

Cyberspace is the environment created by communication technologies such as the Internet (Net), mobile phones and other devices. Cyberspace has opened up a whole new world of instant global communication. Cyberspace can be:

- An incredible place for learning and entertainment
- A powerful link to distant friends and family
- A place to meet new people
- A source of information on just about anything

Communication technologies are extremely useful tools. However, some people use these tools for anti-social and/or criminal activities. You need to know how your children might be at risk and how you can help protect them.



Risks children and young people may face

- ★ They may meet people in cyberspace (online) who want to frighten, bully or harm them; there may be no way of knowing who these new 'friends' are.
- ★ They may take part in chat, often through their computer, mobile phone or games console. They may agree to a face to face meeting with someone they have been communicating with online. Unfortunately this might be someone who may harm them.
- ★ They may be cyberbullied by text, Instant Messaging (IM) or email. Cyberbullying can also take many other forms. The effects can be devastating, and many victims are not reporting the abuse.
- ★ They may see extreme content that upsets or disturbs them, such as violence or illegal pornography.
- ★ They may be encouraged to participate in criminal activities such as harassment, defrauding, hacking or trading in illegal pornography.
- ★ They may not question the truth of what they see in cyberspace. (Anyone can post information on the Internet, including anti-social groups or hate groups looking for new members.)
- ★ They may gang up on others when chatting/texting or when they are using social networking sites.
- ★ They may become overly involved in online activities and neglect other social pastimes, family and homework.

Things parents can do

- ★ Explore cyberspace yourself, and with your children. If you are a beginner, there will be courses in your community. Ask your local school.
- ★ Keep the home computer(s) in a family living area, rather than a private area such as the child's bedroom. This will help you monitor home use, but do not forget there are many other points of access.
- ★ Talk with your children about their use of mobile phones and the Internet, and the risks associated with this. Discuss family rules with them.

Even if you feel extremely worried when children tell you about things that upset them in cyberspace, respond calmly. If you react too strongly (for example taking away the technology), your child may hesitate to confide in you again.

- ★ Computer security is a must for everyone! This starts with Net basics, installing and regularly updating anti-virus, anti-spyware and firewall software and updating your operating system.
- ★ Some computer security products include content filters and other controls that parents can use to help shield young children from inappropriate content.
- ★ Talk with the parents of your children's friends about their rules for cybersafety.
- ★ Watch your credit card - it's easy to use a credit card to buy things on the Net and it can be used as proof of age at certain sites.
- ★ For help, information and advice, get in touch with the Internet Safety Group (see back page) or check the website www.netsafe.org.nz

Keeping children and young people safer at school

Here are questions you can ask your child's school:

- ★ **Do you have a cybersafety policy?**
Ask to see it and discuss it with other parents.
- ★ **Do you have staff and student use agreements?**
- ★ **What cybersafety education can the school offer parents?**
- ★ **Do you use the NetSafe Kit for Schools, as recommended by the Ministry of Education?**

The Kit is available on www.netsafe.org.nz.
- ★ **How do you manage children's use of the Internet, mobile phones and other communication technologies?**

Critical thinking skills are important for everyone in cyberspace. You can help children question whoever and whatever they encounter and to think carefully before responding.

Police Education Officers

Police education officers have been trained to help schools and parents use cyberspace safely. Cybersafety issues are also included as part of the Police **Keeping Ourselves Safe** and **Kia Kaha** programmes. Ask your child's school if they are using these programmes. You can find out more about them on the website www.police.govt.nz/service/yes

The Police Youth Education Service and the Internet Safety Group are working in partnership to keep Kiwi kids safer in cyberspace.

For more information about Internet safety contact:

Internet Safety Group (Netsafe)
(09) 362 0971
0508 NETSAFE (toll free)
queries@netsafe.org.nz

- ★ For the latest information, visit the ISG website: www.netsafe.org.nz. You can send a query from any page of this website.
- ★ For your local police education officer, enquire at your local police station.
- ★ Xtra provides tips for safe surfing at www.xtra.co.nz/safesurfing

Keeping Kiwi Kids Safer in Cyberspace

*A pamphlet for
parents & caregivers*



NetSafe
The Internet Safety Group

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