

Primary Level, Grades K, 1, 2 (ages 5 to 8 years)**Lesson 7: Internet Safety**

Getting started with Lesson 7:

- Principle:** Educating children about Internet Safety. Specifically:
- 1) Some Do's and Don'ts of interacting with people on the Internet, and
 - 2) The importance of protecting yourself and your personal information while using the Internet.
- Catechism:** Man is obliged to follow the moral law, which urges him "to do what is good and avoid what is evil" (cf. GS 16). This law makes itself heard in his conscience. **#1713**
- Goal:** To assist children and young people in recognizing the risks of providing personal information to anyone on the Internet and to help them realize how hard it is to know who someone really is when the only avenue of communication is the Internet.
- Objectives:** To teach children and young people safety rules for the Internet and to raise their awareness about the ways adults can use the Internet to confuse and "trick" them into believing things that are not true. The goal for this lesson is not to teach everything about Internet safety but to concentrate on two specific areas: 1) keeping personal information private, and 2) realizing that there is no way to really know who is talking with you on the Internet. The specific learning goals are:
- Children and young people can learn when to give personal information to an adult and when to keep it private.
 - Children and young people should never give private information to someone they don't know or can't see, such as people who might contact them through the Internet.
- Parent Notice:** Send out a letter to the parents and guardians outlining the goals and objectives of this lesson. Let parents and guardians know that the lessons this year will concentrate on age appropriate Internet safety. For this age group, it will focus on keeping personal information private. It will also reinforce the need for children and young people to follow their parent's rules, particularly those about sharing personal information such as address, phone number, name, names of family members, and information about members of the family, their activities, etc.
- Parents and guardians are the primary educators of their own children. This right of adults to educate their children, particularly in the area of morals, values, and human sexuality, is also recognized by the Church as "an educational duty."¹ The *Teaching Touching Safety* program establish guidelines and principles to assist parents and guardians in the sometimes daunting task of protecting children and young people from Internet predators. The program was developed to help educators, catechists, youth ministers, and other caring adults support parents and guardians as they provide their children and young people with education in this critical area. Many parents readily admit that their knowledge of Internet activity is inferior to that of their children and young people. In most public schools, even the youngest children are often given time during the week to work on the computer and become familiar with cyber activity. Lesson 7 is specifically designed to help parents and caring adults keep children and young people safe while they are working on the computer and "surfing the net" regardless of their age.

Dealing with the primary age—key concept is "activity"

Small children have a natural curiosity, a lively and vivid imagination, and are growing less self-centered and becoming more conscious of others. Their attention span is short, approximately 20 minutes. They build on concrete experiences, love to learn, and are highly inquisitive. **However, they rely almost entirely on others to define good and bad for them.**

When establishing the guidelines for appropriate and inappropriate behavior, parents and teachers should make every effort to create an environment where children are free to ask questions. This early experience of honesty and trust will set the stage for each child's life-long relationships with significant adults. In addition, creating an atmosphere of open inquiry where questions are encouraged invites children and young people to begin to listen to and learn to trust their own instincts and to begin to learn how to evaluate potentially risky situations.

¹ *Declaration on Christian Education, Gravissimum educationis*, Proclaimed by Pope Paul VI, October 28, 1965, Article 3 at 44.

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At this age, children are beginning to differentiate positive and negative aspects of everyday life and are beginning to question the adult's expectation of blind obedience. At the same time they are learning how to respect and care for their own bodies. They are learning about hygiene and beginning to learn about eating properly and testing the limits for activity.

Caregivers need to be open, honest, and available to answer questions correctly with language children can understand. This is the time to talk about ways they can stand up for themselves when they are with adults and others whose behavior is risky or if someone on the Internet wants information they should not give.

Vocabulary words:

- Internet—Global communication network allowing computers worldwide to connect and exchange information.
- Social network—A site or place on the Internet where a number of users can communicate with each other in real time.
- Private—Personal information not publicly expressed.
- Rules—A principle or regulation that governs actions, conduct, and arrangements.

