INTERNET SAFETY GUIDE FOR PARENTS

Information, resources, and suggestions to help keep children safe while using electronic devices.

Prepared by: Social Workers at Hewlett-Woodmere Public Schools

2017

This guide is intended to provide parents and guardians with information, available resources, and suggestions to help keep your children safe when using electronic devices.

Today's youth are digital natives, parents are digital immigrants. This means that our children are much more adept at navigating the evolving internet world and all that it has to offer. It is age appropriate for tweens and teens to want privacy, however as parents it is our responsibility to educate them about proper online etiquette and internet safety. There are a number of factors to take into consideration when entering the digital world. Privacy and anonymity are myths. With that in mind, parents must establish guidelines and set limits for use. You are NOT invading your child's privacy if you are monitoring their online activities. The reality is that the internet, while a terrific resource, has many hidden dangers. Tweens and teens are not emotionally equipped to deal with the immediacy of the internet, the vast audience it reaches, the effects of their impulsivity and the moral responsibilities. Teens need guidance in understanding the long term consequences of an impulsive decision/action.

Cyberbullying

Any electronic communication posted or sent by a minor that is intended to embarrass, harass, or frighten another minor. Vehicles include: Instant and Direct Messaging, social networking sites, cell phones, text messaging, or interactive video and computer games.

Flaming: Online "fights" using electronic messages with angry and vulgar language that can include direct or indirect threats. They are usually short-lived and heated between two people of equal social status. Bystanders can "fan" or "douse" the flames with their comments.

Harassment: Repeatedly sending offensive, rude, and insulting messages to an individual target. This is one-sided and usually occurs in a personal communication, but it can also occur in public communication environments.

Cyberstalking: Repeatedly sending messages that include threats of harm or are highly intimidating, extremely offensive, or involve extortion, thus making someone afraid for his/her safety.

Denigration: "Dissing" someone online. Sending or posting cruel gossip or rumors in a public forum to damage a person's reputation or friendships.

Outing and Trickery: Sharing someone's secrets or embarrassing information online. Tricking someone into revealing information, which is then shared online.

Impersonation: Using a target's password to access their account or creating a fake account using the target's name to post material that reflects badly on the target.

Exclusion: Intentionally excluding someone from an online group or a game.
(Willard, Nancy. Overview of Cyberbullying and Cyberthreats. 2007)

Why kids bully
- For entertainment…boredom…too much time on their hands
- For laughs…a reaction
- To assert power over a peer
- To increase social standing
- Peer pressure
- They are angry and seeking revenge
- Unable to be empathetic

What makes them a target?
- Sensitive - allow a bully to get "into their head."
- Not confident - They have low self-esteem.
- Not sure how to respond or stand up to a bully.
- "Friending" unknown people
- Embarrassing/harassing others
- Sharing passwords

How to respond
- Fighting bullying with bullying only makes it worse
  - Explore other options: report it to online service provider, report it to an adult at home, report it to school.
  - Don't respond/retaliate
  - It's a natural response to want to defend yourself, but you can never have a mature conversation with a bully.
- Block messages/screen names
- Take photos/screenshots of the text message
- Close your account

Web cams
- Can easily be hacked – red light won't necessarily be on
- Keep a post-it over the camera when it's not in use

Emotional Impact
- Poor grades
- Emotional spirals
- Poor self-esteem
- Repeated school absences
- Depression
- Suicide

Cyberbullies have access to victims 24/7

Sexting/Texting

What is sexting?
A combination of the words "sex" and "text" messaging. Sexting is sending sexually explicit messages, pictures or video via text or social media.

- Naked pictures or nudes
- "Underwear shots"
- Sexual or "dirty pics"
- Lewd and provocative text messages or videos

Often these types of messages can be sent from or to a friend, boyfriend, girlfriend or someone your child has met online. Even though teens can be conflicted about sending/posting sexually suggestive content and they know it is dangerous, they do it anyway. There are no identifiers as to who is more likely to engage in sexting behaviors. All cell phone users, regardless of their offline sexual experiences or reputation are at risk.

