More Information:

- **Internet Safety Facts** - providing helpful information and links for parents wishing to protect their children from online threats. The monitoring software they recommend *(http://www.loveourchildrenusa.org/safesoftware.php)* will allow you to monitor all your child's emails, instant messaging and browsing activities - see everything your children do, and get email notifications if they stray into undesirable areas of the internet - http://www.loveourchildrenusa.org/parent_internetsafety.php
- **Safety Rules for the Internet** - some additional advice on using the internet safely - http://www.ehow.com/way_5159439_safety-rules-surfing-internet.html
- **Tips For Staying Safe On The Internet** - advice for Christian teenagers on how to stay safe online - http://christianteens.about.com/od/advice/tp/internetsafety.htm
- **Safe Kids** - internet safety advice for parents, learn how to keep your child safe in today's world - http://www.safekids.com
- **UK Government** - advice on protecting your child from mobile phone and internet dangers. What to do if your child has encountered an online bully or predator - www.direct.gov.uk/en/Parents/Yourchildshealthandsafety/Internetsafety/index.htm
- **How To Avoid Internet Pornography** - practical steps to take to avoid pornography - http://www.ehow.com/how_2063642_avoid-internet-pornography.html
- **Safe Families** - Helpful resources for Christian parents, for believers struggling with online addictions and temptations, and for those seeking to help others overcome these problems. Includes a 'Family Internet Safety Pledge' you and your children can read and sign together – http://www.safefamilies.org
- **Video documentary** - visit http://www.somebodysdaughter.org for information on a challenging Christian video on pornography addiction, entitled *'Somebody's Daughter'*.

Helpful sermons and resources for those struggling with temptation:

- **Temptation** - preachtheword.com/sermon/b2b03.shtml
- **Dangerous Liaisons Of The Mind** - preachtheword.com/sermon/sotm06.shtml
- **Mental Sins** - preachtheword.com/sermon/sins01.shtml
- **Christian Liberty and the Christian's Purity** - preachtheword.com/sermon/1cor15.shtml
- **The Saint, The System And Sin** - preachtheword.com/sermon/1cor25.shtml
- **How To Use Your Liberty For The Lord** - preachtheword.com/sermon/1cor26.shtml
- **Sex And The Supremacy Of Christ** – a free PDF eBook by John Piper and Justin Taylor - http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/OnlineBooks/ByTitle/2398_Sex_and_the_Supremacy_of_Christ/

This booklet was produced by preachtheword.com – to view the latest version of this article on the internet, go to:
http://www.preachtheword.com/sermon/internet-safety.shtml

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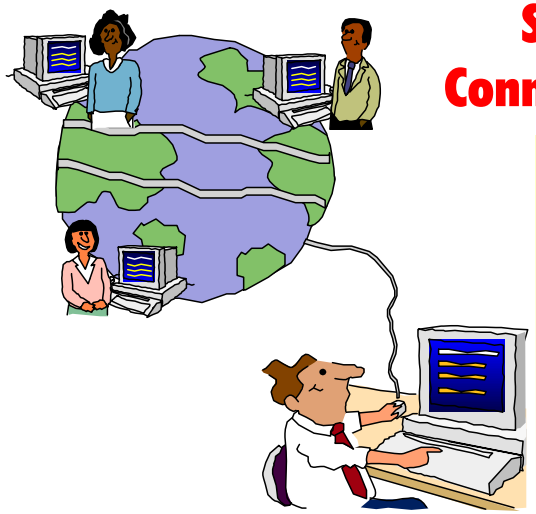
☑ Avoiding Temptation Online

☑ Protecting Your Children

☑ Filtering Objectionable Content

What Every Christian Ought To Know About Using The Internet Safely



Should Christians Connect To The Internet?

The aim of this booklet is to provide some helpful information on how anyone, but in particular Christians, can use the Internet more safely. This article covers helpful suggestions on how to avoid temptation on the Internet, how to keep your computer secure, as well as useful tips and resources for protecting your children online.

