**What Is Social Networking?**

Social Networking is commonly defined as the clustering of individuals into specific groups, like communities or a neighborhood. Although social networking historically occurred in person, i.e. the workplace and schools, it is redefining itself as an online activity. Unlike schools or workplaces, the internet is filled with millions of individuals who are looking to meet other people, to gather and share first-hand information and experiences. The topics and interests shared through social networking are diverse and there is a good chance that content is available to fit your interest.

Websites like Facebook and Twitter are two of the most common resources for social networking. These websites are known as social sites. Social networking websites function like an online community of internet users. Depending on the website in question, many of these online community members share common interests in hobbies, or focus on connecting friends and family. These sites also serve as a way to update group members on various subjects related to a joined cause or effort. Social Networking sites also offer the ability to form new friendships with others from a wide array of social and geographical characteristics. Therefore these sites can promote exposure to a more diverse social system.

There are a number of social networking websites that focus on particular interests, while other websites are more general in nature like Facebook and Twitter. These sites are often referred to as "traditional" social networking websites and usually have open memberships. Anyone can become a member, no matter their hobbies, beliefs, or views. As a member of these online communities, the user or “member” can create a network of friends that share interests while excluding members that do not share common interests or goals.

Below is a table developed from data from the Pew Research Center’s Internet & American Life project [2009 Parent-Teen Cell Phone Survey](http://www.pewinternet.org/Shared-Content/Data-Sets/2009/September-2009-Teens-and-Mobile.aspx), conducted from June 26 to September 24, 2009. n= 800 teens ages 12-17 (including 245 cell phone interviews).

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Online Activities** | **Percentage of teen internet users in the U.S.** |
| American Teens Using the Internet | 93% |
| Use an online social networking site like MySpace or Facebook | 73% |
| Go online to get news or information about current events or politics | 62% |
| Buy things online, such as books, clothing, or music | 48% |
| Share something online that you created yourself, such as your own artwork, photos, stories or videos | 38% |
| Look online for health, dieting, or physical fitness information | 31% |
| Take material you find online like songs, text or images and remix it into your own artistic creation | 21% |
| Look for information online about a health topic that’s hard to talk about, like drug use, sexual health, or depression | 17% |
| Create or work on your own online journal or blog | 14% |
| Use Twitter | 8% |
| Visit virtual worlds such as Gaia, Second Life or Habbo Hotel | 8% |

According to the Federal Trade Commission, “social networking sites are a mainstream medium for teens and adults. These sites encourage and enable people to exchange information about themselves, share pictures and videos, and use blogs and private messaging to communicate with friends, others who share interests, and sometimes even the world-at-large. And that’s why it’s important to be aware of the possible pitfalls that come with networking online”.

“Some social networking sites attract pre-teens — even children as young as 5 or 6. These younger-focused sites don’t allow the same kinds of communication that teens and adults have, but there are still things that parents can do to help young children socialize safely online. In fact, when it comes to young kids, the law provides some protections — and gives parents some control over the type of information that children can disclose online. For sites directed to children under age 13, and for general audience sites that know they’re dealing with children younger than 13, there’s the Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA). It requires these sites to get parental consent before they collect, maintain, or use kids’ information. COPPA also allows parents to review their child’s online profiles and blog pages”.

