PARADE
PRESENTS
Cyberspace Safety

Cyberspace is the world of computers. Consider it a large community, similar in many ways to the community where you live.

Some people spend more time in cyberspace than they do in their own communities. So, you can understand that if cyberspace is a community just like yours only bigger, it has positives and negatives – just like your community does, only more of them.

Your community has a culture. People have a way of dressing and eating and dealing with each other. Cyberspace has a culture, too. People talk online in a different language than they do face to face. They shop online. People even meet other people online. Cyberspace truly is a virtual world.

Your community has crime, too, and so does cyberspace. Just as you have locks on the doors at your home, your computer needs locks to protect you from cybercrime. But you don't live in constant fear that something bad will happen to you. You just do what you can to protect yourself. It's the same in cyberspace. You can navigate through cyberspace safely, but you need to know a few of the rules. The Internet is a huge exchange of information. You'll want to protect your privacy when you post your information online.

Chat About It:

What are some advantages and disadvantages of the virtual world?

Perfect Your Password

The first rule for protecting yourself in the cyberspace community is to keep your personal information as it is intended to be–personal. Start with your password, the code that you use to get to certain places on the Internet, such as your e-mail account. The mission is to come up with something that you can remember easily without using any personal information. Generally, passwords should contain at least eight characters and should be made up of numbers and letters.

Here are some rules for creating secure passwords:
• Use eight characters that are a combination of letters, numbers, and even a punctuation mark.
• Mix uppercase and lowercase letters.
• Your password should not be found in any dictionary, in any language.
• Don't use names – not yours, not your pet's, not even the name of the town where you live.
• Don't use numbers that mean anything like your birthday, address, or phone number.
• Don't use your initials or the initials of anyone you know.
• Don't try to be cute and spell your name with the letters mixed up. Cyber-criminals are very clever and know how to use their computers to decode your puzzle.
• Make your password easy enough for you to remember without writing it down.
• Change your password every few months.
• Don't tell your password to anyone except your parents.
• Don't let anyone see you type your password.

Or, you can follow these 3 steps.
Step 1: Randomly pick six or seven vowels and consonants, like this: **vojipwa**
Step 2: Mix up the case, like this: **VojipWa**
Step 3: Throw in a number, like this: **Vojip8Wa**

You'll have a password that is not a word, but it can be sounded out so you can remember it.

Chat About It: *Have you ever given a friend your password?*

Have you ever been talking to a friend online, only to find out later it wasn't that person?

Social Networking Rocks Your World

Social networking online is the way many teens interact with friends. They may connect more online than in person. It pays to be careful, though, as the people who see you online aren't always trusted friends. Keep important information to yourself. Don't post your full name, Social Security number, address, or bank information. Use a screen name that protects your real name. And, consider carefully what you post online.

Teens use the Internet for more than just talking with friends. Some seek employment online. Others scope out colleges in cyberspace. Perspective employers and admissions personnel know that, so they are likely to check you out online to learn more about you. That's why it matters what you post, even when you are using social media. Your words will be out there forever and you may be judged based on them. Also, keep in mind that when seeking a job or a school, it's great to connect online, but you'll want to follow up the important contacts in person, or at least by phone.

Social networking can also be a powerful tool for political change. Last spring, governments in Tunisia and Egypt were changed, in part, due to social media. Tweets, blogs, and viral videos all served to spur people to act as they learned about ongoing uprisings and joined in.

Chat About It: *Do you think young people will now play a bigger role in bringing about political change as a result of the popularity of social networking? Why? Give examples of how you believe young people should use this power in your community. If you were going to launch a community service project, what might it be and how would you use social media to spread the word and get people involved?*

Shop Smart

The Internet never closes, so you can truly shop until you drop… if you keep a few safety rules in mind.

* Use a secure browser. At a safe site, you will often a see a picture of a key showing that it's locked. For shopping, look for a Web address that starts with "https."

* You will be paying with a credit card. It will likely be one that belongs to your parents. It's a good idea for them to have one credit card that is used only for online shopping. That way, it's easy to track what is bought online. You might suggest that to them.

* Buy from sellers that you know. There's a good chance they are reliable.

* Print out and keep your receipts.

* Shop on sites that say they will keep your information private. Some sites will sell your personal information to other sellers.

Freedom of Speech Online

You've heard about freedom of speech and you know it's a First Amendment right. So, can you say whatever you want online? No, you can't. You may not say things about people that aren't true. And, even if what you write *is* true, that doesn't mean it's wise to put it online. Recent news abounds with stories about people who lost their jobs because of material they posted online that their employers didn't like. What you put online now may live online for years, so consider how a future school or employer might view you based on what you wrote online this week.

Also, you can't copy other peoples' words or work and present it as your own. Imagine that your homework assignment is to research the history of the first Super Bowl game. You figure that the most reliable source for information is the website of the National Football League. So you hit www.nfl.com, and click on the link for the first Super Bowl.

There you find two great paragraphs that recap the game so you copy and paste those into your report. Then you add some statistics that you also found on the NFL's site and on some other sports sites. You write some more information in your own words about the history of the Super Bowl. Are you good to go?

No, you are not. You have stolen from the NFL. That's illegal, and it's cheating. When you took just those two paragraphs off the NFL's site and pasted them into your report, you violated the NFL's copyright. The NFL owns those words and you can't use them without permission. It says that right on the site, but even if it didn't, you must know that you can't take information that you found online and use it as your own. It's stealing, just as if you had broken into the offices of the NFL and stolen a few signed footballs. Stealing words and ideas is called plagiarism.

You may use information that you find online if you do it properly. You must take the information, read it, and either paraphrase it, summarize it, or quote it. That means reading carefully what you found so that you can retell it in your own words.

Chat About It: *How many hours a day are you online? How does it stack up to hours spent in school, talking to people in person, sleeping, or eating? Do you think you spend enough time connecting with people in person? What's the difference between face-to-face interactions and online connections?*