Reasons people sext:
- Peer pressure…They want to fit in
- Want to feel and make others believe they are sexy
- Feel pressure to **sext** as a way of proving their sexuality
- Feel harassed, threatened or blackmailed into sending pictures
- Use sexting as a substitute for and to avoid offline sexual activity
- Think they "owe" their boyfriend or girlfriend or are made to feel guilty

- Are in love with the person and trust them completely
- Have a long distance or online only relationship
- Think that it is funny.
- Think that no one will find out.
- Feel proud of their body and want to share it with other people.

(www.childline.org.uk)

Consequences

Criminal

Sending or receiving a sexually suggestive text or image under the age of 18 can be considered **child pornography** and can result in criminal charges. The laws are continually being updated to address the needs created by the ongoing advances in technology.
 (http://dosomething.org/facts)

Legal Consequences
- Criminal charges- pornography
- Registration as a sex offender
- Expose parents to legal consequences

Emotional Consequences
- Experience embarrassment and humiliation
- Experience on- and offline bullying
- Experience the end of friendships
- Experience guilt and shame
- Experience feelings of hopelessness

(www.Bullying.about.com)

A split second decision to hit send can have lifelong consequences.
More often than not children do not think about long term consequences of sexting. The emotional pain caused by sexting can be enormous for the child in the picture as well as for the sender and receiver—often with legal implications. If your child is old enough for you to give them a phone, you must begin the difficult conversation about sexting before there is a problem.

Tips for keeping your child safe
- Initiate conversations
    - Have you heard of sexting? Tell me what you think it is.
    - Let's talk about the types of things you and your friends like to share online?
    - Can you show me how that works?
    - Do you personally know the people that you communicate online with?
    - Discuss what your child will do or say to someone that asks them to engage in sexting.
    - Explore different strategies for addressing inappropriate requests. Discuss what to do if someone requests inappropriate pics or makes lewd requests.
- Peer pressure, especially at parties is a contributing factor**. Collecting cell phones at gatherings of tweens and teens is one way to reduce this temptation.**
    (https://www.aap.org**)**
- Familiarize yourself with texting/sexting abbreviations

o Visiting **www.noslang.com** and **www.urbandictionary.com** can introduce you to secret language used in texting and sexting.

Common abbreviations

- 8 - it means ate, refers to oral sex
- 1337 - Elite
- 143 - I love you
- 1174 - Nude club
- 420 – Marijuana
- 459 - I love you
- AEAP - As Early As Possible
- ALAP - As Late As Possible
- ASL - Age/Sex/Location
- BLJB – Blowjob
- BYOH – Bring your own high
- CD9 - Code 9 - parents are around
- COIWTA – Come on I won't tell anyone
- F2F - Face-to-Face, a.k.a. face time
- GNOC - Get Naked On Cam
- GYPO - Get Your Pants Off
- HAK - Hugs And Kisses
- IWSN - I Want Sex Now
- J/O - Jerking Off
- KOTL - Kiss On The Lips
- KPC - Keeping Parents Clueless
- LMIRL - Let's Meet In Real Life

More things to discuss...

What could happen to a photo you send?
Do they think about where it is going or who will see it? Once they hit send they no longer have control over or possession of it. Anyone can capture the photo to be reposted anywhere on the internet. It could end up on any number of social networking sites in addition to porn sites.

Who might see it?
Do not send anything you would not want your parents, teachers, or friends to see. Even if you completely trust someone, other people using their phone might accidently see it and share it with others. Additionally, tweens and teens can be revengeful if they get into an argument with each other.

What are the risks?
Even when using a webcam or an app like Snapchat, the person you send a sext to can take a screen shot in seconds or forward it. Information does not just disappear.

