is by placing control in your hands over who your child interacts with. As part of the ongoing monitoring that takes place, McGruff SafeGuard gives you insight into not only what your child says online, but who they are saying it with, and what is being said to your child.

When you identify potentially dangerous behavior, you can block future interaction with the user in question. McGruff SafeGuard also actively prevents your child from interacting with people who have already been identified as potential threats or predators.



SECTION THREE

HOW DOES MCGRUFF SAFEGUARD WORK?

McGruff SafeGuard is a parenting tool designed to offer you the insight and control needed to protect your child online. The software is flexible and easy-to-use, allowing you to monitor your children as you see fit without hassle.

You Set the Rules

The first step in using McGruff SafeGuard is setting the rules—telling the software what behaviors you wish to monitor. McGruff SafeGuard can monitor as much or as little as you desire—including profanity, drugs, discriminatory or racial language, and even religious blasphemy.

Additionally, as children are entering the online community at younger ages than ever before, McGruff SafeGuard offers age-appropriate content filtering. As the parent, you can choose to filter the content your child can access based on their age, or manually block specific websites based on your own discretion.

Private Reporting

Once the McGruff SafeGuard software has been installed on your child's computer, you never need access to the computer again. Through our easy-to-use online interface, you can view current reports on your child's internet activity—including chat, email, instant message, social media, etc.—whenever it is convenient for you.

Instant Alerts

In the event that McGruff SafeGuard identifies a danger in your child's behavior, you can receive instant alerts via email or even text message on your mobile phone. Know immediately if your child is at risk. In addition, you can also choose to receive daily or weekly summary reports of conversations and emails your child has had online.



Collaborative Predator Blocking

McGruff SafeGuard's patent-pending technology for blocking sexual predators harnesses the combined power of all users. If you suspect someone chatting with your child may be a predator, you can report the person with the click of a button. After the McGruff SafeGuard Safety Desk verifies the incident, that predator is not only blocked from communicating with your child, but also every other child protected by McGruff SafeGuard. This means that your child also enjoys the protection of over 100,000 parents and growing who all care about their children's safety.

Password Capture

Some scenarios require drastic measures on the parent's part in order to protect a child. McGruff SafeGuard can capture your child's username and password, giving you full access to take any measure necessary to protect your child from endangering him/herself or others.



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