The Internet seems to have much to offer to make life easier. Online shopping, plane reservations, banking, and other services promise to save us time and money. Online resources promise to make learning easier and more convenient. The Internet has even given birth to a new class of recreation and leisure opportunities.

Although it has so much to offer, the Internet has a darker side. Always just a click away is a seething pool of cult and occult propaganda and recruitment activity, along with dozens of new pornographic websites launching every day. Con-artists prey tirelessly on anyone who seems a good target. Stalkers, rapists, and paedophiles use it to find victims. Misinformation and disinformation is as common as real, valuable information. The lure and mystique of the virtual world and virtual relationships has broken up thousands of marriages. With such a wicked facet to it, should Christians connect to the Internet at all?

Whether or not a Christian should connect to the Internet - or whether or not they allow their children to connect - is an individual decision. It is possible to navigate, explore, and make practical use of the Internet if one has sufficient safeguards in place. However, Internet access may not be for everyone.

A person who has a problem with alcohol should try to avoid places where alcoholic beverages are freely available. A person who is trying to stop smoking should not hang around with others in the 'smoking area' at work, and they should not keep a pack of cigarettes in the cupboard 'just in case'. They should not even allow guests to smoke in their house or car.

- **K9 Web Protection** - used in many schools, you can install it for free on your home computer. Can block websites by category - http://www.k9webprotection.com
- **AFO Internet Safety and Web Content Filtering** - protect computers on your home network using this filtering service, they also provide the option of using them as your ISP (US only) - http://www.afo.net
- **Surf On The Safe Side** - internet protection service which will filter objectionable content including chat rooms and pornography, as well as protecting you from malware websites - http://www.surfonthesafeside.com
- **CyberPatrol** - block offensive websites, stop online predators, control chat and downloads, protect personal information - http://www.cyberpatrol.com
- **NetNanny** - parental control software which protects against predators and cyberbullies, also provides social networking user reports - http://www.netnanny.com
- **Christian-Net** - internet accountability and filtering for families and networks - http://www.cnonline.net
- **bSecure** - content filtering, instant message monitoring, protects you and your family from inappropriate adult content - http://www.bsafehome.com
- **SafeEyes** - Internet content filtering for the home and business, also available: content filtering for the iPhone and iPod Touch! - http://www.internetsafety.com
- **PC Tattle Tale** - this Internet monitoring software records everything your child does when they go online - http://www.pctattletale.com
- **WiseChoice** - a Christian internet filter specifically intended to block adult websites, includes 'Accountability Reporting' - http://www.wisechoice.net

Child Safe Searching (set your child's homepage to a safe search engine):

- **Ask Kids** - child safe searching, use instead of standard search engines when searching with your kids - http://www.askkids.com
- **KidsClick!** - safe search for kids, backed by librarians - http://www.kidsclick.org
- **Yahoo! Kids** - safe content and search engine for children - http://kids.yahoo.com
- **Fact Monster** - a safe place for your children to find help with their homework - http://www.factmonster.com
- **Kids.gov** - links to child-friendly sites, a directory compiled by the US government - http://www.kids.gov
- **KidSurf** - links to child-friendly websites - http://www.kidsurf.net

Filtered Internet Service Providers (ISPs):

- **US only:** christianityonline.com, christianpurity.com, saferaccess.com, truevine.net, crosswayisp.net
- **Links to other Christian Internet Service Providers** in the US and other countries - http://christianity.about.com/od/practicaltools/tp/christianisps.htm

Links To Helpful Resources

Recommended Anti-Virus Software (you should install only one of the following):

- **AVG Antivirus (Free)** - http://free.avg.com
- **Avast! (Free)** - http://www.avast.com/eng/avast_4_home.html
- **Avira (Free)** - http://www.free-av.com
- **Kaspersky** - http://www.kaspersky.com
- **Trend Micro Housecall** (Free online check) - http://housecall.trendmicro.com
- **McAfee** - http://www.mcafee.com
- **Symantec** - http://www.symantec.com

Recommended Anti-Spyware Software (install one or all of the following - all are free):