Supplemental Resource Material for Teachers

The complete grooming process employed by a child molester is usually three-pronged and involves physical as well as psychological behaviors. In person, the process may take months, even years to accomplish with regular face-to-face contact. However, through the Internet, predators can break down the child's defenses in a very short amount of time, particularly if the child is vulnerable or ignorant about the risks of the Internet.

The three aspects of the typical grooming process are *physical grooming*, *psychological grooming*, and *community grooming*—and all three can occur at the same time.

In the case of Internet seduction, the *physical grooming* becomes part of the process much later in the game. In fact, by the time the molester has an opportunity to touch the child it may be too late to protect the child from harm. There is no "build up" in the levels of intimacy of touch when the Internet is the initial contact point. Children solicited through the Internet are often abducted by the molester when a face-to-face meeting is arranged or there is any kind of physical contact. **On the Internet, the physical grooming and community grooming are left out of the initial process, and the psychological grooming has some new twists.**

The most important aspect of grooming through Internet contact is the *psychological grooming*. The molester establishes a relationship online by pretending to be someone in the child's age group. Through conversations about things the child is interested in, the molester will lure the child into social networks and, eventually is often able to convince the child to defy parents, grandparents, and/or guardians and meet the molester outside the home. The child is convinced that the molester is trustworthy and believes this person is a friend, someone that really likes and understands the child. The child may be convinced the online friend is the same age and has the same issues. Molesters know it is important to talk to children and young people on their level. They communicate in a way that children and young people understand and convince the young people that they are someone who can be trusted —someone just like them. On the Internet, this psychological grooming is particularly effective because none of the natural barriers of distrust or apprehension that might arise for a child are present. The physical appearance and real age of the molester are hidden from the child's view. The Internet provides a wall for the molester to hide behind and the child can't see the molester or the wall. Children and young people are particularly vulnerable to this approach because of their natural tendency to trust others.

Threats about not telling or threats about harming someone or something the child loves are not needed in this situation. The child's resistance is broken down through the communication process. Remember, the child often thinks that he or she is talking with another child. There is really nothing to tell mom and dad. After all, they are older. They would not really understand. Sometimes the child is conflicted but most of the time, unfortunately, what really happens is that the child bonds more to the molester.

On the Internet, there is no grooming of the community. In fact, the intention of the molester is to bypass the community altogether. In online seduction, the molester wants to remain hidden from view. He or she will create a relationship with the child that goes around parents, grandparents, and/or guardians and encourages the child to keep the conversations secret. This works because the child thinks the person on the other end of the communication is telling the truth.

The behavioral warning signs of a potential predator are evident in online communications but they are much more difficult for adults to identify. There is a barrier between the parents or caring adults and the predator that distorts everything about the relationship. That is why it is so important for parents and caring adults to be aware of the communications their children and young people are engaged in on the Internet and look for the signs that something is off.

Among the ways that behavioral warning signs show up in new and different ways because of Internet seduction are:

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1. *Always wants to be alone with children.* On the Internet, the predator has one-on-one access to children and young people through email and social networks. Email communications, though, are more risky. Parents can read email on the computer. Social networks are places for private, real time conversations that are more difficult and sometimes impossible to recover and read. Predators will invite children and young people to join them in social networks for "private" conversations.
2. *Give gifts to children, often without permission.* In person or on the Internet, predators find ways to give gifts to children and young people and tell them to keep it secret. The gift may be as simple as candy that parents won't allow. However, gifts are often more than that, particularly when they come from someone who made contact with the child over the Internet. In that case, the gift is likely to be entirely inappropriate—gifts such as perfume, flowers, lingerie, or expensive items.
3. *Allows a child to engage in activities that parents would not allow.* When meeting with children and young people online, predators lure them into online social networks and encourage secrecy. This activity is extremely effective at driving a wedge between the child and his/her parent(s). Child molesters look for children that are alone after school. They prefer to contact the young people between the time school is out and the time parents come home from work. This is another factor that convinces children and young people that the person "talking" to them is someone their own age. Why else would he or she be home and able to chat or email after school?
4. *Uses sexually explicit language and tells dirty jokes.* If parents and caring adults are monitoring young people's communications online, they can often see that this is happening and intervene. If, as is often the case, children and young people are allowed on the Internet unsupervised, it is possible for knowledgeable parents to recover this information but it may not be discovered early enough to protect a child from harm.