Examples of Child friendly Social Networking Sites:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Logo | Name | Description | Age |
| [http://cdn2.d6www.commonsensemedia.org/sites/default/files/imagecache/product_image/product-images/csm-website/scuttlepad-135x195.jpg](http://www.commonsensemedia.org/website-reviews/scuttlepad) | [ScuttlePad](http://www.commonsensemedia.org/website-reviews/scuttlepad) | Social Network with training wheels | 7+ |
| [http://cdn1.d6www.commonsensemedia.org/sites/default/files/imagecache/product_image/product-images/csm-website/togetherville-logo.png](http://www.commonsensemedia.org/website-reviews/togetherville) | [Togetherville](http://www.commonsensemedia.org/website-reviews/togetherville) | Kids' social site connects to parents' Facebook friends | 7+ |
| [http://cdn2.d6www.commonsensemedia.org/sites/default/files/imagecache/product_image/product-images/csm-website/whatswhat.me](http://www.commonsensemedia.org/website-reviews/whatswhatme) | [WhatsWhat.me](http://www.commonsensemedia.org/website-reviews/whatswhatme) | Tween social network with top-notch safety features | 7+ |
| [http://cdn2.d6www.commonsensemedia.org/sites/default/files/imagecache/product_image/product-images/csm-website/yoursphere2.jpg](http://www.commonsensemedia.org/website-reviews/yoursphere) | [Yoursphere](http://www.commonsensemedia.org/website-reviews/yoursphere) | Kid-only social network promises to block dangerous adults | 9+ |
| [http://cdn2.d6www.commonsensemedia.org/sites/default/files/imagecache/product_image/product-images/csm-website/franktown1.jpg](http://www.commonsensemedia.org/website-reviews/franktown-rocks) | [Franktown Rocks](http://www.commonsensemedia.org/website-reviews/franktown-rocks) | Music and social networking combine in safe, cool hangout | 10+ |
| [http://cdn2.d6www.commonsensemedia.org/sites/default/files/imagecache/product_image/product-images/csm-website/gianthello.jpg](http://www.commonsensemedia.org/website-reviews/gianthello) | [GiantHello](http://www.commonsensemedia.org/website-reviews/gianthello) | Facebook-lite gets a lot right, but watch out for games | 10+ |
| [http://cdn2.d6www.commonsensemedia.org/sites/default/files/imagecache/product_image/product-images/csm-website/girlsense.jpg](http://www.commonsensemedia.org/website-reviews/girlsense) | [GirlSense](http://www.commonsensemedia.org/website-reviews/girlsense) | Safe, creative community for tween fashionistas | 10+ |
| [http://cdn2.d6www.commonsensemedia.org/sites/default/files/imagecache/product_image/product-images/csm-website/sweetyhigh.jpg](http://www.commonsensemedia.org/website-reviews/sweety-high) | [Sweety High](http://www.commonsensemedia.org/website-reviews/sweety-high) | Fun, closed social network for girls is strong on privacy | 11+ |
| [http://cdn2.d6www.commonsensemedia.org/sites/default/files/imagecache/product_image/product-images/csm-website/imbee.jpg](http://www.commonsensemedia.org/website-reviews/imbee) | [Imbee](http://www.commonsensemedia.org/website-reviews/imbee) | Safer social networking if parents stay involved | 10+ |

The Children's Online Privacy Protection Act was put into effect April 21, 2000 and applies to the online collection of personal information from children under 13. The act established protocol for Web Site Operators and dictates that they must include in a privacy policy the following measures: 1) when and how to seek verifiable consent from a parent and 2) what responsibilities an operator has to protect children's privacy and safety online. The act also requires direct notification to parents/guardians and parent/guardian consent for the collection of identifiable information.

The Children's Online Privacy Protection Act applies to individually identifiable information about a child that is collected online, such as full name, home address, email address, telephone number or any other information that would allow someone to identify or contact the child. The act also covers other types of information including hobbies, interests and information collected through cookies or other types of tracking mechanisms, specifically when they are tied to individually identifiable information.

Congress established the **minimum age of 13** for most social media sites. However, many younger children participate.

There are increased risks associated with social networking that include data theft and viruses, online predators, and/or individuals who claim to be someone that they are not. Just as in the “real world” danger exists when networking online. As when meeting someone new or in a new situation you are also advised to proceed with caution online. Be cognizant of your cyber-surroundings and who you are talking to, and you should be able to safely enjoy social networking online. At times, parents/guardians may have less experience or knowledge regarding social networking or other online activities than their technologically savvy kids. Technology aside, there are lessons that parents can teach to help kids stay safer as they socialize online.

**Social Networking Risks:**

The internet allows people of all demographics to post videos, build online profiles, text, create alter egos in the form of avatars, connect with friends online, send photos to friends, broadcast their daily life, and inform the world of their beliefs, likes and interests. Although these activities can enrich lives, they come with certain risks. These risks can be classified in the following three categories (on guard on line):

1. **Inappropriate Conduct** – Although one can feel that they are anonymous online, it is important to remember that the user is still accountable for their actions.
2. **Inappropriate Contact** – You never know who you may be speaking with while online. It is important to remember that some people have bad intentions like bullies, predators, hackers, and scammers.
3. I**nappropriate Content** – The internet is spilling over with information. Whether you want to repair your table lamp or seeking the truth about aliens, there is a high probability that you can find these answers (reputable or not) on the internet. However, it is important to note that it also contains pornography, violence, hate speech, or other content inappropriate for children.