Keep conversations on their level
- All should understand that sexting is serious and is considered a **crime** in many jurisdictions. The internet has no boundaries. In all communities, if teens "sext" there can be serious consequences, quite possibility involving the police, and suspension from school.
- Use examples that are age appropriate
  - o Kids - alert them that text messages should never contain pictures of people---kids or adults –without their clothes on, kissing or touching each other in ways they have never seen before

- Tweens - be direct and use the term "sexting", be more specific about the sex acts they may know about
- Teens - be very specific that "sexting" often involves pictures of a sexual nature and is considered pornography

School/Employment
- In accordance with the Dignity for All Students Act, cyberbullying and sexting will be addressed by school officials, if brought to their attention, in accordance with HWPS Code of Conduct.
- One study reported that 12% of college admission applicants were rejected because of what the college saw on social media. What happens on social media, stays on social media. (www.teenlife.com)
- Beyond school life employers are exercising the same methods to ensure they are hiring "quality" employees.

Predators

Although the Internet did not create child predators, it has significantly increased the opportunities predators have to meet victims while minimizing detection. They can communicate with children anonymously through instant messaging, social networking sites, chat rooms, message boards, and even cell phones. Online predators do not fit any one mold or stereotype; seemingly upstanding citizens have been caught enticing children for sexual acts. Contrary to popular belief, most online predators are not pedophiles. Pedophiles target pre-pubescent children, while online predators typically target adolescents who engage in risky online behavior.

- **Grooming**
  Predators take advantage of children's natural vulnerabilities, such as their desire to appear adult or their need for attention. "Grooming" is the process through which predators play on these vulnerabilities by offering children gifts and attention.
    - Long process in which a predator gains the child's trust
    - Exploits a child's natural curiosity about sex to lower inhibitions
    - Gradually introduces explicit images and child sex abuse images
    - Uses his or her adult status to influence and control a child's behavior
    - Offers attention and affection
    - Betrays a child's trust by manipulating his or her emotions and insecurities
    - Child willingly meets this trusted "friend"

Guarding Against Predators

Children who experience online victimization may not share personal details with their parent or guardian right away, but there are warning signs that can help identify a child who has faced a situation of online victimization. Parents and guardians should keep in mind that not all children are being groomed by older predators; children may have sexual encounters with peers and older teens. However, any adult seeking a sexual encounter with a minor is considered a predator. If a child comes to you with a disclosure of exploitation, reassure him or her that talking to an adult is the right action to take and divert any blame away from the victim.

Warning Signs of Grooming or Exploitation in of your Child
- Spends an excessive amount of time on the computer
- Becomes angry when he or she cannot get on the computer
- Withdraws from family and friends
- Minimizes the screen or turns off the monitor when you come into the room
- Inappropriate images or websites on the computer
- Strange phone numbers on your telephone bill
- Gifts in the mail from someone you do not know, such as webcams or cell phones

(Wolak J, Finkelhor D, Mitchell K, Ybarra M. Online "Predators" and Their Victims: Myths, Realities, and Implications for Prevention and Treatment. American Psychologist, 2008;63, 111-128) From netsmartz.com

Safety Tips
- Choose a **non-identifiable**, **non-gender** specific screen name (without sexual references)
- Educate your child about what personal/identifying information is
- Teach your child not to share personal/identifying information
- Approve all photos and videos before posted
- Never meet someone offline that you only know online
- Save copies of online conversations
- Know who your child is communicating with
- Teach your child not to talk about sex online
- Discuss what is considered sexually provocative comments and pictures
- Place limits on electronic communication
  - Parental controls are available through your mobile carrier
- Disable attachments on text messages
- Remind your kids that privacy and anonymity are myths

Look for warning signs. If you feel your child is in danger, make a report to www.cybertipline.com and contact your local law-enforcement agency immediately.

Discussion Starters

Start a discussion with your child. Use these discussion starters to get an Internet safety conversation going with your children. The more often you talk to them about online safety, the easier it will get, so do not be discouraged if they do not respond immediately!

