

## **General tips for parents and social networking sites**

Many parents have found that it is very difficult to delete social networking accounts once their child has activated them. Typically the email address used to activate the account needs to be used to delete it...and many kids don't remember the email address used or may have used one from a friend they no longer even associate with. This makes it very difficult to access the account and manage or delete it. If it is just abandoned...it floats around in cyberspace indefinitely and could be accessed by hackers, predators, future employers or colleges. Others can post messages or even photos to your child's webpages without their consent long after it is abandoned. Therefore, it is suggested that you permit access to these sites very cautiously and maintain monitoring of content on a regular basis.

Do not have an internet connection at home? These accounts can be set up anywhere...at a friend or relative's house or even the library. They do not have to be set up in your home and may be accessed anywhere in the world.

How do you locate your child's site? If you want to search for your child online type in their name in quotes in Google or another search engine (ie "John Smith"). You will get a list of websites to browse through. You can locate their sites, or that of their friends which they have posted on. Anyone can post something with your child's name or image on it on the web so protecting their identity, reputation and safety is your job as a parent.

Talk to your children often about the dangers of putting personal information about themselves and your family online. Set a limit for the number of 'friends' that they can have. Better yet, get your own account and insist they 'friend' you. Do not put birthdates, addresses, phone numbers, or last names. Hackers and predators can obtain that information to locate your child or family. Privacy is an issue; but the safety of your child overrides their need for privacy in these matters. Be upfront and let them know your conditions for use of the internet and social networking sites. Let them know if they choose to use them with your consent you have the right to access them and review them on a regular basis.

### **Facebook Accounts**

Per the Facebook website: On Facebook, only the account holder (juvenile) can deactivate or delete the account permanently. You must have your child's email address (used to establish the account) and their password to make changes to the account. They offer no parental controls or monitoring access.

If you deactivate the account from the "Deactivate Account" section on the Account page, the profile and all information associated with it are immediately made inaccessible to other Facebook users. What this means is that you effectively disappear from the Facebook service. However, Facebook saves the entire profile information and it can be reactivated at any time.

Do not be fooled if your child 'deactivates' an account in your presence. To delete the account permanently, your child needs to log in to their account and submit a request for permanent deletion. Then there is no option for recovery.

### Sexting and Distribution of Inappropriate Images of Minors

Inappropriate pictures posted of minors which are sexually suggestive, show nudity or semi-nudity could be felony violations. "Sexting" is the distribution of such photographs on computers or via email or texts on cellular phones. These issues are taken very seriously by the police department and courts. Protect your child by discussing these issues. Don't let them become a victim...or an unbeknownst offender...by educating about your expectations and the laws affecting images of minors and their distribution.

#### Tips for Internet Use and your Child's Safety

- Talk to your child about internet safety, repeatedly.
- Set reasonable limits on the amount of online time your child has daily.
- Set limits for the number of 'friends' your child can have on a social networking site.
- Get your own accounts for Facebook, etc and 'friend' your child.
- Learn internet abbreviations like brb (be right back) AFPOE (a fresh pair of eyes) AITR (adult in the room) (check out [netlingo.com/acronyms.php](http://netlingo.com/acronyms.php))
- Learn and discuss laws with your children about posting or sending photographs of minors.
- Never post address, phone numbers or when your family is away from home.
- Tell your child never to post their location (at the gym, etc) or where they are going (off to the mall..) ...post about it when they are done with an activity.
- Do not post date of birth...not only does it tell everyone how old your child is, but they can deduce their school, grade, and subject them to the risk of identity theft.