

INFORMATION

from Focus on the Family

HELPING YOUR CHILD NAVIGATE THE BLOGOSPHERE

WHAT IS A BLOG?

A Web log, commonly referred to as a blog, is a simple Web site run by an individual or a group. Blogs typically feature text, photos, and links to other sites. Some include audio or video files. Blogs are generally updated regularly, often by way of a journal entry, and many allow readers to post comments. Some families put up pictures and updates about their activities on blogs so that loved ones who live far away can stay in touch.

In recent years, blogging has also become extremely popular among young people. Recent studies reveal that nearly half of all blogs are now authored by teenagers who use their sites to network with their friends.

DANGERS

While blogging presents some unique online dangers, many of the same principles for protecting your children from harmful Internet content apply. To read more about general Internet safety, we encourage you to read the articles located at “A Journey into Cyberspace” by Focus on the Family’s Focus on Your Child (<http://www.focusonyourchild.com/learning/art1/A0000086.html>).

Unfortunately, sexual predators have found new ways to exploit children through the blogging community. Criminals can maintain a guise of friendship and anonymity while working their way into an unsuspecting child’s confidence through the blogging social network. A number of blogs also advertise services – such as horoscopes – that should give Christian parents pause. Others contain sexually explicit content.

SAFEGUARDS

If you do choose to allow your child to have a blog, the following safeguards should be taken:

- Review the different blogging services that are available. Many blogs advertise an assortment of businesses, and some are more family-friendly than others in this regard.
- Once you’ve found a blogging service that features only safe advertising, learn how to use the tools available on their site. Many allow you to keep a blog private, only permitting people to access it who have been given permission by the parent or the child who updates the site.
- Talk with your children about what is and what is not safe information to make available online – kids should never give out their address, e-mail address, phone number, or personal facts (like where they go to school) to strangers.
- Establish clear boundaries for Internet use that will keep your children safe and review them frequently until each child knows them well.
- Keep household computers in a common area to increase Internet accountability.

MORE INFORMATION

“Are Your Teens Getting Tangled in the Latest Web Trend?” by Tom Neven (*Plugged In Magazine*, February 2006)

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This article offers information regarding some of the more popular blogging Web sites, including MySpace.com.

“Courting Danger Online – Teenagers and the Internet” by Dr. Albert H. Mohler

http://www.albertmohler.com/commentary_read.php?cdate=2005-12-01).

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