**Starting a Dialogue:**

Start early. When your child begins using a computer, cell phone, or other devices it is time to begin discussing online safety. Safety starts with initiating discussions and opening the lines of truthful and meaningful conversation. Remember to keep the lines of communication open, even if you learn of inappropriate online behavior.

As the parent/guardian you have the opportunity to establish boundaries and online behavior expectations before anyone else. Be patient by resisting the urge to rush through uncomfortable conversations with your child. Repeat important information in small doses to allow the information to “sink in” and keep talking about online safety as the child matures. It is important to converse at the child’s level, ensuring that the information is understood and relevant to the child’s age.

**Establishing Boundaries**:

Establish positive online behavior by clearly defining rules regarding the following (remember to be clear and to hold the child accountable):

1. **Values** – Impart morals and beliefs by being upfront about them and how they apply in an online environment. Commutating values clearly will aid in making smarter and more thoughtful choices when confronted with difficult situations.
2. **Activities Allowed** – Discuss the online actions that your child can make like downloading content like movies or music; seeking permission before becoming a member of a social network, or shopping, viewing movies, listening to music, reading blogs, and other social media.
3. **Allowable Web content** – Discuss appropriate types of content they are allowed to view or the type of language making sure the content is suitable for the child’s age.
4. **Usage times and duration** – What times is the child allowed to use the technology; during school, after dinner, before nine o clock, after homework? How long can they use the technology, one hour, three hours, only on weekends? Be clear about your expectations and hold the child accountable.
5. **To chaperone or surf alone** – Establish who or if anyone needs to be present while using the technology.
6. **Think before posting** – Inform the child to only post information that they are comfortable with others seeing and knowing. Once information is posted on-line it lives forever even if it was deleted. Older versions of site information exist on other people’s computers and servers.
7. **Establish strong passwords** – Educate the child on how to establish strong passwords by encouraging the use of long passwords using numbers, symbols, and a mixture of capital/lowercase letters. Personal information, login name, common words, or adjacent keys on the keyboard are not safe passwords. Encourage the child to only share their password with only parents/guardians.
8. **Is it free** – Free games, ringtones, and other downloads sometimes contain malware or other malicious software. Parents/guardians should inform the child to be cautious when downloading by only using trusted sources and scanning the download with security software.

**Young Child Safety:**

Provide close, hands-on supervision: With very young children who are beginning exposure with social networking/computer use, parents/guardians should provide close supervision (i.e. setting beside the child). Even when a parent/guardian is more comfortable with their child surfing on its own, it is important that the parent/guardian stay in close touch with the child when transitioning sites.

* **Choose websites** – Parents/guardians may wish to choose the websites the child visits early in the learning process. Also, the parent/guardian may choose to restrict the child from leaving websites on their own. There is a possibility that an unsupervised child may stumble upon an undesirable website if unsupervised.
* **Download child friendly search engines and programs** – There are several services designed to serve the needs of children, either in focus, or by filtering out sites that some parents/guardians find inappropriate for kids. These most commonly blocked sites deal with explicit sexual matters, pornography sites, violence, hate speech, gambling and drug use. Some examples of these sites follow.
* **Restrict access to certain sites** – The parent/guardian can restrict access to only sites that they have previously visited and deemed safe. Therefore, the child experiences self direction without the risk of stumbling on undesirable content.

**Child Friendly Services:**

**Children Directories**

There are child-safe sites that use human beings to filter out sites that might be considered objectionable for viewing by children. The table below includes some of the directories available to parents/guardians:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Directory | Link | Description |
| Ask Jeeves For Kids | <http://www.ajkids.com/> | A question is asked, and the site directs the child to the right web page that provides an answer. Answers have been vetted for appropriateness. |
| KidsClick! | <http://www.kidsclick.org/> | Supported by librarians, this site lists about 5,000 web sites organized in different categories. |
| Looksmart's Kids Directory | <http://search.netnanny.com/?pi=nnh3&ch=kids> | A listing of over 20,000 kid friendly websites. The site offers a safe search of the entire web, using Net Nanny software to filter results, as well as a free toolbar that uses the same service. |
| Yahooligans | <http://www.yahooligans.com/> | Designed for ages 7 to 12 where sites are handpicked to be child appropriate. Searches will not bring back matched found by crawling the web. Adult-oriented banner advertising will not appear within the service. |

**Tweens (ages 8 to12)**

Tweens are more independent than children and are starting to “explore” on their own. It is important to be with them, or nearby when they are online. Parents/guardians may want to consider keeping the computer or other technological device in a public area or an area close to an adult. Using public spaces for this activity encourages independence but allows for adult monitoring.

