



Family Insider—Instant Messaging

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Children are the living messages we send to a time we will not see

*John W Whitehead
The Stealing of America, 1983*

Ask a student what form of online communication they can't live without and the most likely response would be instant messaging. It offers immediate response and communication with multiple parties at one time. However, instant messaging isn't just for students. Adults are now finding that instant messaging is a great way to communicate with family, friends, and business associates. In fact, because instant messaging is becoming so popular, it was included in new federal rules that went into effect December 1, 2006 concerning archiving digital communications produced by employees. Many schools, businesses, and other organizations are now required to keep tabs on all employee e-mails, instant messages (IM), and other digital communications.

Instant messages are typically quick and unstructured; documented records of comment by comment conversations that can be misunderstood if not properly constructed, saved for future reference, or passed on to others to read. Although instant messaging is a great way to manage time and to get a quick turnaround on something, forethought and online etiquette are essential.

Here are a few instant messaging etiquette tips:

- A quick "hey, can I give you a call" or "I have a quick question for you" is a great way to find out if someone is available for a conversation.
- Instant messaging is not the place to write a two page letter. IMs are meant to be short and to the point. That's why the IM programs limit the amount of text you can type into the text box. If it's too long for the text box,



send an e-mail or call the person.

- Think twice, type once. Be careful what you type in an IM. Your IMs can be saved, or sent to others to view. Once it leaves your computer, what is done with it is out of your control.
- Remember that instant messages are meant to be casual conversations and discussing serious issues should still be done in person. And just because your instant messages are casual doesn't mean you should forego correct grammar, spelling or pronunciation—especially if your IM is work related.

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NAC Tracks

Do you know how to use instant messaging?

A: Yes

B: No


Vote here



Instant Messaging continued from page 1

- Be careful about the terminology that you use in instant messages. Not everyone uses the same acronyms and language. The abbreviations and terminology that you use to communicate with your son away at college will most likely be very different than the language you use to communicate with your boss at work. Also remember that a quick written word can miscommunicate emotions and intent. Because the recipient of your joking, sarcastic remark can't see you giggling behind your keyboard, your message just may be misunderstood as an insult.

- Multi-tasking can be risky. It's very easy to accidentally type a message into the wrong instant messaging box and send it to the wrong person, or to type what you are saying on the phone into your IMs. Take care to focus on communicating through IMs, just like you would during an in-person conversation.

- Use your away feature when you are not available to let others know that you can't communicate with them at that time. Simply not answering IMs because you are busy can lead others to believe you are ignoring them. 




NAC Corner—Statistics and Tips for Our Young Messengers



In today's world, instant messaging has largely replaced the telephone as a means of communication for youth. According to an i-SAFE National Assessment Center (NAC) survey of 55,759 students in grades 3-12 conducted during the 2005-06 academic school year, 53% chat or use instant messaging. NAC also discovered that 29% of students (55,688 respondents) use instant messaging as their main form of communication. And another 29% of students (from a survey of roughly 13,500 students in grades 5-12) chat or instant message with someone they have never met in person.



Here are some helpful reminders from the i-SAFE curriculum to keep children safe while instant messaging

- Make sure your child's screen name doesn't contain any identifying information.
- Show your child how to set privacy options so that only family and friends can IM with them or see when they are online.
- Make sure your computer has the proper protection, such as: anti-virus software, anti-spyware software, and a firewall.
- Tell your children not to share their passwords with anyone.
- Tell your children to be careful about clicking on links or attachments; they don't want to inadvertently download a malicious program.
- Keep online interaction online. Tell your children not to agree to meet or talk on the phone with someone they only know from the Internet; they need to discuss meeting an online friend in person with you first. Be safe! 

New—Internet Life Skills Series

From bill paying to applying for a job, i-SAFE's NEW Internet Life Skills Series is designed to address the safety and security issues encountered when trying to accomplish all of the everyday life skills that are now frequently done online. This unit of instruction is designed to be integrated into Career-Life Skills, Technology curriculum, and/or general Internet safety and security instruction for high school and college-age learners. Each series includes a Teacher's Guide, the Student Workbook, and Series Quiz.


It is not necessary to complete the series in order to be effective—select topics that are most relevant to the student group. Workbook topics are set up to be completed in a self-guided manner by the student. The first two series in the Internet Life Skills Unit are now available in the i-SAFE store. Series 1 covers computer security, online banking, online research skills, and online retail shopping. Series 2 covers personal Web sites and profiles, online social networking, online rela-




tionships, multi-user online gaming, and peer-to-peer networking. Subsequent series will become available throughout the year.

Get your Internet Life Skills Series today at <http://auth.isafe.org/store/>.

Social Networking Bigger Than Ever!

A new study by the Pew Internet & American Life Project finds more than half of all American teens use online social-networking sites. That's not exactly big news. But the study also shows teens are using these sites in ways you might not expect, and the data may reassure some parents. Researchers found more than 66% of teens creating a profile page say their profile is not visible to all users. What's more, an overwhelming majority of 91% says they use social-networking sites to stay in touch with friends. Less than half of those surveyed say they use the sites to make new friends. While social networking appears to be here to stay it's not the highest online activity among teens. Researchers say that honor goes to instant messaging. In terms of popularity, MySpace is still the place. The study found 85% of teens that create or update profile pages do it on MySpace. 

Tax Time, Tax Scam

As April 16 draws near, be on the lookout for those tax e-mail scams. A common one is the fake IRS audit. You receive an official-looking e-mail, supposedly from the IRS. It states you are being audited and directs you to complete and return the attached form within 48 hours or face penalties. Of course the form asks for your personal information including your bank account number and social security number. Another variation is a link in the body of the e-mail that directs you to a fake IRS Web site where you're asked to fill out a form. Don't fall for it! "Audit" is a scary word and these scammers know this. Delete this e-mail. The IRS NEVER uses e-mail to inform taxpayers of an audit. If the agency needs to contact you about an audit, they do so by mail. 



