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Technology Safety Inquiries

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***Editor's Note:** The following information is comprised of the answers to several common questions regarding technology safety.*

***Question**—Regarding technology, what is the best way to protect a child from sexual abuse?*

Answer—As electronic technology changes daily, a parent or caring adult must do the following:

1. Monitor a child's Internet use at home and on the cell phone consistently.
2. Decide on a reasonable amount of time that a young person can spend online each day and be prepared to enforce it.
3. Keep the computer in a public area of the house such as a living room or kitchen and never in the child's bedroom (Doing this is not a violation of the child's privacy; it is a safeguarding measure and part of your responsibility as a parent or caring adult).
4. Never allow a young person to be online immediately after school, without a parent or caring adult in the house.

***Question**—Regarding technology, is there anything that we as a family can do to protect our children?*

Answer—Every family should establish "family Internet rules." As soon as young people begin to use the Internet on their own, it is a good idea to come up with a list of rules that everyone in the family can all agree upon. These rules should also include whether your children can use or visit social networking sites and specific rules for utilizing them. Immediately establish that the fact that you will monitor the site and its contents. Proactive parenting techniques regarding social networking sites are needed today not only to protect your child or teen against child molesters but other social networking dangers such as online bullying by other children.

***Question**—Should I allow my daughter or son to join an Internet social networking site?*

Answer—Prior to making this decision, you should first educate yourself about the social networking site. Once you have identified the social networking site that is most popular in your area, you must evaluate the site that your child plans to use and carefully read the privacy policy, code of conduct, and the rules. You should also find out if the site monitors the content that people post on their pages. The recommended age for signing up for most social networking sites is usually 13 and over, although many underage young people still join by simply claiming that they are older. If your children are under the recommended age for these sites, do not let them use the sites. Most importantly, if you have allowed your child or teen to join and create a profile you should periodically review your child's page and their friends' pages for content. In some schools, social status is based upon how many "friends" one has listed on one's profile or home page. It is, therefore, essential that caring adults not only understand how these sites work, but also that they remain actively involved in monitoring how children and teens are using the sites.

Question—What personal information should I allow my son or daughter to post on a social networking site?

Answer—It is always best to restrict the posting of personal information.As a young person creates a profile page, verify that he or she does not use a full name. Only allow the use of a first name or a nickname, but never an inappropriate nickname that would attract the wrong kind of attention by an online predator. Also, do not allow your children to post the full names of their friends on their profile page. In addition, prohibit posting identifiable information in your child's profile such as home address, cell phone number, and date of birth. It is important to be aware that some social networking sites allow members to join public groups that include everyone who goes to a certain school, or claims that they attend the school. Be careful when your children reveal this and other information that could be used to identify them, such as the name of the town they live in, especially if it is a small one.

Question—Should I allow my son or daughter to post a photograph on the Internet?

Answer—Once a photograph is posted on the Internet, it is there forever. One never knows who has viewed the photo or has copied it and sent it to someone else. If a photo is posted it is best to be cautious about details in photographs. It is best to explain to a child that photographs can reveal a lot of personal or private information. Children should be encouraged not to post photographs of themselves or their friends with clearly identifiable details such as street signs, license plates on cars, the home address numbers, or the name of their school on their clothing.

Question—How does an online predator use a social networking site to locate a vulnerable child?

Answer—As a caring adult, you've probably already encouraged young people *not* to communicate with strangers online. However, young people utilize social networking web sites to write journals and poems that often express strong emotions. Explain to children that these words can be read by anyone with access to the Internet, even if they have been marked private and that predators often search out emotionally vulnerable young people. Once a vulnerable child is located online predator attempts to become first a friend and then a confidant of the intended victim.

Question—My children have many online friends that they talk with, is there any danger in that?

Answer—Children and teens should be encouraged to electronically communicate only with friends or people they actually know in person—not the virtual world. Young people are in real danger when they actually meet "Internet friends" who are in fact strangers that they've only communicated with online. As a caring adult, you must remain adamant that children never physically meet anyone in person that they've communicated with only online.

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1) Regarding the posting of photographs to the Internet, what is a main aspect to keep in mind?

A) ⭕ Only post high-resolution photographs.

B) ⭕ Only people who have been given permission can view a young person's posted photographs..

C) ⭕ Once a photograph has been posted to the Internet, it is there forever.

D) ⭕ None of the above.