Utilizing parental controls and filters is recommended for tweens. However, it is important to note that older teens will more than likely know how to disable these settings.

Many tweens are proficient in finding information online due to schoolwork, but it is important to note that they still require guidance. Help the tween understand how to determine the reliability and trustworthiness of sources.

Tweens are more internet and technologically savvy. Therefore, parents/guardians may want to think about the time the tween uses technology. Consider establishing limits on the amount of time and how often the tween can use technology. **Reestablish Boundaries & Rules**

**Filtering**

Search engines get listings by crawling the web, rather than through human review and categorization. Therefore, there is a grater possibility for objectionable material to appear in search results. To reduce the likelihood of stumbling onto undesirable web content, most search engines offer filtering. Filtering is designed to minimize pornographic content and other material that is not child/tween safe. It is important to note that filters are not 100% accurate and some unsavory material may sneak through. Tween supervision is recommended when using a filtering service.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Search Engine | Pointer |
| Ask Jeeves | Use options for Content Filtering on the Your Settings page or try Ask Jeeves For Kids |
| Google | See the SafeSearch help page for instructions on setting up filtering |
| HotBot | Use the Block Offensive Content section of the Filter Preferences page |
| LookSmart | Has never accepted adult content for listing within its directory results |
| Lycos | Use the Adult Filter section of the Advanced Search Filters page |
| MSN Search | Use the Safe Search Filter on the Settings page |
| Yahoo | Set the SafeSearch Filter option via the Search Preferences page |
| www.searchenginewatch.com | |

**Filtering and Blocking Software**

Filtering software works across the entire web, not just for search results. Most filtering software provides a fair amount of control for parents/guardians to determine what it and is not allowable content.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Software | Link | Description |
| Cyber Patrol | <http://www.cyberpatrol.com/> | Relies on an extensive categorized list of web sites to allow parents to determine which sites are allowable or not. Parents can control whether individual web sites are allowed or not, and the program can filter general or specific web pages, newsgroups, chat rooms and other internet resources, and can be used to limit online time. |
| Net Nanny | <http://www.netnanny.com/> | Provides a wide variety of parental controls, including blocking content based on content, URL, or ratings. In addition to blocking web pages, the program allows selective blocking of access to chat, instant messaging, internet games and newsgroups. The program can also be configured to prevent illegal downloading of copyrighted or obscene material. |
| www.searchenginewatch.com | | |

**Teens**

Unlike tweens who are likely to reflect the values of their parent/guardian, teens are establishing their own values and are taking on the values of their peers. Older teens are maturing and are seeking greater independence from their parent/guardians.

As teens seek greater independence, it becomes less likely that an adult can be present when they utilize technology. Teens are also more likely to carry mobile devices and spend time at other friend’s houses. It is important to establish reasonable rules and expectations regarding technology use and the actions the teen is allowed to take when social networking or using technological devices.

Emphasize that a parent/guardian or other trusted adult has the right to walk in and out of a room at any time and can inquire about their online activity.

Remember to keep discussion open. Parents/guardians should talk freely about their concerns regarding online behavior and should encourage their teen to be honest about their behavior. Teens should also feel that it is ok to discuss anything “scary” or inappropriate they have encountered online or using other technology. Parents /guardians should anticipate how they would react to discovering undesirable activity remembering not to discourage open communication.

**Teens and Credibility**

Teens have a hard time discerning if information is from a credible source. Therefore, they need to understand that not everything on the internet is true, that people or businesses on the internet may not be who they appear, and that information or images shared online can be seen by anyone and is impossible to delete.

**Teens and the Online World**

At times teens may have a hard time understanding that their actions online can affect someone else. Although they cannot readily see the impact they make on another user (i.e. facial expressions, body language, and other social cues), the parent ? parent/guardian? guarding should inform the teen that they are not free to do or say things online that they would not otherwise. There are real people behind screen names, profiles, and the characters in the games they play.

**Teens and Online Social Networking**

Social networking sites, chatrooms, virtual worlds, and blogs, as well as the actions taken on these sites are considered components of online social networking. Social networking has become a major way for teens to communicate. Parents/guardians should work with their teen to help them understand how to communicate through online social networks safely.

