

Protecting Children online - what parents can do to help

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The Internet can be a wonderful source of knowledge and entertainment for children. But its services (web sites, e-mail, newsgroups, chat rooms etc.) can also be harmful to children, as recent well publicised cases show.

Research carried out for the Internet Advisory Board in 2001 showed that 77% of parents believed their children know more about using the Internet than they do.

Some parents can therefore feel powerless to protect their children online - however, there are easy steps that all parents can take to help ensure that their children are protected while using the Internet.

The Internet Advisory Board publishes these easy steps under the slogan **TLCs - Tender Loving Care**. These are common sense rules and parents don't need any knowledge of computing in order to apply them:

Talk

Talk about potential dangers and your concerns

Get them to talk to you about what they do on the Internet

Encourage them to talk about anything "uncomfortable" they find

Look

Keep the computer where you can see it in a busy part of the house

Spend time on-line with them and see what they are doing

Look and take note if too much time is being spent on-line

Check

Check [history files](#) for suitability of sites and chat rooms (sites that your children have visited)

Check e-mails (especially for younger children)

Check phone bills

Set Rules

When the Internet can be accessed and for how long

Never give personal information without permission

Never agree to meet an on-line friend without permission.

The Internet Advisory Board Website www.iab.ie has these tips and more, including information about filtering software and other tools to help parents.

Safety information is also provided by a number of organisations which are represented on the Internet Advisory Board. The National Centre for Technology in Education (NCTE) promotes the safe and responsible use of the Internet in collaboration with schools and parents' councils. Safety information leaflets have been distributed to children in schools, and are available in community centres, libraries etc, as part of the **Be Wise on the Net Campaign**. NCTE is currently developing Safer Internet Use guides for parents and an education package to assist teachers relation to child

online protection. The Barnardo's organisation has issued safety leaflets. Internet Service Providers will also provide safety advice for their customers as part of the Code of Practice and Ethics agreed with the Internet Advisory Board in February 2002. However if you come across child pornography on the Internet, you should report it to the public hotline at www.hotline.ie or the Gardaí. Do not download or make copies, as it is illegal to do so in Ireland.

As the Internet Advisory Board's radio and poster campaign in December/January 2002/3 highlighted - the Internet is a wonderful resource - let's use it wisely .

The Internet Advisory Board is a non-statutory body set up by Government which promotes awareness of Internet downside issues, co-ordinates efforts to combat child pornography and other illegal and harmful activities on the Internet and monitors the progress of self regulation by the Internet Service provider industry. The Board comprises representatives from the Internet Service Provider industry, an Garda Síochána, child protection interests, relevant government departments, the media, the Data Protection Commissioner's office and the Information Society Commission.