

Internet Safety: Rules of the Road for Kids

Parenting today means teaching kids to use digital media responsibly. Learn the rules of the road.

by [Liz Perle](#) | Mar. 10, 2010

Our kids are growing up in public

When we were growing up, a permanent record was something your school kept. Now, our kids create lasting records of their lives whenever they post something online. In a world where anything can be copied, pasted, altered and distributed in the blink of an eye to a vast invisible audience, kids must understand that they hold the key to what kind of reputation they create for themselves.

Help kids help themselves

As parents, it's up to us to help our kids understand the consequences of their actions and prepare them for the fact that the user name "FatGreenWizard" -- which might have been cute in 5th grade -- won't be so adorable at that first job interview. We have to help them think long term about posting those pictures that will inevitably come back to bite them on areas of the body that were all too likely on display in the offending snapshots. Here are a few rules of the road that will help our kids as they grow up in public:

Rules of the Road for Kids

1. **Guard your privacy.** What people know about you is up to you.
2. **Protect your reputation.** Self-reflect before you self-reveal. What's funny or edgy today could cost you tomorrow.
3. **Nothing is private online.** Anything you say or do can be copied, pasted, and sent to gazillions of people without your permission.
4. **Assume everyone is watching.** There's a huge, vast audience out there. If someone is your friend's friend, they can see everything.
5. **Apply the Golden Rule.** If you don't want it done to you, don't do it to someone else.
6. **Choose wisely.** Not all content is appropriate. You know what we mean.
7. **Don't hide.** Using anonymity to cloak your actions doesn't turn you into a trustworthy, responsible human being.
8. **Think about what you see.** Just because it's online doesn't make it true.
9. **Be smart, be safe.** Not everyone is who they say they are. But you know that.