



Protecting Your Child's Privacy Online

The Internet can be a wonderful resource for kids. They can go online to get help with their homework. They can learn about distant times and places, or play online games. Unfortunately, for some kids, “the information superhighway” can lead to trouble. Kids could expose their families to identity theft. A wrong turn on the Web could lead to a loss of innocence or result in physical harm. The following tips can help you keep your child safe in the online world.

Make the Internet a Family Affair

- ⦿ Before letting your kids go online, talk to them about the rules of the road for the information superhighway. You want to be sure it leads to safe, appropriate content.
- ⦿ Surf the Internet with your child, especially at first.
- ⦿ Explain to your kids that they should never give personal information on a Web site without first getting your permission. Personal information includes names, phone numbers, addresses, age or birth date, interests or hobbies, passwords and credit card numbers.
- ⦿ Let your kids know that providing personal information to the wrong person online could be dangerous.

Privacy Is the Best Policy

- ⦿ Find and read the privacy policy on a Web site before giving up any personal information. Look for how the site will use and protect the personal information. Make sure you trust the site before you let your child spend time on it or give information on it.¹
- ⦿ California law requires a commercial Web site that collects personal information to post a privacy policy. The policy must list the kinds of personal information the site collects. It must also tell if it shares that information with outside companies and the kinds of companies it shares with.²
- ⦿ A federal law requires Web sites to have a parent's permission before collecting any personal information from children under 13.³
- ⦿ You can give your consent to the collection of your child's personal information and still say “no” to having the information shared with a third party.



Learn More About Online Privacy and Safety

- ⦿ The California Office of Privacy Protection's Online Privacy Web page has information on state and federal online privacy laws, tips on reading privacy policies, and useful links to other information, at www.privacy.ca.gov.
- ⦿ The California Coalition for Children's Internet Safety's Web site contains safety tips and links to a wide range of resources for parents, teachers, and community organizations, at www.cybersafety.ca.gov.
- ⦿ The Federal Trade Commission has information on online privacy for parents, teachers and kids on their Children's Privacy Web page, at www.ftc.gov/bcp/menus/consumer/data/child.shtm.
- ⦿ A group of non-profit privacy organizations headed by the Center for Democracy and Technology has information on kids' privacy in their online Consumer Privacy Guide, at www.consumerprivacyguide.org/kids.
- ⦿ Teenangels, a group of teenage volunteers who have been specially trained, runs programs in schools on responsible and safe Internet surfing for younger kids, parents and teachers. Their Web site has information for kids, teens, and parents, at www.teenangels.org.
- ⦿ Wired Safety, an Internet safety, help and education organization, has information to help people of all ages with things that can go wrong online, at www.wiredsafety.org.

This fact sheet is for informational purposes and should not be construed as legal advice or as policy of the State of California. If you want advice on a particular case, you should consult an attorney or other expert. The fact sheet may be copied, if (1) the meaning of the copied text is not changed or misrepresented, (2) credit is given to the California Office of Privacy, and (3) all copies are distributed free of charge.

Notes

¹ See our *Consumer Information Sheet 6: How to Read a Privacy Policy*, available on the Online Privacy page at www.privacy.ca.gov.

² The Online Privacy Protection Act, California Business and Professions Code §§ 22575-22579, available on the Privacy Laws page at www.privacy.ca.gov.

³ The Children's Online Privacy Protection Act, 16 C.F.R. § 312.5, available on the Privacy Laws page at www.privacy.ca.gov.