

Online Safety

By Tim Moline

Has your student or child ever been sent inappropriate material by someone he or she met online? Has your student or child ever inadvertently encountered inappropriate material?

Have you ever observed your student or child and friends grouped around a computer, looking at a website, and suddenly close it when you approach?

Have you ever observed your student or child engaged in an online chat and quickly end it as soon as you approach?

The Internet offers an array of entertainment and educational resources for children but also presents some risks. Approximately one in seven youths (10 to 17 years old) experience an inappropriate solicitation or approach while online.

The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC: www.missingkids.com) is committed to helping all audiences—including kids, parents and guardians, law enforcement officers, and educators—learn the aspects of Internet safety. You can't watch kids every minute, but you can use strategies to help them benefit from the Internet and avoid its risks.

The NCMEC urges you to do one of the single most important things you can do to promote safety—talk to kids about the rewards and risks of Internet use.

In reviewing websites and researching information for this column, we acknowledge and incorporate excerpts from several fine websites, including Cybertipline (www.cybertipline.com) and NetSmartz (www.netsmartz.org), as excellent resources for online safety.

Through Cybertipline, we located NetSmartz, a website chock full of resources supporting the whole community. As well as teachers, law enforcement, and parents and guardians, NetSmartz teaches children “how to be safer on- and offline.” NCMEC’s award winning, interactive, educational safety program provides invaluable learning opportunities for educators and families.

These acronyms are shortcuts for statements used when communicating in cyberspace, (e.g., instant messaging, email, blogging, chat rooms). For the meanings of these and many other acronyms, visit www.missingkids.com/adccouncil/lingo.html and click on “Online Lingo.”

“The technology that has so dramatically changed the world outside our schools is now changing the learning and teaching environment within them.”—National Education Technology Plan for the U.S. Department of Education

Do you have any idea what all those mysterious acronyms mean? Take the test below. Draw a line from each acronym to its definition.

ACRONYM	DEFINITION
BEG	Are you up for it?
POS	Public display of affection
CUOL	I think I am in love
RUU4IT	Parent (teacher) in room
LUWAMH	Kiss for you
MOOS	I love you
WEG	Fill in the blanks
P911	Member of same sex
DYFM	See you online
PDA	Parents (teacher) over shoulder
PA	Name, address, zip code
TIAIL	Love you with all my heart
PAW	Dude you fascinate me
RBTL	Big evil grin
PIR	Nosey parents
TAS	Member of opposite sex
PMP	Parent (teacher) alert
FITB	Read between the lines
ILU	My parents (teacher) are watching
MOSS	Taking a shower
NP	Parent (teacher) near shoulder
NAZ	Wicked, evil grin

Note. From www.missingkids.com/adccouncil/lingo.html.

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