**Online Social Networking Pitfalls**

Sharing too much information, or posting pictures, video, or words that damage reputations or hurt feelings are considered common pitfalls of online social networking. Encourage parents/guardians to stress to the teen to apply real-world judgment and common sense to minimize the downsides associated with online social networking. Have them ask themselves the following questions before making an action online: will this affect another person, will this affect me, and am I comfortable with the world seeing this possibly forever?

**What to Do?**

Parent/guardians are responsible for being proactive through discussing expectations and rules, and monitoring online and other social networking behaviors. Parents/guardians can be proactive by responsibly acting on the following:

1. Remind the child that the words they write and images they post have real world consequences.
2. Explain to the child that they should only post information in which they are comfortable with the world seeing. Some of a profile or messages sent to specific persons can be seen even if the privacy settings are on. Encourage them to remember that messages can be forwarded or posted. Parents/guardians should remind the child to think about the language they are using online, and to think before posting pictures, videos, or altering someone else’s content. Remind the child that possibly anyone could see the information that they post.
3. Remind the child that once information is posted, it may never go away.
4. Parents/guardians and/or the child should utilize privacy setting on social networking sites, blogs, and chat rooms. Talk about the ideal settings and who should be allowed to view their content.
5. Parents/guardians should review the child’s friends list and might choose to limit friends to the people they actually know.
6. Parents/guardians should encourage their child to refrain from sex talk online. According to onguardonline.gov, research shows that teens who avoid talking about sex with strangers online are less likely to come into contact with predators.
7. Parents/guardians should know what their children are doing by getting to know the social networking sites and searching through their posted online information. If the parent/guardian is concerned that the child is engaging in undesirable behavior, they may want to search social sites to see what they use or if they are pretending to be someone else. Parents can ask for logon information or try searching by their name, nickname, school, hobbies, grade, or community.
8. Parents/guardians should encourage their child to “trust their gut” and to come to you if they feel threatened or uncomfortable because of something online. Parents/guardians can help block users, report incidents to the police or the site itself.
9. Parents/guardians should stress to the child that it is not ok to impersonate someone else.
10. Parents/guardians should talk to the child about the impression screen names can make and inform them on how to make a good screen name.
    1. Doesn’t reveal too much personal information
    2. IM names should not be the same as the email address
11. Parents/Guardians should tell the child what information should remain private (i.e. social security number, street address, phone number, and family financial information).

**Social Networking Apps**

An app is an application that can be downloaded for use on an online social networking site or on an advanced cell phone. These applications can be games or other tasks to be utilized while using the technology. When apps are downloaded they often give the app developer access to personal information about the person downloading and using the task. The information does not have to be related to the application itself and is often sold or shared with marketers or other companies. Parents/guardians should check the privacy policy and settings to see what information an app can access prior to download.

**Cyberbullying**

Cyberbulling is bullying or harassment that occurs online, and can involve rumors or images passed around for others to see.

**Tips for Cyberbullying**

**Talk about bullying** – Parents/guardians should inform their children that they cannot hide behind the words and actions they post online, and that their negative actions not only hurt the person they are directed to, but also have ramifications for the person responsible. Ramifications include contempt from peers and punishment from parents/guardians and/or authorities.

**Ask the child to inform you if they are being bullied**

**Parents/guardians should do the following if their child is being bullied online or by other technology:**

* Contact the police if the child is in danger
* Check the child’s page for signs of bullying
* Tell the child not to respond if they are targeted by a cyberbully as they are usually seeking a reaction
  + Parents/guardians should work with the child to save the evidence and give them time to talk about the problem
  + If the bullying continues, parents/guardians should share the evidence with school officials or local law enforcement
* Imposter profiles – if a profile is created or altered without the child’s knowledge, the parent/guardian should contact the company and have the profile taken down
* Parents/guardians should have the child block or delete a bully regardless if the bullying involves the child
* Help stop cyberbullying – ask your child not to engage in any type of bullying online by avoiding forwarding or posting aggressive or negative information they see happening. The child should also tell the bully to stop as research has shown cyberbullying to stop when peers intervene on behalf of the victim (onguardonline.gov)
* Parents/guardians should recognize the signs of bullying behavior like drawing disparaging images of other children
* Parents/guardians are models for their children

**Courteous Communication**

What we say, when we say it, and why we say it are the same regardless of the venue. Courtesy is an important part of online communication.