Knowing the warning signs means little where the Internet is concerned if parents are not monitoring their children's Internet activities. Find out where they are going on the Internet. Read email messages. Check out their social network. Put limits and filters on any computer children and young people can use and check regularly to make sure that filters are in place and working.

Generally, the grooming process is complex. On the Internet, it is even more difficult to identify and interrupt. This lesson is designed to focus on two things that children and young people can do to protect themselves from predators on the Internet. Two simple rules that can be the difference between safety and danger for children are: 1) keeping personal information private and 2) children need to follow their parent's rules in order to stay safe. Concentrating on these two rules will reinforce the message from parents and others about Internet dangers while keeping the benefits of the Internet available for everyone to enjoy.

Special Teacher Preparation Tool

Apply Internet safety rules in your own home, school, or organization. Read the attached VIRTUS® articles on the subject:

- *Technology Safety*
- *Keeping Younger Children Safe as They Learn to Use Computers*

Technology Safety

"My mom and dad know absolutely nothing about computers; they don't even use them where they work. I got a computer for my birthday and right away I began meeting lots of cool people online. Right after school is the best time to chat online with my friends because my mom and dad aren't home and I have absolute privacy. Unfortunately, I have had some bad experiences online. I never knew that you could meet really gross people on the computer, but I don't let that stop me from chatting with other people. I spend a lot of my time online; sometimes I wish that we'd never bought that computer."

This scenario can be an all-too-common experience for young people today. Cyber technology and the Internet offer youth an incredible world of experience. With just the click of a mouse a young person can easily research a subject for school, chat with friends, check messages, or download a song. The electronic world can be fun and educational; unfortunately, like the real world, cyber technology, electronic communication, and the Internet also have inherent dangers.

Just as we encourage children and teens to behave in certain ways when dealing with strangers or even interacting with friends, we also need to teach them how to act safely and appropriately when online or while utilizing electronic communication devices.

Unfortunately the technology gap between adults and young people is widening. Children today have grown up with computers and they think of today's technology and the many associated devices as safe and a lot of fun. Many adults, on the other hand, view

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computers only as work tools and don't consider this form of technology to be a source of entertainment or as a constructive way to spend time away from work. However, the best way for adults to span the technology gap is to learn to use media and communication devices as their children do. This means one should try to chat with someone while using the computer online, use an online search engine to find particular information, download some music, or send a text message on a cell phone.

Youth of today need technology-conscious adults—trusted adult with whom they have open lines of communication—to teach them how to make smart choices about whom and what they will find when visiting the Internet. Simply communicating with kids may actually be the best weapon against the child sexual predators that frequently use the Internet to identify potential victims. Sit down with your son, daughter, or a student and ask him or her to take you on a tour of the Internet and the electronic communication world they know.

Parents and schools need to be more actively involved with young people's computer and electronic communication usage than many probably are. Unfortunately, some parents will purchase a computer, set up Internet access, and then just walk away. If one is going to have a computer with online access in the house or at a school, children need to be educated by responsible and caring adults about the many dangers. A computer with online access can be just as dangerous as a car being driven by a teen without a license. Parents should regularly ask their children about their online activity and discuss the many new types of Internet activity popular with young people. Remember, no child-safety filtering software is perfect. Young people must be taught by responsible, concerned adults to be cyber-savvy.

