



Counselor's Corner

November 2015

Do you know where your children are... in the digital world?

We are used to knowing where our kids are and who they are with. But in the digital world, we are often reduced to the role of spectator, as even our youngest children often understand today's technology better than we do. Many of us are overwhelmed with the prospect of monitoring all of the devices and electronic communication our children have access to on any given day. We are trying to figure out which rules to set and how to enforce them. We have a drinking age and a driving age, but there are no hard rules for what age kids can safely go online solo or text a friend on their cell phone or what our role as parents should be in keeping tabs on our children's digital activity.

Digital life starts early and accelerates at the speed of megabits per second. So much communicating goes on silently via emails, texts, social media and IM's outside of our view. Along with concerns over stranger danger and giving out personal information, there are many other important considerations when a child uses electronic communication. Kids may say things to, or about, each other online that they'd never say in person. This can lead to harmful gossip, cyber bullying and even police involvement, as our laws evolve to keep pace with our digital world.

Many parents feel uncomfortable "spying" on their child's digital life and may not feel it is necessary. But new risks in the digital world continually come up as our technology evolves and new ways of interacting develop. You want to trust your kids but they may not always understand the far-reaching consequences of their actions. It's important to ask probing questions and keep a close eye on what they're doing to keep them safe. The difference between responsible monitoring and spying is letting your child know ahead of time that you will be supervising their digital lives and what rules you will enforce. Start the conversation early and keep it going.

Adopted from Parenting.com article: "[How to Spy on Your Child Online.](#)"

Some ways to supervise your child's digital life:

- Keep your digital devices where the family gathers.
- Discuss safety rules and time limits.
- Ask questions about what they are doing and show interest in their digital life.
- Learn to use your browser's history function to see what sites have been visited and what's been downloaded.
- Ask questions if you discover that the history was cleared by your child.
- Consider using a software monitoring program such as WebWatcher or Net Nanny or learn to set the parental controls built into your computer's operating system.

Please visit specific websites for more information and instructions on how to set parental controls.

<https://www.yahoo.com/tech/how-to-set-up-parental-controls-on-your-kids-new-106627999929.html>

November is Internet Safety Month as lessons are taught in all of our schools as part of our Guidance Curriculum. There are many internet sites available that are excellent resources to help you make informed decisions about your child's internet use.

Web Sites:

<http://www.getnetwise.org>

<http://www.wiredkids.org>

<http://www.enough.org>

<http://www.mysecurecyberspace.org>

<http://www.netlingo.com>

<http://www.netmom.com>

For further details or information, contact your child's guidance counselor:

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