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## **Monitoring Your Child's Computer For Their Safety**

**By Chris McElroy**

What websites did your child visit this week? Did any of those websites contain porn, illegal content, or content that you would not allow your child to be exposed to?

What did your child receive in their email this week? Did someone from Bulgaria, Russia, or Thailand send them pornography? How about someone who lives even closer to you? What did they send your child?

Did anyone approach your child about sex in an Internet chat room this week? Did someone invite them to run away from home or to secretly meet with them offline?

Was your child approached through his or her Instant Messenger about sex this week?

You don't know? You hope not? You think that if it happened they would have told you about it? Or do you just think that none of that can happen to your child because you have some sort of content filter installed?

As a parent you have to be proactive. If you did not know the answers to those questions I mentioned above then your child is at risk of being taken advantage of by a child sex predator.

No, I am not just being an alarmist. I am not chicken little and the sky is not falling. However children are falling prey to online sex predators far too often.

Besides that, they are being exposed to pornography, inappropriate content, and even illegal content. If that does not concern you it should.

If your child is trading in pirated music, movies, and software, you can be sued for thousands of dollars. Do you really think saying, "You should not do that" is enough if there is a song or a movie they really want and they know you will never find out about it?

Child sex predators online are very, very smart. Smarter than your child. They can chat with your child for months gathering bits and pieces of personal information they can use to stalk or kidnap your child.

Spammers send out porn to every email address they can get. Is your child's email address among them. Is your child being sent pornography by email? Does it concern you that they might?

And whom are they talking to in that chatroom or on their instant messenger? Is it a friend they met online or someone who is out to do them harm? Do you need for something to happen before you do anything about it?

I am CEO of a missing children organization called the Kidsearch Network and have had to go out and search for more than 80 missing children. We have found a lot of them safe and sound, but we have also been on cases that turned out to be a homicide by a child abductor. Believe me when I tell you this. You do not want to wait until something happens before you do something to make sure your child is safe online.

The software is not expensive nor is it complicated to use, so you have no excuse as a parent for not knowing the answers to the questions I have asked you in this article. Our organization has no affiliation with the companies that provide this software. We make no money by promoting the use of the computer monitoring software. We just want your child to be safe.

You can even try it out for free. Go to <http://www.onlinesafetyshield.com> for more information. It even tells you by email or by your cellphone whenever your child views inappropriate content. You control what websites your child cannot visit. You monitor their email for when inappropriate content is there.

If you monitor your child's computer, the next time I ask those questions, you will be able to say yes.

Chris McElroy actively searches for Missing Children and runaway teens. You can read more at <http://www.kidsearchnetwork.org> , <http://www.missingchildrenblog.com> and <http://www.runawayteens.org>

## Parents – Exercise Your Control

By Asma Latif

Just as it is your job to protect your children in every day life, it is your job as a parent to protect your children online. Parents who wouldn't allow their children to go out with people they don't know often think nothing of letting their children spend hours online chatting with strangers. Today, online crimes can easily enter your home, so it is your responsibility to make your child aware of the online dangers that exist. In addition to communicating with your child about online safety, pro-active parents can purchase software that may prevent potential problems.

Filtering programs such as NetNanny and CyberPatrol can offer some restriction to inappropriate web sites that might contain pornography. However, these programs aren't foolproof and do not provide realtime alerts and notification. Your child may still be able to access some pornographic sites and some legitimate sites may accidentally be blocked.

If you are concerned about your child's online activities, a parental control service by OnlineSafetyPAL and program like OnlineSafetyShield can be used to help ensure online child safety when you are not around. These programs and services are set-up to record and monitor all computer activity and provide real-time alert notification. Parents can create a list of certain specific forbidden words, such as pornography or sex. If any of these words are typed during a session, the program automatically records it. The online monitoring feature can give parents peace of mind by being able to view online recordings. Working parents can even set the program to send them alert emails to their computer and text messages on their mobile phones to let them know when there has been any improper use of the computer. If your child attends after school care that has Internet access, be sure to check with them to see if they use a control or filtering program.

Asma Latif is a pro-active parent, a California CPA and a founder of OnlineSafetyPAL Inc. ( <http://www.OnlineSafetyPAL.com> and <http://www.OnlineSafetyShield.com>) helping other parents protect children against online dangers through parental control software and education. She can be reached at [Asma.Latif@OnlineSafetyPAL.com](mailto:Asma.Latif@OnlineSafetyPAL.com) or at 562.945.3738.

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