

Internet-Related Safety Tips for Teens

1. Don't give out personal information about yourself, your family situation, your school, your telephone number, or your address.
2. If you become aware of the sharing, use, or viewing of child pornography online, immediately report this to the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children at 1-800-843-5678.
3. When in chatrooms remember that not everyone may be who they say they are. For example a person who says "she" is a 14-year-old girl from New York may really be a 42-year-old man from California.¹
4. If someone harasses you online, says anything inappropriate, or does anything that makes you feel uncomfortable, contact your Internet service provider.
5. Know that there are rules many Internet Service Providers (ISP) have about online behavior. If you disobey an ISP's rules, your ISP may penalize you by disabling your account, and sometimes every account in a household, either temporarily or permanently.
6. Consider volunteering at your local library, school, or Boys & Girls Club to help younger children online. Many schools and nonprofit organizations are in need of people to help set up their computers and Internet capabilities.
7. A friend you meet online may not be the best person to talk to if you are having problems at home, with your friends, or at school - remember the teenage "girl" from New York in Tip number three? If you can't find an adult in your school, church, club, or neighborhood to talk to, Covenant House is a good place to call at 1-800-999-9999. The people there provide counseling to kids, refer them to local shelters, help them with law enforcement, and can serve as mediators by calling their parents.
8. If you are thinking about running away, a friend from online (remember the 14-year-old girl) may not be the best person to talk to. If there is no adult in your community you can find to talk to, call the National Runaway Switchboard at 1-800-621-4000. Although some of your online friends may seem to really listen to you, the Switchboard will be able to give you honest, useful answers to some of your questions about what to do when you are depressed, abused, or thinking about running away.²

¹Adapted from Teen Safety on the Information Highway by Lawrence J. Magid. Copyright© respectively 1994 and 1998 National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC). All rights reserved.

²Adapted from Children Online: The ABCs for Parenting: When Is Your Child Ready by The Children's Partnership. Reprinted with permission of The Children's Partnership. <http://www.childrenspartnership.org>