

Is your family safe online?

INTERNET SAFETY TIPS

For Residents of the
25th Congressional District of Florida

www.house.gov/mariodiaz-balart

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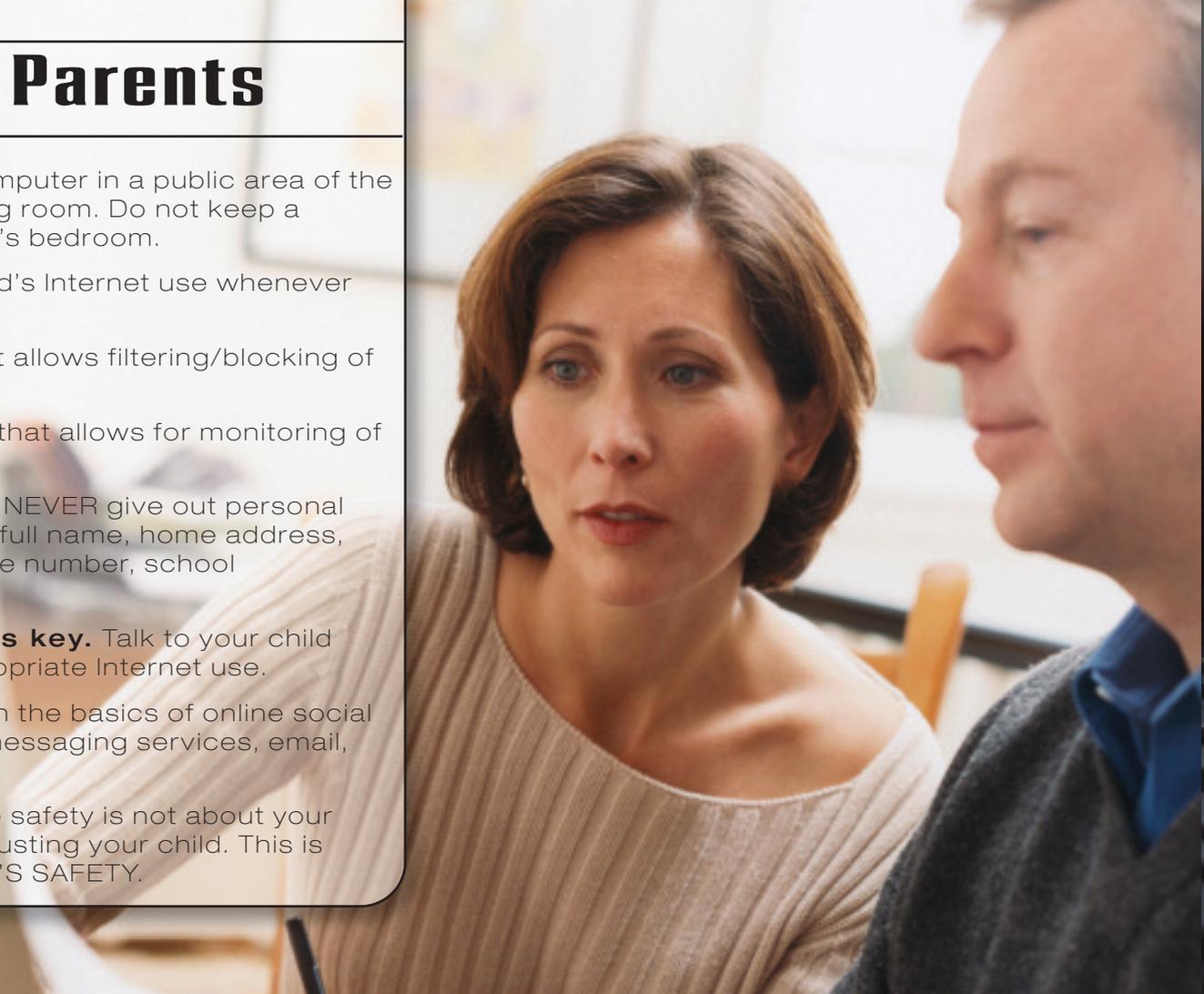


Facts About Online Predators

- Online predators come from all walks of life – all ages, races, and backgrounds.
- Online predators often lead normal lives making it hard to identify them.
- The Internet is an attractive domain for predators because it allows users to remain anonymous.
- Online predators often pose as another person and lie about their intentions.
- The most common means by which predators contact children over the Internet is through online chat rooms.
- According to a 2006 study conducted by the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children,
 - > 61% of teens currently have a personal profile online
 - > 71% of teens have reported receiving unsolicited messages online
 - > 45% of teens have been asked personal information by someone unknown to them
 - > 1 in 7 teens have received an explicitly sexual solicitation online from a stranger
- Predators target likely victims and gain their trust through conversation and friendship.

Tips for Parents

- Keep the family computer in a public area of the house, like the living room. Do not keep a computer in a child's bedroom.
- Supervise your child's Internet use whenever possible.
- Install software that allows filtering/blocking of certain websites.
- Consider software that allows for monitoring of Internet use.
- Teach your child to NEVER give out personal information online (full name, home address, age, birthday, phone number, school information, etc).
- **Communication is key.** Talk to your child about what is appropriate Internet use.
- Educate yourself on the basics of online social networking sites, messaging services, email, and blogs.
- REMEMBER: Online safety is not about your child's privacy or trusting your child. This is about YOUR CHILD'S SAFETY.



Tips for Kids & Teens

- NEVER give out personal information (full name, home address, age, birthday, phone number, etc.) over the Internet.
- Do not open emails or messages from someone you don't know.
- Use screen names that will not give away personal information.
- If using a social networking site or messaging service, restrict access so only friends can see your profile. Only add "friends" who you PERSONALLY know.
- Post only things you are comfortable with other people knowing.
- Remember that people are not always who they seem to be online.
- NEVER agree to meet someone in person after chatting with them online.
- Tell your parents or another trusted individual if something you read/see online makes you uncomfortable. Trust your gut.
- REMEMBER: Online safety is not about your parents not trusting you, or your parents wanting to spy on you. This is about PROTECTING YOURSELF.



Suspicious Behavior

Online predators work in many different ways. It is impossible to know exactly how they will lure their next victim. However, if any of the following occurs in your home, it is time to take action:

- Someone in your home receives unsolicited messages or “friend requests” from strangers.
- An online communication with someone turns explicitly flirtatious or sexual.
- During an online communication, a person suggests an in-person meeting.
- An online stranger sends inappropriate photos/files.
- An online stranger sends repeated messages after being told to stop.

Actions to take:

- Make sure an adult in the home knows of the uncomfortable situation.
- If the website or service allows it, block the offending person. Do not communicate with the person at all.
- If the problem persists, report the offending action and person to your local authorities.



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