

Internet Safety – Parents Guide

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Introduction:

This guide is to help inform parents in areas of internet safety for the protection of their children. Most studies reveal that a student's first exposure to pornography online is by accident; therefore, preventative measures before a child uses the internet are paramount. Measures should be taken to safeguard your home computer and routine checks to ensure that pornography is not being viewed are a must.

Preventative Measures:

These are simple steps to prevent porn usage on the computer.

- Have the home computer in an open place where there are no doors to close off the room from the rest of the house.
- Lock the computer with a password that only the parents know. Then lock the computer when the parents are not able to facilitate the use of the computer.
- There is a rise in getting students their own home pc or laptop for their room. I strongly caution doing this. A student with a computer in his room is like giving him a playboy and then telling him not to open it. It is setting up your child to fail.
- Purchase an Internet Safety Software. This can be a great tool for keeping track of internet usage if it is on at all times. Also, hide the box that it came in, because the instructions in the box often contain the instructions to disable it.

Understanding the Enemy

When it comes to porn on the internet, it is not just a battle between the parent and the child. There is a third member in this battle and that member is the porn industry. The porn industry is smart and deceptive. They know if they can hook a child, then they probably have an adult customer. Their tactics include...

- Commonly used search words. They use words that are commonly searched for on google.com, yahoo.com, and similar sites as their own taglines. For example, commonly searched words such as "dog" or "cat" may return links to porn sites.
- Step sites. Step sites are sites that lead to porn sites. These normally appear as advertisements. Myspace is a great example of the use of step sites. There are banners with images on them that are appealing to the students, but are not porn, but as they click and go to that site, there are then banners on that site that lead directly to porn sites. Facebook is not far behind myspace in the use of step sites.
- URL Simulating. Don't you just hate it when you think that you typed in espn.com and you actually fat-fingered it and typed in esp.com. Well, this is what the porn industry uses to expose children accidentally to porn. So your child tries to go to Disney.com, but accidentally types in disny.com (not a real porn site), but someone has setup disny.com as a porn site to expose children to porn.

- Porn History Removers (PHR). There are all types of websites advertising the ability to remove the evidence of porn usage on the computer. Well, talk about how to check for PHR later on in this guide.

An incredible amount of porn viewed on the internet is done by teenage boys and girls. Yes, teenage girls are currently the fastest growing viewers of internet porn. A parent must understand the enemy in order to have a chance against it.

Investigating Porn Viewing

There are levels of detail that a parent can go through in investigating the possible viewing of porn. Several of these can be done on a daily basis without much problem and others may require more time. I have divided this next section into the level of time needed to investigate.

Easy (daily)

- Most web browsers have an arrow or button near the box where you would type in the website addresses. Click on that box and simply look at where people have been browsing. Go to those sites that you are not familiar.
- Check the favorites. There are some porn sites that automatically add themselves to a computer's favorites and sometimes children do it on accident. It is helpful if your favorites folder is orderly and organized.

Moderate (weekly)

- Search Temporary Internet Files (TIF). On a pc this can be done by...
 - Open Microsoft Explorer
 - Click Tools along the menu bar
 - Click Internet Options
 - Under Browsing History, click Settings
 - Click View Files

These files are stored on your computer to help you websites load faster in the future, but they also serve as evidence of what sites people have visited. Search through the files that are listed there. Pay close attention to the Internet Address line for websites that you are not familiar with. Also, be sure to pay close attention to the Last Accessed line. Check those dates and times when children were home alone or when you are normally not able to monitor computer usage. After searching through the TIF I would suggest that you delete them all just to help you in future searches.

Detailed (monthly)

- Search for Images and Movies. Children may hide pictures or movies on the computer. This is more common if the child has his own computer. It is also very common to move these images and movies to an iPod. Either way, it is a good precautionary measure to search the computer for images and moves. You can do this by...
 - Click Start in the bottom left hand of the computer screen
 - Click Search
 - Select Pictures, Music and Video

- Check the boxes for Pictures and Photos and then also for Video
- Place an * in the search line

This search will return all images and videos. Carefully go through all of them and investigate any peculiar findings.

- Check for Porn History Removers (PHR). This can be done two ways. One way is to simply look at the All Program tab that comes out after you hit the start button. A more detailed way to do this is to search the add/remove programs application. This can be done by...
 - Click Start in the bottom left hand of the computer screen
 - Click Control Panel
 - Click Add or Remove Programs

Search through the programs. Some you may not know what they are. If so then simply google search their name to figure out what it does. If there is a PHR, then it will probably have a name that gives away what it is.

When to be Suspicious

There are signs of possible internet porn viewing. This is not an exhaustive list, but some that should trigger red flags.

- Child is in a locked room with a computer
- Child is alone a lot with a computer
- Child is frequently using the computer when no one else is at home
- Parent not finding any Temporary Internet Files. This can mean that the files were cleared to remove any evidence of porn viewing.
- Child quickly closes the web browser when a parent approaches.

Mozilla Firefox

This is just a word of caution about Mozilla Firefox. Firefox is a web browser, much like Internet Explorer, that is very popular among teenagers. One of its perks is that it has settings that automatically remove all viewing history from the computer. I'm not sure if this feature is available on other web browsers. If Firefox is your web browser of choice, then make sure that the erasing features are not turned on.

How Should You React to Discovering Porn

There are a couple things to remember when dealing with pornography. First is that we are sexual creatures. God created us with this drive for sex. "Be fruitful and multiply" was God's first command to Adam and Eve. The battle is really a holding back of those God-given urges for the appropriate time of marriage.

Secondly, the child probably already feels ashamed about the activity already. If that wasn't the case, why would the child have tried to hide it? I would suggest open communication about how God created this drive and that it is a struggle that will carry on throughout all of life. It is something that the child needs to know that the parent is partnering with him to build the self-control.

Communication is key here. It is common for students to feel isolated and that they are the only one that struggles with this. These ideas need to be dispelled immediately.

One last thing, viewing porn is most often not an isolated event. It has to do with a root issue of lust. Lust is a universal struggle. A person who is better equipped to handle issues of lust, is better equipped to refuse the urges to view pornography. Where is the lust tank being filled? Is it movies, music, magazines and so forth? These things may not cause lust for the parents, but may be filling the child's lust tank. An honest evaluation of our homes, what we watch, read and listen to would probably reveal many causes of lust that are really not necessary in life and are becoming a hindrance to a spiritual growth.

Accountability

There are several websites that offer accountability on browsing history that does not block content. That means it simply reports all that is viewed, but does not prevent the viewing of such content. What these websites also do, is notify those in an accountability group of the browsing history.

Covenant Eyes – www.covenanteyes.com This is a resource that you have to pay for, but is by far the leading accountability websites in the industry right now. It simply emails those in an accountability group the browsing history of a pc. I highly recommend it.

Accountable 2 You – www.accountable2you.com This is a free resource which is functionally equivalent to Covenant Eyes, but is somewhat scaled down. Still better than not having anything at all.

Note: these accountability options are not the same as Internet Safety Software. ISS are porn blockers that will prevent certain websites from appearing. These accountability softwares do not block, but merely inform others of viewing. This software really should be on any computer just in case.

Disclaimer

The battle for internet supremacy is ongoing. This is not an exhaustive list of precautions or issues related to internet porn viewing. Please do your best to stay up on current technology and do the thing that is best in preventing porn viewing: have a relationship with your child which is built on communication and God's Word.