

# Internet and Digital Technology for Parents

## Tip Sheet # 1 – Safety in the home

Children and young people of 2011 live in a digital world. They are members of an increasingly complex and globalised society that is rich in both technology and information. Having the capabilities and confidence to interact with these technologies is critical to success in all aspects of life in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Young people need to develop sound creative and critical thinking, problem solving, decision making, communication, collaboration, negotiation and self direction skills. They also need the ability to find, select, structure and evaluate information efficiently and effectively.

Schools use the internet and digital technologies to support the teaching and learning of such skills. They strive to create engaging learning environments with opportunities that stimulate, extend and deepen student learning. Schools are obligated to provide a learning environment that integrates internet and digital technology use in a safe and responsible manner. To do so schools employ a variety of strategies and mechanisms such as teacher supervision, internet filters and tracking tools.

However, at home the internet and digital technologies are used as a study resource for students and as a social space to meet, play and chat. It isn't uncommon for students to be *'doing their homework'* with numerous other screens open for different tasks and activities such as chatting, sending real time messages, listening to or downloading music, contributing to social networking spaces like Facebook or even gaming or sharing videos from their mobile phones.

Using the internet at home can be an appropriate leisure activity that is interactive and enjoyable. It is useful to view a visit an outing to an online space as no different to any day/night out that your child may have and therefore the same rule and standards of behaviour apply.

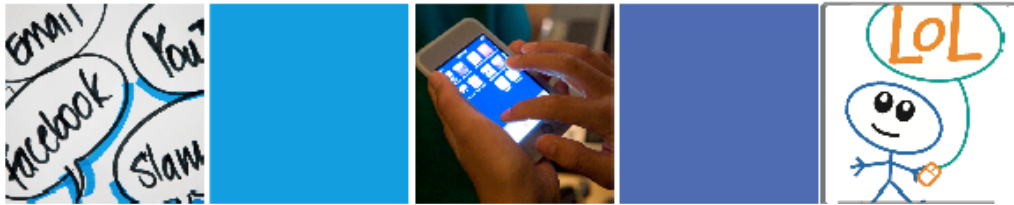
If you have the internet at home, encourage your child to show you what they are doing online and ask them questions while they are doing so. Make some time to sit with your child to find out how they are using the internet and who else is involved in their online activities. Place the computer in a shared place in the house, not your child's bedroom. This will help you to monitor where your child is visiting online and who they might meet there.

When children or young adults leave their home, most parents want to know:

- Where they are going and who they are going with
- Whether this place is safe – who is supervising them?
- What they are doing, and
- When they will be home.

These questions when applied to an online space change very little. Parents may like to ask their child:

- Where they are visiting online
- Whether these places are safe - are they moderated?
- Who they are meeting online and whether they are real life friends or 'online friends' who they have never met.



- What they are doing and saying. Are they revealing information that may make them unsafe or writing or receiving information which is harmful or hurtful?
- How long they intend to be online. The availability for this as a 24/7 activity can affect students' time offline and needs to be appropriate so it is reasonable to question how much time is being spent online.

Research shows that children and young people may not approach an adult for help because they don't think adults understand their online 'stuff'. They also believe that by admitting to a mistake or highlighting a situation they may be blamed and this may lead a parent to ban their access. It is therefore essential that parents and/or guardians display an interest in their child's online activity and actively support them if an incident does occur.

### *Support links for parents*

- **Cybersmart** ([www.cybersmart.gov.au](http://www.cybersmart.gov.au)) provides activities; resources and practical advice to help parents safely enjoy the online world.
- **Childnet International** (<http://www.childnet-int.org>) provides resources on e-safety information for parents and carers.
- **NetSafe** ([www.netsafe.org.nz](http://www.netsafe.org.nz)) provides cybersafety education for all New Zealanders, but its information also holds relevance for Australian parents.