Teenagers who use the various online services often feel that they don't need the same controls or restrictions as younger children. Unfortunately, teens are more likely to get in trouble while online than are younger children. Online social networks provide teenagers the opportunity to easily reach out beyond their parents, their circle of friends, or even their own peer group. Teens are frequently unaware that social networks are often the most dangerous online location a person can visit.

Law enforcement in the United States observed that child molesters' use of computers and the Internet exploded in 1997. No longer did the child molester have to assume a child-related profession or lurk in parks and malls to gain access to children. A molester could now sit at a computer and roam online from chat room to chat room trolling for children and teens susceptible to victimization.

It is vital to be aware of and familiar with new and changing technology and to maintain open lines of communication with children and teens. Young people might not be receptive to the message of safety if they feel that they are more knowledgeable about certain technology issues than are the trusted adults in their lives. Also, young people can be great teachers, so it is important to let them show *you* the sites they are visiting online, whom they are talking to, and what they are doing in today's world of technology. Remember, by routinely talking with young people, setting time limits, having them take breaks from online activity, and continually educating ourselves about ever-changing technology, we are all aiding in the guidance and protection of God's children.

Keeping Your Young Grade-schoolers Safe as They Learn to Use the Computer

This past week, my second-grade son came home with another homework assignment that will require independent research. Now, my response to this project was probably similar to what many of yours would be: First, I cite research conducted in the second-grade as example #621 of "how much smarter kids are these days." (In second grade, I distinctly remember that we still played with wooden mosaic tiles and had recess twice a day.) Second, I cringed thinking about how many extra hours of homework support "independent research" will mean to me personally during this already too-busy week. Third, I have to admit that I was a little jealous because, frankly, learning all about the Adele penguins sounded totally fun.

Of course, grade-school research no longer means pulling out a color-coded volume of *Childcraft Encyclopedia*. Nowadays, even young students are expected—if not required—to use the computer to prepare assignments. And, of course, this is often supported by computer curriculum in school and, at least in my house anyway, by a healthy dose of computer-based games. All this adds up to the fact that kids as young as seven are "surfing the web" independently.

Just like we as us parents have a responsibility to keep our kids safe as they learn to cross the street, we have a responsibility to keep them safe as they begin to navigate online. For older kids, this may involve monitoring the various social network sites or learning to decipher instant-messaging shorthand. For the youngest users, however, the guidelines are more basic but just as important. Perhaps some of the lessons learned at our house will be useful to you, as well

Monitor the monitor. Young users should never be online alone. While the risk posed by Internet predators may not worry you as *much* if your kids are *not* using social network sites, you should still be concerned about the information or graphics kids could stumble upon accidentally when searching for legitimate information or games. You want to be accessible to help guide their searches—or to quickly close an unexpected site.

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Centrally locate the computer. The computer in our home is located in the kitchen, a central spot for us, as it is in many homes. Having it in the kitchen simply makes it easier for me to monitor my kids' online use—and allows them plenty of computer time during meal preparation or clean-up. Making it easy for me to monitor simply means I am likely to do a better job and, like most parents, I need all the help I can get!

Know a few safe, kid-friendly sites. Identify a few sites that you feel comfortable letting your kids navigate themselves. While you should always be in eyeshot of the monitor, your child should have the chance to learn how sites work and discover independently the wonderful resources available online. Sites that are more likely to facilitate independent use are probably those that are kid-specific and that limit advertising. Your child's teacher can help you choose a few that would be most appropriate.

Make sure other caregivers know the basics. Perhaps this point is best made by illustration: A few months ago, my son wanted to look online for certain animated videos. I sat with him as we browsed what was available on several sites. Now, I am savvy enough to expect that mixed in with the many cool, kid-appropriate clips that we found were going to be some that were sexually-explicit or violent or just contained humor that isn't appropriate for a seven-year old. We just didn't open the files that looked like they might be trouble. Working that way we found tons of great stuff and, I have to tell you, we both had a blast!