- **Spyware Blaster** - http://www.javacoolsoftware.com/spywareblaster.html
- **SpyBot Search and Destroy** - http://www.safer-networking.org
- **MalwareBytes Anti-Malware** - http://www.malwarebytes.org
- **SUPERAntiSpyware** - http://www.superantispyware.com
- **HijackThis!** - this will scan your computer and produce a log file detailing what programs are loading and running in the background. This log file can be shared with a computer expert (either someone you know, or someone online) to determine if any of the entries are malicious - http://free.antivirus.com/hijackthis/

Recommended Internet Filtering Utilities (including 'Safe Surfing' software):

- **Covenant Eyes** - Christian internet accountability and filtering software which will monitor all activity, and email a report to selected individuals. Ideal for protecting both children and adults - http://www.covenanteyes.com
- **OpenDNS** - a little more technical to set up, but easy if you follow the instructions. This can protect every device on your home network if it is set up on your router, without installing any software. Having a free OpenDNS account allows you to block content by category *(http://www.opendns.com/solutions/household/parental/)*, and can also keep a log of all sites visited using your Internet connection *(using the 'Stats' function - http://forums.opendns.com/comments.php?DiscussionID=3414)*. After setting up an OpenDNS account, you can install the optional OpenDNS Updater to make sure your network is always protected *(http://www.opendns.com/support/dynamic_ip_downloads/)*. Get started with OpenDNS by signing up for a free account *(http://www.opendns.com/start/)*, after watching the helpful video tutorial *(http://www.opendns.com/support/videos/)*. If you wish, you can also use one of the other filtering programs mentioned here at the same time as OpenDNS to provide additional protection – http://www.opendns.com

Likewise, people who have addictions, problems with self-control, lack of discipline, or other weaknesses or challenges, should not have unhindered access to the Internet. If they access the Internet at all, they need to have good safeguards in place. In fact, everyone should have some safeguards in place. The extent and complexity of the safeguards will depend on the individual, their weaknesses, and their maturity.

Basic Safeguards

Some common sense and effective measures that one can employ are:

Subscribing to a filtered Internet access service: These services make many of the worst web sites on the Internet inaccessible. They aren't foolproof, but they do filter out the bulk of the dangerous material. Avoidance is our first line of defence. Unfortunately, Christian filtered internet service providers are generally only available in the US, however many other filtering options are available. *(See 'Filtering Objectionable Content' for more information).*

> ***"Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away" - Proverbs 4:14-15***

Creating Accountability: Accountability can be a very effective tool for safeguarding the online experience. Making it possible for other people to see what a person is doing on the computer helps create accountability. Accountability can be as extreme as always having someone else around when a person is on the computer, or as simple as putting the computer in a well-travelled area of the home, facing the computer screen out into the room so that anyone present can see what is being done. Often, when a person might succumb to temptation when alone, the presence of another person will strengthen them. The free OpenDNS service mentioned later in this article allows you to keep a log of all websites accessed over your internet connection. Allowing several people access to this log is an excellent way to create accountability. Also the Christian 'Covenant Eyes' accountability and filtering service comes highly recommended, and will email reports of online activity to people you select. *(See 'Filtering Objectionable Content' for more information).*

> ***"Two are better than one...for if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up" - Ecc 4:9-10***

Discernment: As in all aspects of our daily lives, it is important for believers to exercise discernment when using the internet. In the same way that you are careful to avoid certain television channels, programmes, magazines, movies, places and company, you should be careful to avoid certain areas of the internet. Visiting sites which feature explicit or illegal content is only asking for trouble. Not only are you *leading yourself into temptation,*

you are exposing your computer to the risk of malware and viruses. According to a report by Google, the most dangerous sites are: those which have a lot of advertisements; those containing pornographic links or content; those which produce too many pop-ups; sites which try to install files themselves; and sites which provide free software 'cracks', 'keygens', 'serial numbers', and 'game cheats'. The discerning user will steer clear of all such activities.

