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Pay Attention, **IT'S A WIRED WORLD.**

Cyber-bullying. Sexting. Fraud. Identity theft. Parents all over the world read the headlines and worry about their children's online safety. Yet a computer is an essential learning tool and turning off the computer is not always practical.

There are steps you can take to ensure your children are using the Internet safely. The National PTA and Facebook have recently joined forces to develop safety tools for the most-used social networking site; more than 50 million teenagers are on Facebook.

Wherever your child is on the age spectrum, here are tips for setting boundaries at home.

BOUNDARIES UP TO AGE 10

Young children need supervision and clear rules when it comes to Internet use.

- Microsoft recommends that you sit with your children when they use the Internet until they are 10 years old.
- Set clear rules. Make sure they don't share personal information, such as their real name, address, phone number or passwords with people they meet online or friends. Help them create fun nicknames instead.
- Use family safety tools to create appropriate profiles for each family member and to help filter the Internet.
- Protect your children from offensive pop-up windows by using the pop-up blocker that's built into many browsers.

BOUNDARIES AGES 11-14

Children this age tend to be savvier about the Internet, but it's still a good idea to supervise. It might not be practical to physically supervise their use at all times, but there are tools such as Windows Live Family Safety, Windows 7 Parental Controls, or Windows Vista Parental Controls.

- Set safety tools on the medium security setting, which will have some limitations on content, websites and activities.
- Keep Internet-connected computers in an open area to easily supervise your children's activities.
- Encourage your children to tell you if something online makes them feel uncomfortable or threatened. Stay calm and remind your kids they are not in trouble for sharing that information. Praise their behavior and encourage them to come to you again if the same thing happens.

BOUNDARIES AGES 15-18

Teenagers in this category will most likely have almost limitless access to content, websites or activities. But there are still things you can do to keep them safe.

- Keep talking about online lives, friends, and activities, just as you would about other friends and activities. Encourage your teens to tell you if something or someone online makes them feel uncomfortable or threatened in any way.
- Create a list of Internet house rules for your family. Include the kinds of sites that are off-limits, hours, social networking privacy settings, etc. Be aware of the photos that teens post of themselves and their friends.
- As much as possible, keep Internet-connected computers in an open area and not in a teenager's bedroom.
- Know which websites your teenagers visit and whom they talk to. Encourage them to use monitored chat rooms and insist they stay in public chat room areas.
- Tell them never to agree to meet an online friend.
- Teach your children not to download programs, music, or files without your permission.
- Teach your kids responsible, ethical, online behavior. They should not be using the Internet to spread gossip, bully, or threaten others.
- Make sure your teenagers check with you before making financial transactions online (including ordering, buying or selling items) and potential risks.
- Require your child to "friend" you online.

In the fast-paced environment, how do you help your children navigate online?

Continue the conversation at [Facebook.com/myweac](https://www.facebook.com/myweac).