Internet Safety Tips by Age: 2-4

Many preschoolers are already active computer users. According to a 2005 report from the National Center for Education Statistics in the U.S., 67 per cent of preschool-age children use a computer, and 23 per cent use the Internet. While children at this age have a limited attention span for online activities, Internet images and sounds can stimulate their imaginations and add to their experiences.

Parents and older siblings can take preschoolers on the Internet, visit websites and play online games. At this age, adults have an important role to play in teaching safe Internet use and monitoring their children's reactions to online material.

2- to 4-year-olds:

- will accept media content at face value
- don't have the critical thinking skills to be online alone
- may be frightened by media images, both real and fictional
- may be frightened by realistic portrayals of violence, threats or dangers
- risk moving from appropriate to inappropriate sites through hyperlinks

Safety Tips

- Always sit with children at this age when they're online.
- Create a personalized online environment by "bookmarking" a list of acceptable sites.
- Use kid-friendly search engines or ones with parental controls.
- Investigate Internet-filtering tools as a complement — not a replacement — for parental supervision.
- Protect children from offensive "pop-ups" by disabling Java on your computer or by using blocking software.
- Start teaching children about privacy. Have them use an online nickname if a site encourages them to submit their names to "personalize" the Web content.
- Have all family members act as role models for children's use of the Internet.