> ***"Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.***
> ***Abstain from all appearance of evil" - 1 Thessalonians 5:21-22***

Flee: When you are tempted to do something immoral or impure on the Internet, turn the computer off immediately and pray or read the Bible for a while. The biblical model, exemplified by Joseph when he fled Potiphar's wife at the expense of his own career and comfort, is to flee from temptation. Flirting with temptation is a dangerous game - a game that we usually lose. *"The best way to disengage an impure desire is to engage a pure one; the best way to expel the love of what is evil is to embrace the love of what is good instead. To be specific, we must replace the object of our sinful affection with an infinitely more worthy one - God Himself" - Thomas Chalmers*

> ***"Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart" - 2 Timothy 2:22***
>
> ***"But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness" - 1 Timothy 6:11***
>
> ***"Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body" - 1 Corinthians 6:18***

Protect Your Personal Information: Never give out personal information about yourself, such as your real name, where you live, where you work, your phone number, passwords, etc. unless you are absolutely certain of the identity of the person with whom you are in contact. Don't respond to emails asking for private information or requesting that you 'verify your account details' - always contact the company in question directly.

Don't Open Unknown E-mail Attachments: When you receive e-mail with a picture or other file attached to it, don't open the attached file unless you know exactly what it is and who sent it to you. Never click on a link in an email, especially if you are not sure of its destination - it is safer to type the address of the website in question directly into your browser. The most common way that computer viruses spread today is through e-mail attachments or malicious websites. Some viruses, once they infect a computer, actually 'hijack' the person's e-mail account and send messages with the virus attached to it. For

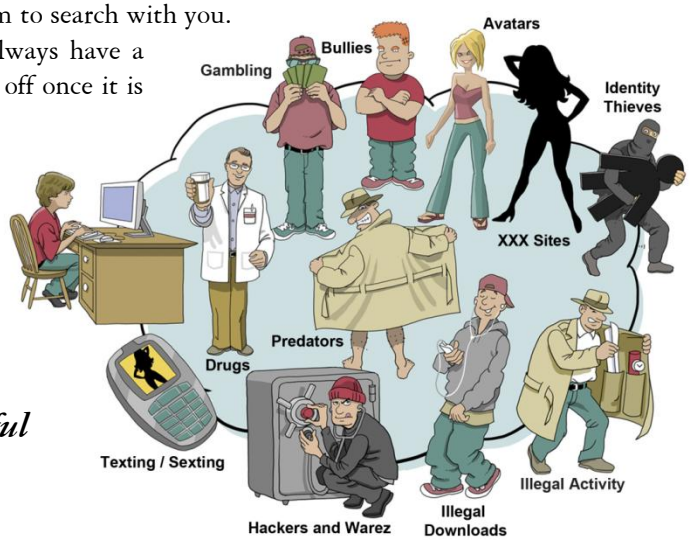
Conclusion

Yes, it is possible to enjoy the many benefits of the Internet while minimizing its risks. For most adults, some very simple safeguards are sufficient. For adults with special challenges or addictions, more stringent safeguards are necessary. For children, more extreme and obtrusive protections must be in place. We can't afford to take chances with our children, so we must be particularly careful what they do, where they go, and with whom they speak. The key to a successful and safe online experience is never to be casual about it. Always ask yourself if what you are doing is glorifying to God. How would you feel if the Lord Jesus Christ were with you in that chat room, or looking over your shoulder at that web site? *(He is!)*. Don't miss the section overleaf, which provides links to other helpful articles on internet safety, and some related resources for those struggling with the temptations of the Internet.

> ***"All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not" - 1 Corinthians 10:23***

Other Precautions

- Have an appropriate Bible verse or slogan attached to your monitor, which will be of help to you when temptation comes – for example, verses such as Hebrews 2:17-18; 1 Corinthians 10:13.
- Decide how long you want to spend online before you start, and stick to that time.
- Don't surf the net late at night, especially when alone.
- If you are searching for something that could also be of interest to your spouse or children, then invite them to search with you.
- Never surf 'aimlessly', always have a goal in mind and switch off once it is achieved.
- Always keep your computer's operating system and web browser up-to-date with security patches and other fixes released by the manufacturer.



