

The Librarian's Guide to Great Web Sites for Kids



The Internet, World Wide Web, information superhighway, and cyberspace are all words used to describe an exciting and fun learning tool that continues to offer families and children access to a wide variety of information.

At the touch of a keyboard or screen, at the click of a mouse or by voice command, it is possible to view a copy of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address or today's breaking news. Children can find assistance with their science projects, watch a movie trailer, or send electronic messages by e-mail, instant messages, or chat, to a friend across the street, in another town, or another country.

Using this technology wisely with your children will help keep them safe and provide fun and educational experiences for the whole family.

Since the sheer volume of places to go and things to do online can be overwhelming, parents and children might need help finding the most useful and appropriate information on the Internet. Librarians are experts at selecting, organizing, and categorizing information, making it easier for you and your children to use. Today, librarians are applying those same skills to cyberspace so that you and your child can make the most of the vast resources the Internet offers.

We hope that these tips and guidelines will help you and your children enjoy the benefits of the Internet. Remember: It's not the technology, but how it is used that makes a difference in a child's life.

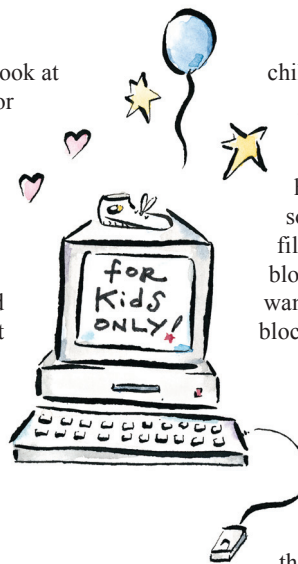
Keep up with the Internet

How do parents and children keep up with new technologies and the opportunities they provide for fun and learning?

Whether you have Internet access from home, libraries and librarians are always there to help. Almost all libraries also offer free Internet access for adults and children.

A great starting point is the American Library Association's "Great Web Sites for Kids" (www.ala.org/greatsites). These sites are fun to visit and many of them are educational. They are easy to navigate, have clearly identified authoring sources, and make effective use of the Internet to create unique, interactive experiences.

You and your children can also look at your local library's Web pages for recommended Web sites, take classes on Internet use for children and adults, get homework help, and attend the special programs your local libraries, schools, or community centers provide to get acquainted with the newest and best Internet technology and content. This way both you and your children can become experts in what the Internet has to offer.



Keep up with Children

Spending time online with your children is the best way both to learn about the Internet and to teach your children responsibility, good conduct and the values that are important to you. Ask children to share their favorite Web sites and what they like about them. Help them discover Web sites that can assist with their homework, hobbies, and other special interests. A set of suggested criteria is available at the Great Web Sites for Kids. These criteria are helpful for parents and children when considering the quality or validity of any Web site.

The vast majority of Internet sites are safe. But, like the real world, the virtual world contains content that may not be appropriate for children. Parents also should examine Web sites for racial, gender, and other biases they feel are inappropriate for their

children. For your home computer, parents need to learn about and decide if filtering software has an appropriate role in your household. Studies on such software have demonstrated that filters are not perfect. They cannot block everything you might not want your child to see, and may block information that is helpful.

Whether or not a filter is in place, guidance from parents and other adults is crucial in creating safe and positive Internet experiences for your children. We strongly recommend that you supervise older as well as younger children's Internet use at home and at the library. It's a good idea to place computers in the kitchen, family room, or

Sites for Parents and Caregivers



Child Safety on the Information Highway

☞ www.safekids.com/child_safety.htm

A guide to Internet safety for young people, originally from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children and Interactive Services Association.

Connect for Kids

☞ www.connectforkids.org

This nonprofit site provides news and information on issues affecting kids and families, over 1,500 helpful links to national and local resources, and two e-mail newsletters.

KidsHealth.org

☞ www.kidshealth.org

Articles on many aspects of child health—for parents, kids, and health professionals—from the Nemours Foundation.

Mother Goose Pages

☞ www-personal.umich.edu/~pfa/dreamhouse/nursery/rhymes.html

A collection of nursery rhymes, with tips on how to share them with children of different ages.

