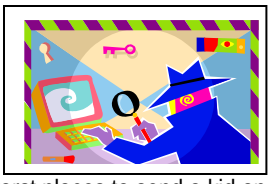

Family Friendly Searching

One of the worst places to send a kid on the Web, is a search engine. They search for something innocent, like "girl sites" and the results can be quite shocking. Search engines have realized that families need options to get results without unwanted, offensive material.

A couple of the major search engines have added an optional family filter. You have to make sure it is turned on before starting your search, by setting the options. When you do this, each time you go back the filter will be active. Altavista www.altavista.com has a family filter option that is a little confusing to operate. Initially I thought I had the family filter on, and I didn't. When you open Altavista is does not show if you have the family filter on until you actually do a search, but once you initiate the filter it will be on every time you go there. Go Network www.go.com clearly shows that you have the GoGuardian feature on, when you go back to the site after leaving.

To alleviate looking whether or not you have the filter on, going directly to a search engine that is only family friendly is easier, especially for children. Ask For Kids www.ajkids.com is a good option and it is simple for any child to use. Instead of searching for terms, all they have to do is enter a question. It also has a spell check option for their question. Another place to search is KidsClick http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/KidsClick .You can search through sites that have been hand picked by librarians.

Another option is to use directories, such as About.com www.about.com. Instead of searching, you go to the category you want information about. For instance, if you want information about barbie dolls, you would go to the main page, select "hobbies", then click on "collecting", and then choose "Barbie Doll Collecting". By using directories, you control what comes on your screen. Several search engines also offer directory options to locate what you are looking for.

With so many sites available, it can be a very difficult task to find the information you are looking for, quickly and easily. One of the biggest problems with search engines is that they return irrelevant results. Search engines are trying to remedy this problem, but in the meantime, at least you can filter out the offensive material.

Often children see Website addresses on television and want to visit. Great! The Internet is a great interactive compliment to television. There is a problem with this though. Many cyber-squatters have registered addresses that are close to popular sites. The worst part of the cyber-squatter problem, is that they have pornography on their sites. The purpose is to hold up the company for money. Here is how to protect yourself from this practice.

Typing URLs

Typing in a URL can lead to an unwanted surprise. URL stands for Uniform Resource Locator or Webpage address. Several pornographic sites prey on typing errors, and not knowing what the actually domain extension is. They may do this because they get more money from advertising, they just like to shock you, or perhaps it is just coincidence. Whatever the reason is that this happens, it does. Learn how to protect yourself from these unwanted surprises.

A popular site among teenage girls is http://www.gurl.com. They offer free email, advice columns and is really a great site. If someone verbally told a young lady about this site, they may type in http://www.girl.com and they would reach a pornographic site. They are many more of these pornographic sites that have close spellings to children's sites. This is in no way the company's fault. Whoever buys a domain name owns exclusive rights to it.

A common way for a site to obtain traffic is to use a popular name and then use .net, .org, or .com equivalent. For instance, http://www.whitehouse.gov will bring you to the United State's White House where you can learn more about President Clinton and other Presidents. Make the error of typing in http://www.whitehouse.com and you will be brought to a pornographic site with no warning page. Whitehouse.com even brags that it has been mentioned on many networks news broadcasts. Whitehouse.org is also a pornographic site, but at least they have a warning page that you must be over the age of 18 to enter. Whitehouse.net is a parody site of the whitehouse.gov site. This site does not have any advertising on it, but is very misleading because the page looks very similar to the real White House. This happened because the United States government did not have the fore-thought to buy those domain names, before someone else did. Once someone buys a domain name, they may sell it, but they name the price.

So what do you do to protect yourself? First of all, consider a filtered Internet Service Provider or filtering software. If this does not appeal to you, instruct your children not to type URLs. Have them use a portal site, like an About.com kid's site to surf from. Consider using a kid safe search engine like Ask Jeeves for Kids. Finally if someone sends a non-clickable link by email, learn how to copy and paste it, without retyping the entire URL without the chances of a typo.

I have been told that school children have had their Internet privileges revoked because they have reached pornographic sites accidentally by typing wrong URLs. Arming yourself with knowledge that these exist and how to protect yourself is more than half the battle. Make your Internet experience much richer without embarrassing yourself or your children, and do not make these pornographic sites more popular.

Crossearch.com is a Christian search engine among other such as the following:

http://www.cwd.com Christian Worldwide Directory
http://www.christianet.com Christian Shopping Mall
http://www.christianlinks.com Christian Links
http://www.his-net.com/ Christian Only
http://www.711.net Christian Portal

Metasearches

http://www.infind.com Six Searches in One. InferenceFind is a metasearch engine. Its search results are generated from calls to other search engines on the web. It's a search tool that calls out in parallel all the best search engines on the Internet, merges the results, removes redundancies, and clusters the results into neat, understandable groupings. Finds queries on six search engines on the web, but can be configured to call any search engine. Currently finding results from WebCrawler, Yahoo, Lycos, AltaVista, InfoSeek, and Excite.

Metacrawler

http://www.metacrawler.com/i this site uses nine search engines to comb the web, auctions and newsgroups.

Twenty Searches, One Key Stroke
http://www.savvysearch.com/ A site owned by CNET, this metasearch service allows you to search twenty search engines at the same time.

Classic Search Engines:
http://www.google.com
http://www.ask.com
http://www.yahoo.com
http://www.deja.com
http://www.altavista.com
http://www.hotbot.com
http://www.excite.com
http://www.about.com

Many people learn to prefer one search engine over another. Try them all and find the one that finds the results you're looking for.