Things became tricky the following week, however, when my boys stayed the night with my parents. My eldest son wanted to show them some of the great clips that he and I had watched together. He easily found the site by himself and correctly relayed that, "my Mom says these videos are fine for kids." My parents, though, just didn't know what to do with content filtering and, while they were in the other room, he ended up watching a raunchy video that I had previously blocked.

The lesson here is that anyone who helps your child with the Internet needs to know and follow the same guidelines you have at home. My mom and dad are super grandparents, but I had failed to remind them that they should always be sitting with my son while he is online. Moreover, I hadn't identified for them the few websites that are, in my experience, safe places for his to explore. Most importantly, I should have flagged the site with video clips as a site that needs specific oversight.

Talk to your kids. Your children need to know why you are being vigilant as they work online. At our house, I say simple things like, "Just like with movies and books, some sites aren't good for kids. I want to make sure you find the ones that are." Moreover, your kids need to know that they will never get in trouble for telling you what is happening online. Thank God our son told my parents right away about the video clip that he accidentally viewed. As uncomfortable as it was, they were able to respond to what he saw. And, at least I hope, we are setting the stage for open communication about the potential dangers he might face from Internet predators as he gets a bit older.

What is the real reason for all of these Internet rules—and, for that matter, most household rules? To create a framework in which all of our kids can live big, adventurous lives—safely. Now, we certainly don't do everything right around our place. But I'd like to believe that these guidelines will help my children enjoy some great entertainment *and* learn all about the Adele penguin.

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Lesson 7: Internet Safety

Keeping Personal Information Private

Educators, catechist, youth ministers, and other caring adults should prepare by reviewing the entire lesson plan and by reading *Teaching Touching Safety: A Guide for Parents, Guardians, and other Caring Adults*. During the class, follow the instructions to complete as many of the activities as possible in your allotted amount of time.

Activity #1: Play the introductory DVD to begin the lesson.

Activity #2: Lead the discussion on private information with children in the class.

Activity #3: Do the hidden objects coloring page with the children.

Prayer: A suggested prayer is provided at the end of the lesson. If you wish, you may use this prayer to conclude this lesson with your students.

Supplies and Preparation:

Opening DVD
DVD Player and TV
Print picture of a computer screen large enough to hold up in front of you.

Activity #2: Classroom Discussion: **[NOTE TO TEACHER:** You will need to be flexible and very attentive in this discussion. Children have a sense of what “private” means. They know, for example, that it is special when they get private time with mom or dad. They usually know what it means when mom or dad needs some private time or are in a private meeting.

Young children rarely know the line between “public” information and information that should be kept private. Components of this lesson should help children learn to:

- recognize the kind of private information that they should not reveal to people online
- recognize the difference between secrets and surprises and that keeping secrets is not okay
- remember how important it is to tell trusted people when something uncomfortable happens and how people sometimes use the word “private” to hide risky, dangerous, or embarrassing situations

They will not learn all this in one short lesson but it is important for you to be able to distinguish between these different ways we process information with children so you can help clarify for them during the lesson.

The definitions of secret and surprise:

- Secret—something that is hidden from others or that is known only to one or to a few.²
- Surprise—something that leaves a person feeling wonder, astonishment, or amazement, as at something unanticipated.³

The primary purpose of this discussion is to teach children and young people to keep any identifying information from finding its way onto the Internet and into the hands of potential predators. It may be a bit challenging to keep these different concepts distinct but remember the goal of the lesson. If you keep your emphasis on the Internet in the discussion and the fact that no one knows who is behind the voice or person on the screen, it will be easier to keep the focus on the message.]

- **What does it mean to keep something “private?”** (Discuss with children that private information means that is it only for a few people that are part of the same group, such as members of the family or classmates at school.)
Make these points:

² The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition Copyright © 2000 by Houghton Mifflin Company.

