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Internet Safety For Your Kids

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Caught in the Middle

Caught in the Middle: How the Internet Can Improve and Destroy Lives

Our access to information has never been so convenient. In ancient times, only young men were allowed to go to school and learn about philosophers and literature. When the ultra-conservative Middle Ages came along, knowledge was left in the hands of the religious, and wouldn't see a renewal until the Renaissance.

As the centuries passed, people were granted greater access to information, until our modern day scholars decided to make things easier for everyone.

From libraries stocking books in order, we moved to databases that stored information in a way that it could be stored, searched through, and retrieved. These databases and the way they were managed were brought online, where they came to the Information Superhighway. The Internet has since revolutionized the way that knowledge is accessed, and has given people from all over the world a chance to learn more and do more.

People are also now, more than ever, eager to share their expertise on specialized subjects, and help out those in need through the ease of online communication. What are some of the advantages offered by the Internet?

- Some sites offer knowledge and information for free or a minimal fee. The online free encyclopedia Wikipedia, for instance, has allowed users to post their knowledge on certain topics, and has given users the chance to access this knowledge as they would a real encyclopedia. There are also many other sites that offer information for free, such as science sites offering modules that science teachers can use when performing experiments, or clothing sites offering online courses in fashion design.
- Not all libraries carry the books that we need, so online merchants such as Amazon and Barnes and Noble sell books, allowing more people all over the world to buy them. With the advent of the electronic book, or e-book, people can now read books on their computers without having to pick a real heavy book up.
- Knowledge is offered in different media, depending on the learning abilities of those who need information. If a person is more

visual, he or she can choose to watch a video or read an online book or pamphlet on the information he or she needs. If a person learns better through listening, however, he or she can choose to listen to audio files. This flexibility and versatility of the Internet has allowed more people to learn in the format that they want and are most comfortable with.

The beneficiaries of this technology are undoubtedly our children. They will have an easier time doing their research for school, since information is easy to retrieve online. They can buy the books they need if their local libraries don't have them. They can learn through all means possible.

These benefits, however, come with their own risks, and we as parents are caught in the middle of a war between free speech and censorship. While there are thousands of students who benefit from the knowledge offered by the Internet, there are also thousands more who become victims of predators, such as credit card thieves or worse, pedophiles. While there are thousands of students in developing countries who find their minds opened constantly by their exposure to new mindsets and cultures, there are thousands more who find themselves duped by once trustworthy people online.

If you have a child who uses the Internet constantly, then you may want to take note of these disadvantages to better monitor your child's Internet use.

- While information is easier to retrieve online, it can also encourage your child to simply cut and paste information, with little or no effort devoted to analysis. This can make your child lazy, and may even lead to your child being accused of plagiarism by perceptive teachers.
- Not all information online is true, and not all information online is edited. This has led to many schools banning the use of online sources and Wikipedia as references in important reports and assignments.
- Many online help forums are actually a venue for child predators to stalk new victims. Because children and teenagers often seek affirmation and help from people outside their family circle, they are more susceptible to such attacks.
- Pornography is rife online, and some multimedia sites may actually contain pornographic or disturbing images or footage. While

your child learns from useful multimedia files, he or she may also be traumatized or wrongly indoctrinated if he or she accesses the wrong ones.

The Internet has its advantages and disadvantages, and we as parents have the right to be alarmed and vigilant. The wealth of information online has also allowed wrongdoing to proliferate, and we can often find ourselves caught in the middle. All that we can do is protect our children, and make sure that they have access to real books and research materials, so that they don't have to rely completely on online sources for their work.

What Are Some of the Dangers?

What Are Some of the Dangers of the Internet?

The information superhighway and the Internet revolution have allowed people of all ages, races, genders, and inclinations greater access to knowledge and communication. With more information stored online, more people can read about their favorite subjects without having to run to the library, or purchase an expensive encyclopedia set. With more knowledge organized in a format that can

be easy to search through, retrieve, and work with, more people can learn faster and do more research online.

This revolution in information technology and presentation comes with its own disadvantages. Not all information presented online is true or edited, and nothing can surpass power of a real encyclopedia or reference book in terms of veracity of the information presented. Not all online forums seeking to help people are populated by experts or, much less, decent Internet users. Not all websites are safe to access, and not all files that you download from the Internet are free from malicious programs that can give hackers access to your computer.

Our children are the greatest beneficiaries of computer and online technology, and they are certainly its greatest victims. While the Internet can help your primary school student look for facts on Thailand, it may lead him or her to sites that advertise on the country's teeming sex trade.

Thank You For Reading

The Internet Safety For Your Kids Preview

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