Online Gaming Tips for Kids, Tweens and Teens

Online gaming is fun and interactive. You can play with friends or with people across the globe. Make sure you know how to protect yourself and your personal information while playing online. Following these simple guidelines can prevent problems later. The first step is **STOP. THINK. CONNECT.**

It's your game. Take control.

- If another player is making you feel uncomfortable, tell a trusted adult. Remember that you can always kick a player out of the game if they are making you uncomfortable.
- Learn how to block and/or report another player if they are making you uncomfortable. Keep a record of what the other player said, but do not engage them.
- Playing with people you don't know or who aren't your good friends? Time to use a disguise.
  - Use a safe Game Name: something cool like SecretNinja99 or LeTigreVerde
  - Use an avatar instead of the webcam. Sure, the webcam is cool, but strangers don't need to know what you look like. Embrace an air of mystery.
  - Use the voice altering features if you have them. Otherwise, avoid voice chat to protect your anonymity.

Keep a Clean Machine.
Talk to your parents or guardians about how they can make sure your computer is protected against computer viruses, spyware and other bugs.

- **Keep security software current**: Having the latest security software, web browser, and operating system are the best defenses against viruses, malware, and other online threats.
- **Protect all devices that connect to the Internet**: Computers, smart phones, gaming systems, and other web-enabled devices all need protection from viruses and malware.

Protect Your Personal Information.
Personal information is any information that can be used to identify you or your accounts. Examples include your name, address, phone number, user names and passwords, pictures, birthday and social security number.

- **Secure your accounts**: Ask for protection beyond passwords. Many account providers now offer additional ways for you verify who you are before you conduct business on that site.
- **Make passwords long and strong**: Combine capital and lowercase letters with numbers and symbols to create a more secure password. (Remember, passwords are the keys to your accounts. The only people who need to know them are YOU and your parents. Not your brother, sister, best friend, or teacher – just you.)
- **Own your online presence**: When available, set the privacy and security settings on websites to your comfort level for information sharing. It's ok to limit how and with whom you share information.

Be Web Wise.

Stay informed of the latest Internet developments, know what to do if something goes wrong and be open with your parents about what you are doing online.

- **Stay current. Keep pace with new ways to stay safe online**. Check trusted websites for the latest information, share with friends and family, and encourage them to be web wise.
- **Think before you act**: Be wary of communications that implores you to act immediately, offers something that sounds too good to be true, or asks for personal information. Do not accept downloads from strangers. This includes cheat programs that may claim to help you perform better in the game, but really could be carrying malware.

Be a Good Online Citizen.

It is easy to say things from behind a computer screen that you would never say face to face. Maintain the same level of courtesy online that you would in the real world.

- **Safer for me more secure for all**: What you do online has the potential to affect everyone – at home and around the world. Practicing good online habits benefits the global digital community.

STOP. Before you use the Internet, take time to understand the risks and learn how to spot potential problems.

THINK. Take a moment to be certain the path is clear ahead. Watch for warning signs and consider how your actions online could impact your safety, or your family's.

CONNECT. Enjoy the Internet with greater confidence, knowing you've taken the right steps to safeguard yourself and your computer.