Don't miss the helpful links section overleaf...

Filtering Objectionable Content

One of the easiest and most beneficial steps to take is using some method of filtering out undesirable content, or completely blocking access to particular websites. There are a variety of methods you can use to block dangerous areas of the internet, these include changing your ISP to a Christian filtered service provider, installing filtering software on your computer, or using a free DNS (Domain Name System) filtering service:

Use an internet filtering program. Just as you can place materials unsafe for children out of reach on the top shelf in the real world, there are also things you can do in the virtual world to make surfing for your children a lot safer. This is where 'Safe Surfing' products come in. **CyberPatrol** and **NetNanny** are two well-known examples. Designed to keep you and your children safe online, the software filters out inappropriate websites, prevents children from divulging personal information online and includes time management features. *(See the links section at the end of this booklet for recommended Internet filtering utilities).*

Filter every computer in your home for free. Use the free **OpenDNS** service which allows you to easily filter undesirable websites for every device in your home, or an individual computer. You can block websites by category, and block or allow sites individually. OpenDNS also has an optional service which will allow you to keep a log of every website visited over your internet connection (helpful for monitoring internet activity). OpenDNS works by changing a setting on your router, and does not require any software to be installed on your computer(s). It will also help protect your computers from 'phishing' and malicious websites. It has the advantage of not only protecting computers, but any device that connects to your home router by WiFi. Further instructions for setting up OpenDNS can be found at **opendns.com/start** *(Also see the links section at the end of this booklet for additional advice on setting up OpenDNS).*

Subscribe to a filtered Internet service. There are Internet service providers that filter out and prohibit access to most inappropriate web sites. Unfortunately these are generally only available in the US, and they do have the inconvenience of requiring you to change your ISP. Additionally, they do not mean we can ignore the other suggestions given here, but using a filtered ISP is a big step in the right direction.

http://www.covenanteyes.com

http://www.cyberpatrol.com

this reason, even if you receive an e-mail from someone you know, don't open the attached file unless you know what the file is, and that the sender uses virus protection. It is very smart to make the small investment in an anti-virus program for your computer (or even use free versions). Most anti-virus programs will even scan your incoming e-mail for viruses. Once you have installed your anti-virus software, be sure to update it regularly so that you'll be protected against new viruses, which come out daily. *(See the links at the end of this booklet for recommended Anti-Virus software).*

Install Protection Against Spyware and Malware: Increasingly, malicious software is being used by criminals with the aim of stealing personal information, or with the intention of driving you to visit their websites or purchase their fake 'security software'. Symptoms of a spyware infected computer include slow downs, annoying popups (often explicit), a redirected homepage on your browser, and 'toolbars' which you did not install yourself. There are a number of free solutions which will help protect your computer from these dangers. *(See the links section for recommended Anti-Spyware software).*

Block Advertisements and YouTube Comments: Frequently advertisements on websites (as in many other mediums) can feature provocative or suggestive imagery. If you use the **Firefox** web browser, you can install the free **'AdBlock Plus'** addon *(http://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/1865)*, which will block advertisements on all websites. If there are certain websites you visit regularly and trust, you can choose to allow advertisements on these sites in order to help support them. Additionally, comments on the YouTube website are notorious for crass and vulgar language - these can easily be hidden using the YouTube Comment blocking addon for Firefox *(http://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/7115)*.

Adults usually require less stringent safeguards than children. Children are more naive, have less life-experience, and are more susceptible to many of the dangers lurking on the Internet. However, adults should never take a casual attitude toward their online activity. Many adults have been lured into unhealthy relationships, occultism, divorces, cults, con-artists' schemes, unhealthy lifestyles, and more through the Internet.

Recommended Solution
Internet Explorer Replacement Browser
Firefox
Safer, Faster, Better

http://www.getfirefox.com
Firefox Addons: http://addons.mozilla.org

"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" - Philippians 4:8

Protecting Children

"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" - Proverbs 22:6

Parents are often very concerned about how to protect their children from the perils of the Internet while still enjoying its benefits. With pornography sites just a click away, cults aggressively recruiting online, and sexual-predators looking for children in chat rooms and e-mail forums - wise Christians will take sensible steps to protect their children.

