



Who's watching?

Setting house rules about online safety with your caregiver

BY KRISTEN J. DUCA

Everywhere you turn, you hear debates surrounding kids and technology usage. Every family has different rules and boundaries relating to technology, but most agree that technology is not going away, and it is best to teach our kids how to navigate it safely early on.

The internet has amazing advantages as it relates to children who explore it in a safe manner. Numerous creative, user-

friendly, inexpensive (sometimes FREE!), and unique websites exist for children to gain expertise in certain areas, explore new territories, or further their education in specific subjects. Today's children can use the internet to do everything from honing their culinary skills to exploring countries across the globe to learning another language to perfecting their math facts.

However, parents are not always around to patrol their child's usage of technology, and the policing inevitably falls into the

hands of caregivers. It is a terrific idea to clearly communicate your expectations surrounding technology in your household upfront to both your caregiver and your child. A few house rules to think about as your child navigates the internet include:

- Do not download attachments or install software without the supervision of an adult.
- Do not agree to meet with people you interact with online.
- If you notice anything online that

makes you uncomfortable, bring it to the attention of an adult.

- If someone asks to meet you in person, ignore the request and alert an adult immediately.

- Never give out any personal information or details about yourself, family members, or friends (including name, address, phone numbers, age, school, camp, extracurriculars, teams, photos, or passwords).

- If you use a public computer, make sure you log out of all accounts you accessed during the session.

- Be careful of any screen names you create and make sure these names do not include any of your personal information such as your first or last names.

- Do not compromise other people's online work or accounts.

- Do not bully, gossip, or post anything inappropriate about anyone online.

- Be mindful of your tone if you post online comments.

- Never post your image or personal video clips online (those of your friends, family members, and acquaintances are off limits as well).

- Beware of minimum age limits on many social media websites and respect them.

- Avoid clicking online ads and pop-

Clearly communicate your expectations surrounding technology in your household upfront to both your caregiver and your child.

up ads, as they can contain viruses or expect you to provide your personal contact information.

- Understand that not everything you read online is true or accurate, and if you are conducting school research online, you should ask an adult (teacher, librarian, or guardian) for respectable websites to use.

- Limit your usage of the internet and be aware that spending time in person with friends or family members is the best way for you to socialize.

- When in doubt, grab an adult for guidance, advice, and supervision.

Whether you print a list of rules and post it to your refrigerator, or create a technology contract signed by all (you,

your child, and your caregiver), you will want to be forthcoming about the importance of online safety. Clearly state to your caregiver that your end goal is to make sure your child is protected when he is online under her supervision while you are not present.

You may also want to make it clear to the caregiver that you do not want any personal information or images about your family posted online in any capacity for privacy concerns. Additionally, if your child brings a friend home, you should tell your caregiver that you expect her to relay your house rules regarding technology to him so everyone is on the same page.

Bottom line: it is important that parents and caregivers work together to teach children about safety and responsibility as it relates to technology. Remember, technology will be a big part of our children's lives for years to come!

Kristen Duca and her husband are the parents of two girls in New York City. She has served as a contributing writer for New York Parenting and Long Island Special Child magazines, and she's author of "Ultimate Nanny: How to Find, Interview, and Manage the Most Important Person You Will Ever Hire - Your Child's Nanny," which is available on amazon.com. She blogs at ultimatemama.com.

BRIDGE

Chess for the 21st Century



"Bridge should be taught in every school in the country."

-Warren Buffett and Bill Gates

- ◆ It's both analytical *and* social
- ◆ It improves test score
- ◆ Play and learn *with* your child



New program for parents and their children (grades 5-12).

Saturday mornings starting April 7th at Honors Bridge Club (58th and Lexington), the largest bridge club in the country.

Information at: www.honorsbridgeclub.org