- What do you know about online predators?
- Have you ever met anyone online who asked you to meet face-to-face?
- What would/did you do if someone asked to meet you in person?
- Has anyone ever tried talking to you online about inappropriate or sexual things? What did you do?
- How might someone online try to gain your trust?
- Why might someone online want to gain your trust? What are the possible risks of trusting them?
- Why is it important that you come to me if someone makes you feel uncomfortable online?

(www.Netsmartz.com)

Social Media Websites

Tweens and Teens are using social media sites and apps in addition to the ever popular Facebook. The trendy apps are ever changing though understanding why they are popular and what problems can ensue will help you to keep your child safe.

Twitter is an online social networking service that enables users to send and read short 140-character messages called "tweets". Registered users can read and post tweets, but unregistered users can only read them.

- Why it's popular: Teens like to share quick tidbits about their lives with friends. It's also great for keeping up with what's going on in the world, news, celebrity gossip, etc.
- What parents need to know:
  - Public Tweets are the norm for teens. Though you can choose to keep your tweets private, most teens report having public accounts (Pew Internet & American Life Project 2013).
  - Updates appear immediately. Even though you can remove tweets, your followers can read it until it is taken down. This can get kids into trouble if they write anything in the heat of the moment.
  - It is a promotional tool for celebs. Twitter reels in teens with behind the scenes access to celebrities' lives, adding a whole new dimension to celebrity worship.

Instagram is a platform that lets users snap, edit, and share photos and 15-second videos – either publicly or with a network of followers.

- Why it is popular: Teens can share, see and comment on photos. Users can edit photos, using fun effects and filters.
- What parents need to know:
  - Teens are on the lookout for "likes" and may use this to validate their popularity.
  - Public photos is the default.
  - Direct Messaging (DM) is available for users to send "private" messages to friends. This increases the likelihood that inappropriate messages will be shared.

Snapchat is a messaging app that lets users put a time limit on the pictures and videos they send before they disappear.
- Why it is popular: Teens share fun, light, goofy moments without the risk of them going public.
- What parents need to know:
  - It is a myth that Snapchats go away forever. The receiver can take a screenshot before it disappears. Snapchats can be recovered.
  - It can make sexting seem OK. The seemingly risk-free messaging might encourage users to share inappropriate pictures.

Tumblr is a cross between a social networking site (like Facebook and Twitter) and a blog. It is often described as 'microblog' as people usually post short snippets of text and quick snaps as opposed to longer diary style entries found in more traditional blogs.
- What parents need to know:
  - Porn is easy to find. It is extremely easy to come across hardcore pornography, violence, self-harm, and drug use on the site as Tumblr is a totally open and non-filtered platform.
  - Privacy is difficult to guard. All Tumblr blogs are public by default and once a Tumblr profile is set up, a public blog is automatically generated. It is possible to block users from interacting with you on Tumblr. But, you can't stop them from viewing your blog.
  - Posts are often copied and shared. Tumblr makes impulse posting easy with a variety of apps available on mobile devices. Tumblr has seen a huge increase in content (images and text) being replicated and shared without copyright agreements being in place. (www.Webwise.ie)

Kik Messenger is an app-based alternative to standard texting as well as a social networking app for smartphones. Because it is an app, texts do not show up on the phone's messaging service.
- What parents need to know:
  - Safety and Privacy Concerns.
    - **Stranger danger is an issue.** Kik allows communication with strangers who share their Kik usernames to find people

to chat with. The app allegedly has been used in high-profile crimes, including the murder of a 13-year-old girl and a child-pornography case. There's also a Kik community blog where users can submit photos of themselves and screenshots of messages (sometimes displaying users' full names) to contests.

