

# Online Safety Tips From The Jacob Wetterling Resource Center



## Children

1. Talk to your parents about the Internet. Learn together. Sites like [www.netismartz.org](http://www.netismartz.org) or [www.jwrc.org](http://www.jwrc.org) are wonderful places to start.
2. Don't give out personal information about yourself or agree to meet anyone from online in real life without getting your parent's permission AND involvement.
3. If you receive messages or pictures that give you an "uh-oh" feeling, tell a trusted adult right away.

## Teens

1. Don't give out personal or emotionally private information online. If you would feel uncomfortable seeing what you are typing or posting on a Highway billboard, don't put it on the Information Highway.
2. Remember that you are responsible for your online footprint. Things that you post today can impact your future academic, personal, or professional life.
3. Listen to your gut instinct. If something seems too good to be true, it may be just that. Don't agree to meet people from online in the real world without your parents' involvement and permission.
4. Do your part to create safe online experiences for others by not sending or forwarding along disturbing, harassing or provocative emails. If you are on the receiving end of Cyberbullying, do not respond. Instead, report the situation to an adult who can help. This kind of behavior is not only vicious, it can also be illegal.
5. Adults who have your best intentions in mind want to be a mentor and **not** a significant other. If an adult is attempting to start a romantic relationship with you, online or in real life, leave the situation. Follow up by talking to your parent or another mentor about what happened.

## Adults

1. The Internet isn't ALL bad. Even though online threats can feel overwhelming, remember that being an involved parent can be a huge protective factor in helping to keep your children safe online. Keep the computer in a public room with well understood expectations and guidelines for your family. Consider using filtering or blocking software to HELP reduce inappropriate online messages or pictures. But filters can never be trusted to catch all inappropriate material. Parental involvement is essential to keeping kids safe online.
2. Sit down with your child or teen and learn together. Seeing your youth's online experience from their perspective helps you to understand how they interact with others online. You should have the email addresses, screen names and passwords for your children's online accounts. If you have given permission for your teen to use a social networking site, sit down with them for periodic checks of their page and friend lists.
3. Good communication is key – at any age. Younger children may stumble upon unwanted pictures while teens are at higher risk and are more likely to get involved in chat room discussions, receive solicitations and/or have issues with Cyberbullying. If you find out your child or teen has encountered something inappropriate while on the Web, discuss it with them and establish boundaries. Show them the best way to react to an unwanted situation, which may include closing out of a site and informing a parent of what they saw or found.
4. Report illegal online behavior. Let your child know that their safety is important to you both online and in the real world. Just as you would report a real world danger to the police, use the Cybertipline at 800-843-5678 or online at [www.cybertipline.org](http://www.cybertipline.org) to report online threats to your children. In Minnesota, you can get additional information from Minnesota ICAC at (651) 793-1060.

# PLAY WHAT-IF GAMES WITH CHILDREN & TEENS



What-if Games are a great way to help children and teens think about how to handle potentially dangerous situations. Adults can use what-if questions to spark conversation with children and teenagers while they are in the car, at the store, or during any other shared time. It also gives adults insight into how their children make decisions.

What-if games are most effective when they are used often and in non-threatening situations. Keep the tone positive and provide lots of encouragement. Ask your kids the “What If” questions below and listen carefully to their answers. While there is no single correct answer, we’ve provided some key talking points you can share with your kids during your

discussion. But don’t stop here. Keep the conversations going with some creative scenarios of your own – it’s a great way to keep the dialogue going at home.

## ***What would you do if...***

### **...your brother’s friend gave you \$20, but said to keep it a secret?**

There is a big difference between surprises and secrets. Surprises are kept quiet for a short time and when everyone finds out about the surprise they are happy—like a surprise birthday party. Secrets are something you are asked to keep quiet about for a long time, maybe even forever. Sometimes a secret might not seem like a big deal. You should never be asked to keep a secret from your parent. If someone asks you to keep any kind of a secret from your parents, tell an adult you trust right away.

### **...someone sent you a picture on the Internet that made you feel uncomfortable?**

Don’t delete the email or chat, just turn off your monitor and tell your parent or caregiver about what you’ve seen. Never respond to offensive or dangerous online message. An adult can tell law enforcement about the situation or report to CyberTipline at 800-843-5678 or [www.cybertipline.org](http://www.cybertipline.org).

### **...your neighbor offered you a ride home from school so that you don’t have to walk?**

You should always check first with your parent or caregiver before going anywhere with anyone—even if you know them. Also, remember to make a special code word that only your family knows, like “popcorn.” Don’t go with anyone who doesn’t know the code word.

### **...you told an adult about something that made you feel afraid, but they didn’t believe you?**

Not all adults, even people who care about you and want to help, always know what to do to keep kids safe and happy. You deserve to be safe and to share your feelings with trusted adults. Tell as many people as you need to, like your teacher or youth group counselor, until someone understands and helps.

### **...someone is watching you and your friends play at the park and that makes you feel scared?**

Always trust your feelings or your gut instinct. Leave the park right away and tell a trusted adult what happened. Tell your parents and the parents of any kids you’re playing with that you have left the park and where you are playing now.

### **...a peer you meet online invites you to meet up with him/her at the mall?**

You should always get permission if you want to meet a friend from online in the real world. If your parent gives you permission, you should take your parent or other trusted adult with you when you meet them for the first time. Keep your first meeting in a public place and do not go to a second location. Listen to your gut, if anything about the meeting feels uncomfortable or wrong, leave right away.