

Be Safe – and Nice – Online

The Internet can be lots of fun. Just be sure to use it right. By Valerie Van Kooten

TEN-YEAR-OLD David was having a great time playing videogames online. He liked that he could play with kids from other states. Sometimes his cousin, who lived 500 miles away, would play against him.

Once, David played against someone named Bruce. While they were playing, David got a message from Bruce. When David opened it, he saw that Bruce had sent him an inappropriate picture. This upset David, and he told his parents about it. They helped him block Bruce so he couldn't bother David anymore.

Be Safe

Here are a few tips to help you stay safe and comfortable online:

Remember that you can't trust everyone online — just because you have played games with someone or friended them on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, it does not mean they are *really* your friend. If they have access to what you post, it is very easy for them to use the sharing options on social media sites to send it to others.

Do not share your personal information. Avoid giving your last name, address, phone number, email address or your school information.

Be suspicious of strange questions and conversations. If someone you don't know well asks for your personal information or asks questions that make you uncomfortable, stop the conversation and tell a parent.

Don't be afraid to tell an adult what is going on. "The No. 1 fear of kids is that Mom and Dad will go ballistic and take away their computer," Michael Ferjak, a criminal investigator, says. "You're not doing anything wrong by being on these sites, and you need to let a trusted adult know if something weird is happening."

Be Nice

The Internet can be a great tool to help with homework, keep in touch with friends and family, and play games. But it also is a place where you can be bullied or you can bully someone else. And that is not only unkind, it can also be against the law.

What should you do about it?

If You Are Being Bullied:

Talk to a trusted adult. Tell your parent, a Scout leader or a teacher at school. You haven't done anything wrong, and you need help to stop it.

Don't respond. Usually the bully is trying to get a reaction from you. If you don't respond, he or she will move on. It's hard not to want to get back at the bully, but this will just make it worse.

Stay offline for a while. Don't go to websites where people are talking about you. Turn off your cellphone for a while. Let adults do their job in taking care of it.

If You Are the Bully:

Look at your friends. Sometimes people do things in a group that they would not do

alone. Look at your group of friends. Are your friends bullying someone? Are you part of it? Can you help stop it?

Don't think you can get away with it. What you say and do online can be tracked and can be traced back to you.

Put yourself in the other person's shoes. How would you feel if this were being said about you or done to you? Just stop doing it.

If someone you know is being bullied, be a good friend. Do not

Earn the **BSA Cyber Chip**, which shows you understand and agree to certain rules of cyber-safety. Get the details at boyslife.org or from your unit leader, local council or Scout shop.



forward mean messages about them or embarrassing pictures of them. Tell the bully to stop. Sometimes someone who is being bullied cannot think clearly enough to report it. Help the person who is being bullied report it to a trusted adult. ✦

For lots of cybersafety tips, visit boyslife.org/netsmartz