(www.commonsensemedia.org)

Omegle is a website that allows you to chat (video or text) with a random stranger.
- What parents need to know:
    - Users get paired up with random strangers.
    - Privacy is not protected. The Omegle privacy policy clearly states that your information (including the IP address) is saved on their servers for 120 days. Additionally, using video chat requires that your computer's IP address is made available to the stranger's computer. At the end of an Omegle chat, users have the option to save the chat's log and share the link. Therefore your conversation is not really private, and the contents of the chat, including any personal information you might share can be sent to anyone without your knowledge.
    - Mature/Sexual content. Many people who use Omegle are searching for sexual content – live or pornography.

(www.bewebsmart.com)

Ask.fm is a global social networking site where users create profiles and can send each other questions and answers, with the option of doing so anonymously.
- What parents need to know:
    - Bullying is a major concern. Anonymity can encourage mean behavior. No one monitors the content on Ask.fm. The website states, "**The ask.fm service allows for anonymous content which ask.fm does not monitor.** You agree to use the ask.fm service at your own risk and that ask.fm shall have no liability to you for content that you may find objectionable, obscene or in poor taste.
    - **Posts have been linked to numerous suicides** around the world, according to the Daily Mail.
    - Ask.fm is integrated with Facebook and Twitter - **all these accounts can easily connect** and what is posted on Ask.fm is easily shared and can appear on those other sites with next to no effort.

(www.chicagonow.com)

Whisper works by asking users type a message or "secret" into the app. It then attempts to find a matching stock image based on the content of that user's message. If no images suffice, users can search for their own photos and customize the look of their secret.

- What parents need to know:
  - While Whisper is 100% anonymous, users are still able to comment on or like other Whispers, as well as receive private messages from other users.
  - Whispers are often sexual in nature. Some users use the app to try and hook up with someone nearby, while others post "confessions" of desire". Pornographic pictures will likely be attached to these "Whispers".

GroupMe is an app that does not charge fees or have limits for direct and group messages. Users also can send photos, videos, and calendar links.

- What parents need to know:
  - It is for older teens. The embedded GIFs and emojis have some adult themes, such as drinking and sex.
  - Teens are always connected. Without fees or limits, teens can share and text to their heart's content, which may mean they rarely put the phone down.

Houseparty - Group Video Chat is a way for groups of teens to connect via live video. Two to eight people can be in a chat together at the same time. If someone who is not a direct friend joins a chat, teens get an alert in case they want to leave the chat. You can also "lock" a chat so no one else can join.

- What parents need to know:
  - Users can take screenshots during a chat and share it with whomever they want.
  - There is no moderator. Part of the fun of live video is that anything can happen, but that can also be a problem. Unlike static posts that developers may review, live video chats are spontaneous, so it is impossible to predict what kids will see, especially if they are in chats with people they do not know well.

Live.me – Live Video Streaming allows kids to watch others and broadcast themselves live, earn currency from fans, and interact live with users without any control over who views their streams.

- What parents need to know:
  - Kids can easily see inappropriate content.
  - Predatory comments are a concern. Because anyone can communicate with broadcasters, there is the potential for viewers to request sexual pictures or performances or to contact them through other social means and send private images or messages.

<u>YouNow: Broadcast, Chat, and Watch Live Video</u> is an app that lets kids stream and watch live broadcasts. As they watch, they can comment or buy gold bars to give to other users. Ultimately, the goal is to get lots of viewers, start trending, and grow your fan base.

- What parents need to know:
    - o Kids might make poor decisions to gain popularity. Because it is live video, kids can do or say anything and can respond to requests from viewers -- in real time.
    - o Teens can share personal information, sometimes by accident. Teens often broadcast from their bedrooms, which often have personal information visible, and they sometimes will share a phone number or an email address with viewers, not knowing who is really watching.
    - o It is creepy. Teens even broadcast themselves sleeping, which illustrates the urge to share all aspects of life, even intimate moments, publicly -- and potentially with strangers.

<u>Monkey -- Have Fun Chats</u> - If you remember Chatroulette, where users could be randomly matched with strangers for a video chat, this is the modern version. Using Snapchat to connect, users have 10 seconds to live video-chat with strangers.