³ Id.

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- *Private is about something that is no one's business except for the people who should be involved in a situation.*
 - *Private information is information that belongs to a particular person or group like a person's name, age, address, school name, etc. [Invite students to think of things that might be considered private information. Be sure to clarify for them the difference between "private information" and "secret information."]*
 - *Private information is only for the use of the person or group that it belongs to.*
 - *Keeping something private means to keep it away from people outside the group and protect it from becoming public.*
- *When we are on the computer and doing research or playing games on the Internet, sometimes someone on the Internet wants us to give them information that might be private.*
 - *It is important that we keep that information to ourselves because no matter what people say on the Internet, we never really know who we are talking to, do we? [Create a demonstration of how the Internet hides people from us.]*
 - *What is the "private" information you should never give to someone you meet or talk to on the computer? [Let the children come up with these things and add things that they don't come up with. Listen for things that would give someone an idea where or how to find a child.]*
 - *Name*
 - *Address*
 - *Phone Number*
 - *Town you live in*
 - *Parents name*
 - *Name of your school*
 - *Name of the park in your neighborhood*
 - *Name of where you go to Church*
 - *Grandparents name or address*
 - *Computers are fun, but it is important for us to remember that we don't really know who we are talking to on the computer no matter what the person says or writes to us. We can't be sure the person on the computer is telling us the truth. Do you think you could find out if someone on the Internet is telling the truth? [They will probably say "yes." But even if they say "no" do the following activity so they can gain the knowledge that we never really know who is behind the computer screen.]*

[NOTE TO TEACHER: Sit in a chair in front of the children and put the poster of the computer screen in front of your face and upper body. Then ask the children to tell you whether you have your eyes open or closed so they start to get that they don't really know what's going on at the other end of the computer connection. Tell them you are holding up two fingers and ask them if that is true. Move the poster and show them you are holding up five fingers. Then, if they believed you when you said you were holding up two fingers, ask them why. Most of the time it will be because you are the teacher and they trust you. Use these and a couple of other illustrations—e.g., telling the children you are the same age as they are—to remind them that on the Internet, it is impossible to tell whether someone is who they say they are and whether they are telling the truth.]

- *If someone scary was talking to you on the computer, would you want them to know where you were or how to find you? No, of course not, and the only way to know that you are safe is to say "no" to everyone on the Internet even when it is someone you think you know.*
- *Talk with your parents, grandparents, and the adults in your house about how to keep private information safe from people who don't deserve to know it. Make sure everyone knows to keep private information private from people on the Internet. This is a way we can help keep everyone safe.*

Activity #3: Coloring page that includes hidden objects. Having students find the hidden objects can be used to demonstrate the fact that things are not always what they seem to be when we first see or hear them.

- **[NOTE TO TEACHER:** Print one copy of the activity page on large paper and hold it up in front of the class. Ask them what they see and let the students describe the picture they see.] *As we have talked about today, sometimes people try to get private information from us but they hide themselves from us. We can't see them or know if they are really being truthful so we need to be careful. In our picture, there are things hidden in the lines that are not what they seem, just like some people who contact us through the*

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Internet. Find as many of the hidden objects as you can and then, if you have time, you can color your picture. If you don't finish in class, take this page home and work on it with your parents. Share with them what you learned about private information and how to keep it private.

- Hidden Objects Coloring Page Key:



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Prayer to end the lesson:

Teacher: *“God wants us to be safe and healthy. God even gives us a special angel to help look after us. When we don’t know what to do, we can ask our Guardian Angel to help us be safe. So, let’s pray together and ask our Guardian Angel to look after us.”*

Angel of God,
My guardian dear,
To whom God's love entrusts me here.
Ever this day be at my side.
To light, to guard,
To rule, to guide.

Amen

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Find the Hidden Objects and Color the Page

