

# SAFETY ON THE INTERNET

## *Leader's Guide*

The following is offered **only as a suggested format** to lead a conference about safety on the internet. This was written for elementary and middle school kids. **Adapt it to meet the needs of your audience.** For a conference with kids & adults, documents and handouts are available at the website, [www.protecteverychild.org](http://www.protecteverychild.org), ready to be downloaded and printed.

Some sample ways to discuss internet safety with your children or with adults:

1. Introduce yourself to the group using a false name. (For example, my name is Sarah Smith.) If they know you, this will certainly get their attention. At the end of the session, tell them your real name emphasizing that you were not honest with them in giving them your name. This will reinforce the fact that on the internet everyone is not always honest and there is no way to know with whom you are communicating.
2. Begin by telling them you are here today to talk about internet safety. Ask how many have their own computer or use their family computer at home.
3. Ask where the computer is located. Tell them the computer should always be in a common area of your home—like the kitchen or den. Ask how many go into chat rooms, blog areas, My Space or other websites like that.
4. Say that learning the rules about safety on the internet is very important. Ask, “Can anyone tell me why?” The answer: it is very important to protect your identity on the internet. What does the word identity mean? That is who you are. You are Tom or Jane. You are a boy or a girl. You love to play soccer or softball. You love a particular movie. You like to go skating or bowling. All of these things are a part of you. If you tell these things to a stranger, they may begin to put together all of these bits and pieces of information and find out who you are.
5. Ask, “Does anyone here have a dog? Does your dog stay in a fence? Chasing cars is something dogs like to do, but would you let your dog chase cars? Why not?”
6. Ask, “You wouldn’t let your dog do anything that you think may hurt him, would you?” The same is true of your mom and dad. They don’t want you to do anything that will hurt you, and the computer, as much fun as it can be, can indirectly hurt you if you don’t know the rules about protecting your identity.
7. Ask them to listen very carefully to the DVD. Say, “Most of these things you probably already know, but you may learn a lot of new things, too. Remember these rules so you can teach your parents and your younger brothers and sisters how to stay safe while using the internet .
8. After playing the DVD, ask them to tell you some of the rules of internet safety. After they list each rule, ask them why the rule is necessary. Ask if they learned anything new. Remind them that going into a chat room and talking online with someone they don’t know is like going to the park alone at night. It is very dangerous. Ask, “Can you tell me why?” Answer—because you don’t know with whom you are communicating.

9. Ask, "Did you know that you need to tell your parents about all adults that you talk with online or even by email? This means teachers, friends, and even family members. We want to trust everyone we know, but you need help from your parents to know whom you can trust."
10. Give them the *It's MY SPACE* document. Ask, "Who can tell me what MySpace is. MySpace is for ages 14 and up, so you may not be involved with that yet. It is a website that allows you to have your own website. Does anyone here have their own website? What kinds of things do you have on your website? Do you have your picture on your website? Do your parents know what is on your website? Did you know that putting something on your website makes it available for every one there to see? It is not private. And it is there forever. It can do a lot of harm. Did you know that someone could take your picture and change it without your knowing it? This could get you into a lot of trouble."
11. Ask, "Do any of you ever go to Krispy Kreme Doughnut or Dunkin Doughnut stores? Or do you ever go to Baskin Robbins? Why do you go there? Because it is the best place to get doughnuts or ice cream."
12. Predators—remember that word from the DVD? Predators go to chat rooms, and places like MySpace, to look for girls and boys that they can meet. Because it is the best place to find kids!
13. Soon, they are your best friend and they want to meet you. NEVER agree to meet anyone you only know online. Some days you may feel very lonely, you may feel like no one cares about you or feel like you need a friend. Predators WILL take advantage of these situations and become that friend. Many times if a predator is asked how he found a victim, the answer is that the victim found them.
14. "What do you think a predator looks like?" Ask them to describe how they think they look—a beard, dark glasses, mean looking, etc. Not necessarily. In reality they look like an average person. A minister, a teacher, a policeman. They blend in with everyone else. Asking you to keep your relationship with them a secret is a dead giveaway that they are not who they seem to be.
15. Let's go over some rules again. They include the following things: never talk to strangers, never agree to meet anyone you met online, never give your real name or tell if you are a boy or girl, always check with your parents before adding any information to a website form, never give personal information about you or your family to anyone you only know online, and never provide your picture.
16. Now, before we leave, I want to tell you something. Do you remember my name? When we started I said I am Sarah Smith. I was not honest with you. I am really \_\_\_\_\_. That is how a predator can reach you. He may tell you he is 18 years old, and you may feel very flattered that an 18-year old is spending his time talking with you. He may really be a 40-year old man searching for his next victim. Whether he is 18 or 40, he may be making plans to lead you into a dangerous situation.