- What parents need to know:
    - o Lots of teens are using it. Because of the connection with Snapchat, plenty of teens are always available for a quick chat -- which often leads to connecting via Snapchat and continuing the conversation through that platform.
    - o Teens can accept or reject a chat. Before beginning a chat, users receive the stranger's age, gender, and location and can choose whether to be matched or not.

<u>MeetMe: Chat and Meet New People</u>. Although not marketed as a dating app, MeetMe does have a "Match" feature whereby users can "secretly admire" others, and its large user base means fast-paced communication and guaranteed attention.

- What parents need to know:
    - o It is an open network. Users can chat with whomever is online, as well as search locally, opening the door to potential trouble.
    - o Lots of details are required. First and last name, age, and ZIP code are requested at registration, or you can log in using a Facebook account. The app also asks permission to use location services on your teens' mobile devices, meaning they can find the closest matches wherever they go.

<u>Yellow - Make new friends</u> is an app that is often called the "Tinder for teens" because users swipe right or left to accept or reject the profiles of other users. If two people swipe right on each other, they can chat via Snapchat or Instagram.

- What parents need to know:
  - o It's easy to lie about your age. Even if you try to enter a birth date that indicates you're under 13, the app defaults to an acceptable age so you can create an account anyway.
  - o You have to share your location and other personal information. For the app to work, you need to let it "geotag" you. Also, there are no private profiles, so the only option is to allow anyone to find you.
  - o It encourages contact with strangers. As with Tinder, the whole point is to meet people. The difference with Yellow is that the endgame is sometimes just exchanging social media handles to connect there. Even if there's no offline contact, however, without age verification, teens are connecting with people they don't know who may be much older.

(www.commonsensemedia.org)

Oversharing/personal information

Using social media is not inherently disastrous. The dangers and concerns linked to these sites come with oversharing…providing too much information or posting pictures, videos or words that can attract pedophiles, damage a reputation, or hurt someone's feelings. Applying real-world judgment and common sense can help to minimize those downsides.

Remind your children that online actions have offline consequences.
- Only post what you are comfortable with others seeing.
  - o Profiles have a larger audience than we are aware of. Employers, college admissions officers, police, school personnel may all view your information.
  - o Always ask yourself, "Would I be okay if my family, teacher, coach, friends read this?"
- Once it is posted, it cannot be taken back.
  - o Even if you delete a post, it may have been saved on someone else's phone or computer.
- Limit what you share.
  - o Keep private information private. Including names of school, teams, family members' names, etc.
  - o Avoid talking about sex online – especially with strangers.
  - o Send group messages with care.
- Use privacy settings.

(www.onguardonline.gov)
- "Sharenting" is the new buzzword for parents who share the activities of their children on social media.

o   Many parents post embarrassing information about a child or give information that could identify a child's location.

(www.myfoxny.com/story/28545576/sharenting-parents-sharing)

Tips for talking to your child about sexting

Today's teens are digitally savvy. They are able to access each other 24/7. For this reason it is necessary that you talk to your child about their social media life. Parents should and need to know who their child's friends are both online and offline. In order to protect your child from becoming a **victim or engaging in inappropriate use of their technology,** conversations should be ongoing. This topic cannot be discussed enough.

Depending on the age of your child conversations should be relevant to what they have access to and are utilizing on their phone, apps, gaming systems, social media sites, etc...

- Be knowledgeable about current sites, apps, and products
- Educate your child on safety rules/"netiquette"
- Outline your expectations for online behavior and make consequences clear
- Passwords - up-to-date and private
- Initiate a conversation - Ask questions
  o   What are your favorite things to do online?
  o   What is personal information? Why should you keep it private?
  o   What could you do to be safer online?
  o   What would you do if anyone online asked to meet you face-to-face?
  o   Besides me, who do you feel that you can talk to if you are in a scary or uncomfortable situation?
- Keep computers in an open area – **NOT** in a bedroom
- Monitor the history
- Check profiles and blogs
- Familiarize yourself with common abbreviations and sites

Contracts for use of technology

Samples (Appendix A)

Dignity for All Students Act

The Dignity for All Student Act (DASA) became effective in New York State on July 1, 2012. DASA provides instruction in civility, citizenship, character education, tolerance, respect for others, and dignity. It combats bullying, harassment and discrimination in public schools and includes awareness and sensitivity in relationships, including individuals of different races, weights,

nationalities, ethnicity, religion, mental or physical abilities, sex, sexual orientation, gender identities or expressions.