Don't let your kids have a computer connected to the Internet in their bedroom. That's just asking for trouble. You wouldn't let a stranger into your child's bedroom would you? Then why let them in via the Internet?

Put the computer in a public, well-travelled area of the home with the screen facing out into the room. *"What about my child's privacy? What about trust?"* some parents will ask. Forty years from now, after a long struggle with a life-destroying pornography addiction, your child will wish you had been less concerned about privacy and more concerned about their safety and well-being.

ALWAYS try to have an adult present when children - including *(especially!)* teens - are on the Internet. Kids and even teenagers are not aware of the potential dangers of idle curiosity. Five minutes of 'curiosity' at the wrong web site could destroy a life.

Educate your children about the dangers on the Internet. The naive child is easier prey, and an educated child will better understand the steps you take to protect them. Tell them why you are setting up safeguards for them, and explain why they should not reveal personal information about themselves (not even their names) online. Remember that you will not always be with your children when they use the internet – they need to be aware of the dangers, so that whether at home, at school, or visiting a friend's house, they will still exercise caution.

Review your children's e-mail and surfing activities. One parent opened his 9-year-old daughter's e-mail because he wanted to know who was writing to her, and he found in it a photograph of the worst kind. You might feel self-conscious monitoring your children's e-mail, and they might protest, but you may find yourself very glad that you had the wisdom to love your child enough to protect them in that way. There are also many ways to review which websites have been visited, including simply checking the 'History' function on your internet browser. When they have their own house, buy their own computer, and pay for their own Internet access, then they can have their 'privacy'. Until then, God holds you accountable for their actions and their protection. As a deterrent, make your child aware that you, or a computer literate friend or relative, will occasionally perform 'spot checks' on their email or browsing. Monitoring software is available which

will watch everything your child does on the computer, and send you email notifications of dangerous activities.

Avoid 'chat rooms' and 'instant messaging' if possible. Again, your children will protest, but they simply do not know and understand the dangers that exist. You know better than they do. Yes, you even know better than your teenager! If you permit your child to enter a 'chat room', be sure you sit right next to them – and be aware that chat rooms can be frequented by sexual predators, cult members, and child pornographers.

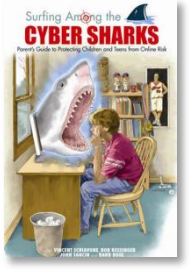
Face Facts – you cannot always protect your child, eventually they will be exposed to something you would rather they hadn't seen. In these days when the Internet can be accessed on mobile phones and even MP3 players, it is impossible for you to supervise your child at all times. Because of this, you as a Christian parent have a grave responsibility to prepare your child for these future temptations by teaching them Biblical principles, and explaining the dangers the world presents.

Every week there is another story in the news about a pervert preying on children in a 'chat room'. Once your child is in the news, it's too late. Didn't your parents always warn you never to talk to strangers? It applies even more on the Internet. There is no way to know who those other people in the 'chat room' really are, or why they are there. Don't trust anyone in a 'chat room', ever, and have your child avoid them altogether unless you are present with them.

Some of these suggestions may sound drastic in relation to the permissiveness and apathy of today's world, but they are by no means as drastic as one might at first think. A wise parent will limit their children's Internet activities even more, and will even take steps to protect themselves and their spouse. Remember, marriages are broken literally every day by relationships struck up in chat rooms - and by pornography addictions spawned by a few moments at the wrong web site.

Your child's life, physical, mental and spiritual well-being are at stake. If you love your child they are important enough to warrant drastic measures. Loving parents will take whatever steps are necessary to protect their children from inappropriate or naive activities on the Internet. Their tomorrow is worth today's inconvenience.

For more information, read the helpful booklet "Surfing Among The Cyber Sharks: A Parent's Guide To Protecting Teenagers and Children From Online Risk"



http://www.cyberpatrol.com/media.asp