

# Cruise Control

Teach your child these simple safe-surfing rules before they begin their online adventures.

*by Parry Aftab*



Before letting a child go online alone, be sure he understands and agrees to the following rules.

"Participate only in activities for which you have permission." If you've installed software that will block certain sites, tell your child. Most important, explain the values that make you object to certain sites or activities.

"Be responsible and courteous." Explain to your child that he's accountable for his behavior online just as he is in real life.

"Be cautious about what you tell people online." Remind your child that people online may not be who they claim to be. Your child should agree never to meet an online friend without your direct supervision.

"Balance online time with other activities." Internet surfing and chat shouldn't crowd out chores, homework, sports, and time with friends and family. If necessary, agree on an online time allowance and use software to enforce it.

"Come to us if there's a problem." Let your child know she can confide in you if she feels uncomfortable or uncertain about something that happens online. Reassure her that you'll won't "pull the plug" but will work together to solve cyberproblems.

"Don't give out personal information without permission." Be specific about what information is private. Print these simple guidelines, post them near your computer, and review them with your child.

## **Ask Mom or Dad Before Sharing the Following Information Online:**

- Your real name
- Family addresses or phone numbers
- Name and location of your school
- Name and location of your parents' places of work
- Real names of real-world friends or family
- Log-on names or passwords for Internet service providers, online services, or favorite Web sites
- Personal pictures of any kind
- Credit card or bank account numbers

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