Hewlett-Woodmere Public Schools is in compliance with DASA and has updated all Codes of Conduct and policies in accordance with regulations. As part of DASA, school districts are required to appoint a staff member at each school building to coordinate the investigation of reported DASA violations.

Dignity Act Coordinators

Franklin Early Childhood Center: Ms. Amy Pernick

Hewlett Elementary School: Mrs. Colleen O'Hara

Ogden Elementary School: Mrs. Elizabeth Murray

Woodmere Middle School: Mr. Colin Thompson

Hewlett High School: Mr. Tom Naglieri

Helpful websites for parents and kids:

www.commonsensemedia.org: Provides independent reviews, age ratings, and other information about all types of media.

www.ncpc.org: This site contains cyberbullying and Internet safety information for parents.

www.netsmartz.org: Educational resource from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. Discusses various Internet safety topics for parents, kids, tweens and teens.

www.wiredsafety.org: Wired Safety provides Internet safety information for children, teens, and adults. The website also has an important resource for parents—a downloadable translator for cyber-lingo and acronyms used by teens.

www.stopbullyingnow.org: Includes information for adults regarding cyberbullying and face-to-face bullying. The site also offers information for children ages 10 to 12 regarding bullying

www.internetsafety101.org: Provides basic internet safety tips for parents and kids

www.cybertipline.com: If you believe that your child has been targeted in any way, report your concerns here, in addition to contacting your local law enforcement agency.

- Nassau County Police Department 4th Precinct – 516-573-6400
- Nassau County Assistant District Attorney for Cybercrimes - 516-571-3800

www.noslang.com and **www.noslang.com/dictionary/full**: These are helpful resources to have when trying to decipher text messages and instant messages.

www.urbandictionary.com: Another helpful resource to have when trying to decipher text messages and instant messages.

Parental Controls
If you are concerned about your child's internet and messaging activities, there are apps and software that parents can install to monitor the activity. Your online service provider or mobile carrier will have information on all parental controls regarding your purchased device. A Google search on parental monitoring apps will also provide you with options and reviews of current products.

THIS CONTRACT IS BETWEEN _____ AND (PARENT(S) _____

☐ A cell phone is a privilege and can be taken away at any time.

☐ The cell phone will only be used on a regular basis to call **{insert permissible contacts, such as family and known friends}**. Otherwise, child will only use the cell phone to make emergency calls.

☐ Child agrees to answer the cell phone whenever Parents call, and to return missed calls in a timely manner. Doing otherwise implies that Child is in danger.

☐ Child agrees not to take phone calls from any unknown number. If Parents are calling from a number that Child may not know, Parents will leave a voicemail with instructions to call.

☐ Child agrees to use appropriate etiquette when sending and receiving text messages or phone calls. Child will be polite to peers and will not engage in any form of bullying. If Child experiences bullying, Child will inform Parents immediately.

☐ Child will not take or send photos of any type with cell phone without direct permission from Parents.

☐ Child will turn over cell phone without argument to Parents for any reason whatsoever. Text messages, phone messages, and other data will not be considered private because these materials can end up in the wrong hands easily.

☐ Bad behavior of any kind will result in suspension of phone privileges. Bad behaviors will not be defined explicitly, but may include talking back, doing poorly in school, or failing to do chores. Any type of bad behavior may result in suspension of cell phone privileges.

In addition to these conditions, Child agrees to keep the cell phone safe, charged, and silent at appropriate times. Child will ask for clarification on any issues that are complex or confusing. Conditions that are not explicitly spelled out in this contract may still apply at Parents' discretion.