Get Involved—Promoting Your Internet Safety Event


February's "Get Involved" activity was to conduct an i-PARENT Board meeting in your community. We hope that your meeting was successful and that other community members stepped up to join you in planning events to raise awareness and educate others about Internet safety.

Begin this month by focusing your efforts on creating a buzz in your community about your event. Effective promotion determines much of the success of any event. i-SAFE offers you the following suggestions on how to promote and advertise your upcoming Internet safety event.

- Log in to the i-SAFE Web site <http://www.isafe.org> and submit an Implementation Plan (IP) to ensure that your event is posted on the i-SAFE Web site calendar.
- Use the i-SAFE 'Sample News Alert' document to notify your local media (newspaper, TV stations, community newspapers, etc.) – http://ilearn.isafe.org/iparent/docs/ta/news_alert.pdf
- Use the i-SAFE 'Meeting Invitation E-Mail' to send e-mails to friends, family and local news groups – http://ilearn.isafe.org/iparent/docs/ta/email_invite.pdf
- Post flyers on community bulletin boards, in local stores, etc., using the i-SAFE 'Meeting Announcement Poster' – <http://ilearn.isafe.org/iparent/docs/ta/announcement.pdf>



- Visit your city's Web site and submit a request to post your event on the city event calendar.
- Provide local schools and churches with the 'Meeting Announcement Poster' to post on location and to send home with students and members – <http://ilearn.isafe.org/iparent/docs/ta/announcement.pdf>

All of these documents are also contained in the Forms and Documents folder on the i-PARENT Toolkit CD. To get your i-PARENT CD, log in to <http://www.isafe.org> and submit an Implementation Plan (IP) for an 'i-PARENT Program' 

Teens and Instant Messaging—Hooking Up, Hanging Out and Homework

Does this look familiar? Your son, daughter or student chatting online to 14 different friends, doing homework, surfing the Internet, all at the same time, all without a problem. To see them in action is to witness a champion "multi-tasker." So, when is too much, too much? When do you pull the plug? When is a communications crackdown appropriate?

Here are some suggestions on monitoring the messaging

1) **DO** set some ground rules on instant messaging and homework. Some experts advise parents to ban IMing until after assignments are completed. Others argue that in today's world, multi-tasking is an advantage. The first step is determining whether your teen can chat with friends and still accomplish a good term paper on the Mayan civilization.

2) **DO** talk with your teen about the nature of real friendship. Stress to them the best friendships involve really knowing a lot about the other person, doing things together and sharing your feelings openly. The online experience can be one way to deepen a friendship, but it shouldn't be the only way.

3) **DON'T** feel intimidated by technology. It may be the first time in history, kids know more than their parents do about an important aspect of life. But parents who are awed by their kid's online proficiency are less likely to be proper overseers.


4) **DON'T** ignore warning signs. If your teen is socially withdrawn, has trouble making friends or seems to prefer online chat to face-to-face relationships, it may make sense to restrict computer time, or even to seek professional help 

States Leading Changes

It was previously reported that New York, Virginia and California were leading the nation when it comes to Internet safety education and awareness. These states are still leading the way, but now there could be a few new members in their club.

Washington, Rhode Island, Oregon, and Hawaii have pending legislation that would incorporate cyber-bullying and Internet safety education into the classroom. Eight states now have some sort of legislative initiative regarding the Internet safety issue and this bodes well for the youth of America.


More than 77 million young people ages 5 through 17 regularly use the Internet and that number grows every day. Young Americans are the explorers of the new frontier known as the World Wide Web and more and more communities are equipping them with the tools to be safe.

Thanks to the forward looking legislators in these states for watching out for the young people and families they are elected to represent. Let's hope that other states follow their lead. You can do something to promote Internet safety in your community by contacting your state or congressional representative. Visit www.votesmart.org to find out who your elected officials are and let them know that i-SAFE and Internet safety should be taught in every school in America. 




New York Times for Parents

Are you looking for ways to start thought-provoking conversations with your children? Unsure if a movie is appropriate for your children? Check out the New York Times'

Learning Network Parent Connections Web site—<http://www.nytimes.com/learning/parents/>. Here you can get Conversation Starters and a Family Movie Guide at the click of a mouse. It also has a Student Connections web page with news summaries, a daily news quiz, test prep questions and resources for surfing the Web. 

Implementation Plan Changes

In order to better serve your needs, i-SAFE is now offering you the option to choose "priority" or "next day" shipping. Just indicate your choice when you complete an Implementation Plan. The cost will be added to your order.

Also, while i-SAFE continues to provide you FREE materials through an Implementation Plan, a \$5.00 shipping/handling fee will be added to every order of i-SAFE deliverable products. 

The series of i-SAFE newsletters also includes the *i-EDUCATOR Times* and *Kewl Times* (for students). We encourage you to read the others and ask you to use the main article to initiate discussion and action with your students and your community.

About i-SAFE

Founded in 1998 and active in all 50 states, i-SAFE Inc. is the leader in Internet safety education. i-SAFE is a nonprofit foundation whose mission is to educate and empower students, parents, seniors, and community members to safely and responsibly take control of their Internet experiences. i-SAFE provides knowledge that enables them to recognize and avoid dangerous, destructive, or unlawful online behavior, and to respond appropriately. This is accomplished through dynamic K through 12 curriculum and community-outreach programs to students, parents, law enforcement, and community leaders. i-SAFE is the only Internet safety foundation to effectively combine these elements. www.isafe.org