

## Talking to Your Child About the Internet:

Explain to your child that the internet is a wonderful place to get information and learn things, but like the real world, it has its own set of dangers. You may need to adjust the language below depending on your child's age, but you need to help your child understand that:

- Just like in the real world, there are some people on the internet who do wrong things such as lie, steal, and trick people. Because of this, kids need to be careful about the information they share and the places they go on the internet.
- They need to protect their personal information on the internet just as they would not share that information with strangers they met on the street. Such information includes their last name, their address, their school, their phone number, and Social Security number.
- They should not share their current whereabouts online since someone could use that information to find them.
- On the internet, they should only chat with people they actually know in person since some people on the internet may not be honest about who they are. They should let you know if a stranger tries to talk to them online.
- They need to create strong passwords that are not easy to guess, as some people might try to guess their password and break into their account. Here are some tips for creating a strong password:
  - ✓ Don't use your name, your pet's name, your school or other names people could guess
  - ✓ Don't use a word in the dictionary as a password since hackers can use programs that check for words from dictionaries.
  - ✓ Use a combination of letters, numbers, and symbols. It is much harder to guess this kind of password because there are more combinations to try.
- They should not tell their passwords to anyone except their parents.
- If they share too much personal information on the internet, they can put themselves and their families at risk of getting a computer virus or someone hacking into their computer, stealing their identity, and stealing important information like banking account passwords.
- They should not arrange to meet someone in real life that they met on the internet.
- They should tell you if they see anything on the internet that makes them feel sad, confused, uncomfortable or scared. Explain that it is not their fault if they see something like this, and they will not get in trouble for telling you about this.
- They should not send pictures of themselves or their family without getting your permission.
- They should not download or install any software or "apps" without your permission.

Have your child sign an Internet Safety Pledge that you tailor for your specific child. Go to <http://www.netsmartz.org/Resources/Pledges> to create your own pledge. The NetSmartz site also offers additional internet safety rules for middle and high schoolers.