With increased demonstration of responsibility, fewer restrictions may be possible. As such, this contract will be reviewed on **{date of review}** and possible changes will be discussed on that date.

_____   _____
 (Child's Signature)   (Parent's Signature)

_____   _____

The Teen Cell Phone Agreement

Dear Caring Adult,

This contract is designed to create an open line of communication between you and your kid regarding their cell phone. The goal is to help your kid become a well rounded person who can coexist with technology, NOT be ruled by it.

You probably find yourself in one of two situations:

They already have a cell phone and you haven't had clear rules in place.

Expect the conversation to be a bit tougher here. They will feel you are setting the ground rules after the game has begun.

Admit that you made a mistake (we all do) and that because you care about them (which you do), that's why we are doing this.

OR

You're about to give them a cell phone.

GOOD NEWS! There is no better time to get people to agree to what you want than when you're handing them a shiny new toy.

"I just need you to review and sign this understanding about your cell phone -- then it's all yours!"

Edit the contract on the next page as needed to make it your own.

Encourage your kid to ask questions, and don't be afraid to have a few laughs along the way.

Cheers,

Josh Shipp!

Dear _____,

CONGRATS! You've proven yourself mature and responsible enough for your own cell phone. Given that you have a new cell phone in your hands, we obviously trust you to make good decisions—so why are we making you sign this lame thing that's loaded with stuff that you probably already know?

Well, let me get to the point.

A cell phone is more than a piece of technology. If used wrongly, it can be a weapon that puts your safety at risk. You've always been a great kid, and we want to make sure that you continue making smart choices.

The goal of this agreement is to make sure that you're always safe and happy—and that we always maintain a direct and open line of communication. I'm asking you to always use your phone for good and to ask for help from me or a trusted adult when a situation leaves you feeling scared or unsure.

Please review this contract, and be sure to ask me any questions that you may have.

With love,

_____

Family Cell Phone Agreement

1. I understand that the rules below are for my safety and that my parents love me more than anything in the world. I understand that my parents want to give me freedom, while also giving me enough security to make smart choices. **Initial here:** _____

2. I promise that my parents will always know my phone passwords. I understand that my parents have a right to look at my phone whenever there's a need for them to do so, even without my permission. **Initial here:** _____

3. I will hand the phone to one of my parents promptly at _____ pm every school night and every weekend night at _____ pm. I will get it back at _____ am. **Initial here:** _____

4. I will not send or receive naked photos. Ever. I understand that there could be serious legal consequences that could put mine and my parents' future at-risk. **Initial here:** _____

5. I will never search for porn or anything else that I wouldn't want my gradma finding. **Initial here:** _____

6. I understand that my behavior on my phone can impact my future reputation—even in ways that I am not able to predict or see. **Initial here:** _____

7. I promise I will tell my parents when I receive suspicious or alarming phone calls or text messages from people I don't know. I will also tell my parents if I am being harassed by someone via my cell phone. **Initial here:** _____

8. When I am old enough, I won't text and drive. I understand it's very dangerous and pretty stupid. **Initial here:** _____

9. I will make an effort to learn phone and internet etiquette. I understand this is an extension of normal manners. I will turn off, silence, and put my phone away in public—especially in a restaurant, at the movies, or while speaking with another human being. I am not a rude person. I will not allow the phone to change this important part of who I am. **Initial here:** _____

10. I will NEVER use my phone or social media to bully or tease anyone, even if my friends think it's funny. **Initial here:** _____

11. I will not lie about where I have been or how I am using the phone. I promise to answer questions openly, honestly, and directly. **Initial here:** _____

I understand that this is NOT my phone and that it was paid for by my parents. Having this phone is not a right–it is a privilege that can be taken away. As such, I have read the following document and agree to the above rules. I understand that if I have any questions, I should talk to my parents face-to-face.

_____

Sign here