

# Online Safety

Here are some simple tips to help you stay safe online

## Information for teachers:

- **Don't give out information simply because it is requested.**

Countless websites ask you to give them your full name, date of birth, address, phone number, email address etc when you might just want to search their catalogues or read messages on a discussion forum. Give as little information as possible, and if they insist on information that doesn't seem justified, leave to go elsewhere. Some people give false information on such sites especially if they don't plan to return in the future. Be especially cautious of 'profiles' and 'directory listings' for instant messaging programs or websites.

- **Block or ignore unwanted users.**

Whether you are in a chat room or using IM, you should always check out what options/preferences are available to you and take advantage of the "Block all users except those on my buddy list" or adding unwanted usernames to an ignore list in chat. If anyone bothers you and won't go away, put them on block or ignore!

- **Don't allow others to draw you into conflict.**

That may mean that you don't defend yourself from personal attacks. It's safer to ignore them and keep yourself above the fray. When you respond to a harasser in any way, you're letting him/her know that s/he has succeeded. No matter how hard it is to do, do not interact with a harasser. When s/he realises that s/he isn't getting a reaction from you, in most cases s/he'll move on to find an easier target

- **Remember that once you post a picture online you can never completely remove this.**

Posting images of yourself online can never really be private. Other internet users can screen shot or copy your images and use them as their own. Your images can be altered or even passed on for use on other sites. (Further session around Sexting to ensure young people are aware of the risks in terms of consequences)

- **If a place becomes stressful, leave it.**

There are many stressors we cannot avoid easily in our lives, so why put up with those we can avoid? If someone is being unpleasant in a chat room or on a discussion board, there are countless others that are likely to be more pleasant. If another visitor to a chat room or forum is harassing you why would you want to be there? Don't allow yourself to get tied up in battles.

- **When you change, really change!**

If you need to change your username or email address to break off contact with a harasser, using a variation on your real name or anything you've used in the past leaves tracks allowing the harasser to find you again fairly easily. If you've always been 'Kitty' and you change your handle to 'Cat', you haven't really changed. The harasser knows that you have particular hobbies or interests. For instance, perhaps you like to play Scrabble. If s/he's really obsessed or simply has too much time on her/his hands, s/he's likely to poke around in different Scrabble-related forums looking for feline names to see if he can find you again.

- **Watch what you "say" online.**

When you do participate online, be careful – only type what you would say to someone's face. If you wouldn't say it to a stranger standing next to you why in the world would you 'say' it online?

- **Know what's in your signature file.**

Don't put your email address, home address or phone number.

- **Never give your password to anyone.**

Your ISP will never, ever ask for your password while you are online or via email. In fact, they shouldn't ever contact you to ask you for your password. They can get it from their own records, if they really need it for any reason. If you call them for support, there are a few rather rare instances in which the support person might ask you for your password – but you called them, right? So you know, it's really a support person from your ISP that you're talking to. There's no legitimate reason for anyone to ever contact you to ask for your password.

#### **Information for Adults:**

- **Personally monitor children's internet use, even if you have trained them in what information they can and cannot give out.**

There is no software in the world that can replace the active involvement of a concerned parent.

- **Instruct children to never, ever give out personal information.**

Their real name, address or phone number online without your permission. Consider posing as a stranger to befriend them just to see what you can learn.

- **Be very cautious about putting any pictures of yourself or your children online anywhere or allowing anyone else (relatives, schools, dance academies, sports associations etc) to publish any photos.**

Some stalkers become obsessed because of an image.