

Resources for Further Investigation



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A Word About Blogs

- Weblogs, more commonly known as **blogs**, are websites in which items are posted and listed in reverse chronological order.
- Popular teen websites that allow for blogging, such as Facebook.com and Myspace.com, can use personal information for **commercial use**.
- A new blog is created about every second, with more than 80,000 blogs created daily.
- Blogs often have a focus on a particular area of interest, ranging from **personal** (acting as an online journal or diary) to **political** (such as a warblog) to **educational** (or Edu-blog)
- **Free** blogging software (such as Blogger.com) allows anyone to easily create and maintain a blog without any programming or web development experience.
- The **Blogosphere** is the totality of blogs; blogs as a community; blogs as a social network.
- Individual entries on a blog are called "**posts**." Readers can make comments on posts. Hostile comments are call "**flames**."

Teen Internet Use & Awareness

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A Risky Social Network

Online social networks are emerging at a quickening pace and with membership on the rise, everyone's getting involved. Most sites, such as Myspace.com (43 million users) and Xanga.com, target a national audience, while others, like Buzz-Oven.com, focus on specific interest groups or geographical locations. Facebook.com is designed for students. Networks are formed as members link to their friends and search for new friends based on common interests.

Anyone can quickly and easily register and create a profile that includes pictures, artwork, and blogs—all information that can be viewed by other users. Members can contact each other through chat and email and even form groups. Teens are a large part of these networks.

Using cheap digital tools, many teenagers are chronicling their lives online—a sort of open diary. They are building their identities and sharing it with an appealing worldwide audience.

But while the information is intended for other teens, these social networks can easily be examined by potential employers—even years after the content was originally created—and exploited by predators.

The Dangers

Presumably innocent photos display license numbers and personal appearance. Blogs reveal job locations and personal patterns. According to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, there were 1,224 incidents last year of “online enticement” of children by adults and estimates that one in five children gets sexually solicited online.



Precaution



More than ever, parents need to be aware and involved in their teen's life. Experts encourage parents to educate themselves and participate with their child's online activities. Dwight Silverman of the [Houston Chronicle](#) states, “The notion that the online world is somehow more dangerous because it's via computer comes from not understanding the medium... The same precautions that kids should take when out and about apply to online lives as well.”

Expert Tips

- Do not let your PC act as a babysitter!
- Establish guidelines and rules
- Keep Internet accounts in your name
- Check up on your child's activity online regularly
- Learn teen chat lingo at www.missingkids.com/adccouncil/lingo.html

Just the Facts

Of the 24 million US teens (12 to 17)...

87 % use the Internet

65 % Instant Message (IM)

44 % go online every day

29 % keep several IM conversations going at once

29 % have more than 50 “buddies” on regular IM

Data: Pew Internet & American Life Project

Top 5 Sites Most Often Visited by Teens (9/05):

Createblog.com

Quizilla

Blogthings.com

QuickQuiz

Memegen.net

“Don't share information you wouldn't put up on a billboard on a superhighway.”

Parry Aftab