



Young Media Australia fact sheet

What are the risks involved with my child using the internet?

The Internet links computers and databases world wide. It provides a most valuable communication system for obtaining information, sending mail, and chatting with others with similar interests. However, it is an adult world, and as such it can be a dangerous place for children to play because they may:

- inadvertently access inappropriate information
- come into contact with paedophiles
- be subjected to invasion of privacy and unsolicited advertising
- run the risk of becoming addicted.

Inadvertently access inappropriate information

- there are almost no restrictions on what can be placed on the world wide web
- there is no system of classification or age restrictions for accessing the Internet as there are for TV and films.
- it is not always easy to identify the source of the communication
- chat rooms can be full of strangers who use language which makes children and parents feel uncomfortable. There may be discussions on subjects that are inappropriate for a child to 'listen in on'. People may not be who they say they are.
- there is abundant material on the Internet that is sadistic and violent, or sexually explicit, and which can be damaging to children and young people's development. Such sites can easily be found accidentally. Some of it can appear superficially harmless and amusing.
- there are sites that provide information on criminal activity such as bomb making and drug abuse.

Come into contact with paedophiles

- paedophiles use the Internet as a way of winning the

trust of children and setting up meetings

- they also share information with each other on vulnerable children and how they can be approached.

Be subjected to invasion of privacy and unsolicited advertising

- some commercial websites invade children's privacy by seeking personal information
- some sites offer and encourage children to acquire products or seek experiences which are costly and which many parents would consider unsuitable
- children may be encouraged to complete questionnaires and enter competitions that lead them to divulge personal information or incur unforeseen costs.

Run the risk of becoming addicted

- children and young people can become addicted and so absorbed in what cyberspace has to offer that little or no time is left for relating to people in person, or getting sufficient physical exercise

How to complain

If you see content which you think would be prohibited by law (such as child pornography, or other explicit portrayals of sex) you can ask the Australian Broadcasting Authority to investigate.

<http://www.aba.gov.au/internet/complaints/complaints.htm>

Related topics

- Internet filtering software—what it is and how to use it
- Tips for safe Internet use
- How to complain—Internet

Further reading

Australian Broadcasting Authority's Cybersmart Kids

<http://www.cybersmartkids.com.au/>

Kidsnet (UK)

<http://www.chatdanger.com/>



For more information about Children and the Media, call the **Young Media Australia Helpline**

Up to date and reliable information for parents and caregivers about the impact of the media on children.

1800 700 357

Freecall anywhere in Australia, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
Or go to the Young Media Australia website

www.youngmedia.org.au

Ordering more fact sheets

Young Media Australia has over sixty printed fact sheets about the impact of media on children.

To get a list of available Young Media Australia fact sheets, or to order your copies call the

**Young Media Australia Helpline
1800 700 357**

You may also download a fact sheet order form from our web site **www.youngmedia.org.au** or browse the fact sheets in topic format online.

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