

Cyber Safety

Tips for Churches, Parents, and Kids

One of the biggest changes in the 21st century is the impact of the internet on our everyday lives. In addition to its informative and entertaining purposes, the internet offers new and exciting opportunities for Christians to interact and learn more about their faith. Like many other innovations, the internet also has a side that is dangerous and destructive.

Rock Solid embraces the internet as an informative tool for churches, parents and children. We believe that the opportunity to share our message of God's love for us through Christ brings with it the responsibility to educate churches, parents, and children about being safe online.

For more information about online safety, check out:

www.isafe.org

www.safekids.com

www.netsmartz.org

Tips for Churches

Promote cyber-safety awareness in your congregation by providing education and training for families, plus information about family-friendly sites.

Make sure your church has current and effective anti-virus and filtering software on all computers. If your church does not have computer services budgeted, this is a great service opportunity for knowledgeable computer professionals and enthusiasts.

Create a Technology Acceptable Use policy for your church's staff and to post at all publicly shared computers. Check with your local school district for guidance about policy language.

Never post an online photograph of any member of your congregation without a signed consent form, especially of children and teens. Preferably do not identify individuals by name (particularly children and teens), or use only first names if absolutely necessary.

Use discretion when posting church newsletters online. Newsletters often contain the personal information about children and youth, including full name, grade level, and parents' names.

Staff and volunteers should always copy parents when emailing or text-paging children and youth or obtain written permission for one-on-one emailing.

Tips for Parents

Keep the computer in a common family room and set appropriate boundaries for when and how often your child can be online.

Educate your child about responsible internet use and safety

Check out sites that your child is visiting and know your child's passwords for accounts such as email, social networking sites (MySpace, Facebook), gaming, and music/video downloads.

Make sure your computer has current and effective anti-virus and filtering software.

Use discretion in your computer use. Older children and teens are often able to trace computer history, so don't visit sites you wouldn't want your children to see.

For younger children, bookmark sites that are acceptable for them to visit.

Do not install peer-to-peer applications on your computer. These allow easy access to billions of images and clips of pornography, child pornography, hate speech, and violence.

Tips for Kids

Never, ever give out any personal information online without first checking with a trusted adult.

If someone ever says something online that makes you feel upset or uncomfortable, shut the computer down and tell an adult immediately.

If you've met someone online, never meet with him or her in person without having a trusted grown-up present.

Don't open an email unless you know who it's from.

If there's a new site you want to visit, ask a grown-up to visit it first so they can make sure it's safe.

Be smart about what you post online. An inappropriate picture, rumor, or blog entry with "too much information" is shared with the whole world once it's on the internet.

One out of three kids is bullied online. Don't hurt someone's feelings just because you can't see them face- to face. Also, don't respond if someone says something mean to you online.