Parents/guardians should talk to their child about the following online manners:

* Be polite – The rules are the same on and offline
* Tone it down – Avoid using all caps, bolded font and exclamation points as they coincide with yelling
* Copy and reply all sparingly
* Chain letters – Do not open them or forward as they are usually unappreciated and can contain viruses or spyware

**Phishing**

Phishing occurs when text, email, or pop-up messages are sent to retrieve personal and financial information from the recipient. The information is commonly used to commit identity theft.

Circumvent phishing by:

* + - Avoiding replying to requests for personal information
    - Avoiding giving out personal information
    - Using caution with attachments or downloads – Attachments and downloads may contain viruses or spyware regardless of the sender. Only open expected attachments or download from trusted sites. Scan the attachment or download with antivirus software.
    - Using security software – remember to update your software regularly
    - Reading mail – review your credit card and bank statements as soon as you get then to check for unauthorized charges
    - Forwarding phishing emails – forward any phishing emails to [spam@uce.gov](mailto:spam@uce.gov) .
    - Looking for teaching moments – Parents/guardians should use the receipt of phishing correspondence to teach their child good security habits. If a parent/guardian receives a phishing message, they should show it to the child and help them understand that messages are not always what they seem.

**Mobile Phones**

According to the Pew Research Center’s Internet and American life project, 2009, 75% of all teens ages 12-17 own a mobile phone. It is important for parents/guardians to take into account a child’s age, personality, and maturity when deciding on purchasing a mobile phone. In essence, the parent/guardian should ask, is my child responsible enough for a mobile phone?

It is important to note that mobile phones have more functions than making and taking calls. Many online applications are available on mobile devices including social networking, blogging, content uploading, media sharing, and video editing. Children should use the same precautions discussed earlier when using these applications.

**Mobile Phone Tips**

**Photo/video sharing** – Encourage teens to think about theirs and others privacy before sharing photos or videos. Parents/guardians should be upfront with expectations regarding digital imagery and should impart the dangers to integrity and personal safety.

**Mobile Bullying** – The same rules apply as cyberbullying. Parents/guardians should reinforce expectations regarding the treatment of others and the consequences for participating in the harassment of others.

**Mobile Social Networking** – Many sites allow users to check and update profile information from a mobile phone, virtually allowing access from anywhere. It is important for parents/guardians to note that the filters enabled on a home computer will not limit the information received on the mobile phone. Therefore, the teen’s maturity and ability to follow the rules must be taken into account when purchasing a phone with internet capabilities. Parents/guardians can turn off web access on most phones.

**Purchasing the “right” phone** – The carrier and the phone itself should offer some privacy settings and child safety options like allowing the parent/guardian to turn off features.

* There are phones made for children that are designed to be easy to use and to limit the features available to the child.

**Develop Rules** – Parents/guardians should communicate rules regarding mobile phone usage clearly and repeat them often (When are calls and/or texting allowed? What is the child allowed to do on the mobile phone?). Consequences should be clear and enforced when the rules are broken.

**Set an Example** – Parents/guardians and other adults set the example and should remember to model acceptable behavior at all times.

**Texting**

Texting is a popular way for a child to communicate. Texting is similar to sending and receiving emails and most of the same rules/etiquette applies. Parents/guardians should encourage their child to:

**Respect others** – It is important to avoid shorthand and language that might confuse the recipient. The child should be guided to read a message through to see how it reads before sending it out.

**Ignore stranger texts**

**Learn how to block phone numbers**

**Avoid posting phone numbers online**

**Never provide personal information in response to a text**

**Sexting**

Sexting is the act of sending or forwarding sexually explicit photos, videos, or messages from a mobile phone.

Teens should be informed never to engage in sexting as they are risking:

* Their reputation
* Their friendships
* Breaking the law if they create, forward, or even save this kind of message.

**P2P File Sharing**

Peer-to-Peer (P2P) file sharing allows for the distribution of games, music, or other files/software online by informal networks. It is important for parents/guardians to inform the teen that sharing/downloading copyrighted materials is illegal. Also pornography, spyware, and malware can be hidden in a shared file.

File-sharing software should be installed properly so that nothing private is automatically shared. Default setting may require tweaking to ensure that the “save” and “download” folders are not share by default. Also, parents/guardians should stress the importance of scanning shared files by security software prior to opening or playing a downloaded file.