Find out more at
www.ala.org/greatsites

Sites for Kids

Harry Potter

☞ www.scholastic.com/harrypotter

Scholastic has created a fun-filled site for Harry Potter fans of all ages. Click on this site and find a trivia game, a pronunciation guide, owl posts and more.

Seussville

☞ www.seussville.com

The Cat in the Hat, Sam-I-Am, Horton and the Whos, and the rest of the Seuss characters welcome you to Seussville, Dr. Seuss's playground in cyberspace. You can play games, chat with the Cat in the Hat, win prizes, find out about new Dr. Seuss books and CD-ROMs, and much, much more!

Time for Kids

☞ www.timeforkids.com

This companion to the Time for Kids magazine connects youth with up-to-the-minute news and current events. The site also includes a dictionary, measurement conversion table, country information and games. Full-text articles are available in English and Spanish.

Congress for Kids

☞ www.congressforkids.net

Learn the basics about the U.S. government with activities led by Uncle Sam.

Find out more at
www.ala.org/greatsites

living room so that you can see your children using it. Young children should never be allowed to "surf the Net" alone. Review your safety guidelines with them on a regular basis.

Suggested Family Internet Safety Guidelines

The best way to ensure your child's safety on the Internet is to be there. Of course, that is not always possible. Just as you teach your children rules about dealing with strangers outside the home, you must provide rules for communicating online at home or elsewhere. Discuss your library or community center's Internet use policy with children as well as your family rules. You may also decide to

make an "Internet Use Agreement" with your child. Getnetwise.org offers sample contracts.

Suggested Rules for Kids

- ☞ Always ask your parents' permission before using your full name, address, telephone number, or school name anywhere on the Internet.
- ☞ Don't respond to messages that make you feel uncomfortable or uneasy.
- ☞ Never tell anyone your passwords.
- ☞ Do not give out credit card numbers without parents' permission.
- ☞ Never arrange to meet in person someone you've met online unless you discuss it with your parents and an adult goes with you.
- ☞ Do not believe everything you see or hear online. Some people may be trying to sell you something or spread inaccurate information. If information you see or hear seems untrustworthy or frightening, discuss with your parents or other adults you trust.



Suggested Netiquette for Kids

It's also important to teach children "netiquette"—how to behave online. Such straightforward rules as not typing in all capital letters (it looks like you are shouting), being polite, and keeping quiet in chat rooms until you get a sense of what people are talking about, are simply good manners as well as common sense.

Definitions

Just as there are different TV channels and kinds of magazines, there are many types of places to visit in cyberspace.

Here are a few examples:

World Wide Web sites often contain colorful graphics, sound and animation, as well as text, and each may be linked to many other Web sites. Many of the most informative sites are sponsored by educational and nonprofit organizations. Some

sites are sponsored by movie companies, toy manufacturers, publishers, and other firms to sell their products. There also are thousands of sites created by individuals to express an idea, pursue a hobby, or "publish" their own vision.

Databases offer an enormous quantity of searchable information. Whether compiled by a commercial entity or other institutions such as museums and the federal or local government, experts tend to be consulted or in charge of content selection.

Search Engines are computer programs that search and store information about Web sites and allow users to locate web sites based on such information. Unlike a database, a search engine is not composed of human experts in its compilation process and cannot judge the validity or authority of each Web site found.

E-mail is electronic mail that makes it possible to send a written message to one person or thousands almost instantaneously.

Instant Messaging (IM, IMing, ICQ, etc.) allows people to see if their friends are using the Internet and then send messages back and forth in "real time." This combines the "instant" aspects of a chat with the messaging aspects of e-mail. IM is also available on some cellular phones.

Blog (Weblog) is a frequent, chronological publication of personal thoughts and Web links—a personal online journal that can be viewed by all.

Chat rooms are generally devoted to particular subjects like baseball or video games. Participants can talk to each other in "real time," with their remarks appearing as they type them in.

Usenet groups are postings on specific topics, where the comments—and sometimes images—follow one another in a "bulletin board" style.

Discussion/Mailing Lists (listserv®) are email-based online communities that allow subscribing members to exchange ideas on a given topic. List topics range from pure entertainment (movie star fan mailing list) to highly specialized professional discourses (applications of biopsychology).



Association for Library Service to Children

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