



CANADA'S CENTRE  
FOR DIGITAL AND  
MEDIA LITERACY

## Protecting Your Privacy on Commercial Websites

The Internet provides marketers with many opportunities to elicit personal information from children. Kids love playing on the Web, and commercial sites for children are continually ranked as top online destinations.

However, as kids register with websites to play games, win prizes, engage in chat or join clubs, they may also be compromising their privacy. Here are some of the ways:

- **Online registration forms**, that ask kids to sign up in order to become club members or access "fun" areas on a site
- **Quizzes and surveys**, that are used to determine the preferences and attitudes of young consumers
- **Contests**, in which kids are required to submit personal information to enter or win prizes
- **E-cards**, where friends' email addresses are submitted to a Web site so that the company can send them e-cards and greetings
- **Chat environments**, where children may be asked for personal information in order to join a chat room, or where children may inadvertently post personal information while chatting
- **Cookie files**, that track users when they enter a site and record the areas they visit; these files can be used by marketers to create customer profiles and deliver customized information to young visitors

### Privacy Policies

Privacy Policies outline the privacy terms and conditions of a particular site. However, many privacy policies are vague, misleading or non-existent. When you read a Privacy Policy, you want to know:

- What information from young visitors is being collected or tracked, and how this information will be used
- How parents can change or delete any data that has been collected about their children
- What steps are being taken to safeguard children while they participate in chat rooms, message boards and email activities on the site
- Whether it adheres to the industry guidelines for selling to, and collecting data from, children on the Internet
- What methods are used to ensure that verifiable, parental consent is obtained before a child releases any personal information online
- How you can contact and/or find out more about the company hosting the website

