

Dear Parent,

It is widely believed that the Internet has many benefits. It has the capacity to present information in a number of formats such as audio, video and hypertext, all of which can be highly motivating for the learner. In addition, email, mailing lists, and communication services have the potential to promote cross-cultural exchanges, language learning opportunities or other collaborative projects. However, there are also risks associated with Internet-based learning.

According to a Webwise Survey in 2006, 98% of young people in Ireland use the internet with 44% going online everyday. Of these, 28% access the internet through personal devices like mobile phones and games machines. Young people are primarily going online to make friends, play games, download music, and do their homework. As parents, the most important thing you can do to reduce the online risks is to engage with their digital lifestyle.

Webwise.ie have ten important tips for parents.

- 1. Discover the Internet together:**  
Be the one to introduce your child to the Internet. This could make it easier to share both positive and negative experiences in the future.
- 2. Agree with your child on rules for Internet use**  
Try to reach an agreement with your child on how long they should spend online and what types of sites and activities are ok.
- 3. Encourage your child to be careful when disclosing personal information**  
They should be selective about what personal information and photos they post to online spaces. Once material is online it is subject to all kinds of unauthorised use.
- 4. Talk about the risks associated with meeting online friends**  
Young people are making friends online but they should only physically meet these strangers in the company of an adult or others they trust.
- 5. Teach your child about 'source criticism' on the Internet**  
Not all information found online is correct. Educate your children on how to verify information they find.
- 6. Don't be too critical towards your child's exploration of the Internet**  
Remember, it is not always their fault if they come across inappropriate content on the Web
- 7. Report online material you may consider illegal to the appropriate authorities**  
It is important that we all take responsibility for the Web and report matters which we believe could be illegal to [www.hotline.ie](http://www.hotline.ie)
- 8. Encourage respect for others**

As in everyday life there are informal ethical rules for how to behave when relating to other people on the Internet

**9. Know your child's internet use**

To be able to guide your child's Internet use, whether it's on their mobile phone or PC, it is important to understand how children use the Internet and know what they like to do online.

**10. Remember that the positive aspects of the Internet outweigh the negative aspects**

The Internet is an excellent educational and recreational resource for children. Encourage your child to be Webwise and explore the Internet to its full potential.

Below some of the points mentioned above will be discussed in further detail.

Source Criticism:

In Short, who puts information on the Internet and why they put it there. The easiest way for both you and your children to be critical of sources is to discuss it.

Here are a few starting points of discussion;

**“Who can put information on the Internet”**

Anyone can! This is great because now it's easy to find out about just about anything. But you have to be careful. Just like in real life, people on the Internet can make mistakes and tell lies. Sometimes on the Internet it's even harder to know if someone is telling lies because you can't see them.

**How do I know if what I see on the Internet is true?**

There are a few ways of checking.

- Find out who owns the web site. Do they have a good reputation? If you are not sure, ask friends, colleagues, teachers etc.
- Compare what you see on the Internet with information from other places, like books and magazines.
- Compare what you see on the Internet with what you already know.
- Look for a date on the website. If the website is very old, the information might be out of date.

**Are there Adverts on the Internet?**

Yes! There are lots of 'ads' on the Internet and they can pop up anywhere. When you're reading something it's important to know if someone's trying to sell you something.

**Is it OK to copy things from the Internet?**

If you want to copy something exactly from the internet and use it in a project or on your own website you should do a couple of things:

- Ask permission from the owner of the website if it's OK to copy their work. This is fair since it's their time and work.

- When you copy something into your own project or website, always reference where you got it from. Again, this is only fair.

### **Why do some sites ask me for personal details?**

Some websites collect information about people so they know what kind of adverts to show them. Then they sell this information to other sites. That's why sometimes you get emails from sites you have never visited or heard of. This is called spam and in Europe it's against the law.

### **How do I know what a web site will do with my personal details?**

Good web sites will have a "Privacy Policy". This tells you exactly what they're going to do with your name, email, or any other information you give them. But as a rule you should never give any personal details over the Internet without checking with an adult first.

Should you have any queries concerning Internet safety, please don't hesitate to contact the Head of ICT at the College. You will be able to find more information on the [www.webwise.ie](http://www.webwise.ie) website.

Other sites that may be useful:

[www.hotline.ie/generaladvice.php](http://www.hotline.ie/generaladvice.php) - Hotline for suspected illegal content encountered on the Internet plus general advice for parents and children.

[www.saferinternet.org](http://www.saferinternet.org) - European network of e-safety awareness

[www.ncte.ie/InternetSafety/](http://www.ncte.ie/InternetSafety/)

## Internet Safety Guidelines.

Here is a set of guidelines that you can rate in order of importance with your child. This is a good way to facilitate a discussion between you and your child about internet safety.

Please rate the following from 1-15

I will never disclose any personal details to someone in a chat room	
I will tell an adult if I find something online which upsets me	
I will always treat others on the Internet, as I would like to be treated	
I will not insult or offend someone online even as a joke – they may not take it that way	
I will always have fun in cyberspace and remember that the virtual world is not a real world	
I will share with other my online experiences	
I will always verify material I come across on the Internet	
I will ask permission from parents/guardians before I purchase anything online	
I will take regular breaks if I am on the Internet	
I will not ask others to disclose personal information	
I will not bother with adult material	
Copying from the Internet may be illegal – always ask permission from the web author to use material from the Internet	
I will never copy huge chunks of material from the Internet for prep – that's cheating	
I always bookmark my favourite sites – that way I can find them again really quickly	
If someone sent me something by email that I don't like, I never forward it on – If I did that would be spamming	