

click

A TECHNOLOGY GUIDE FOR PARENTS

HOMEWORK AND THE INTERNET

Helping children
research online

STAYING SAFE ONLINE

Keep your online experience a good one

MUM AND DAD'S GUIDE TO BUYING A COMPUTER

All you need to know
before you buy

SENDING CYBER-BULLIES INTO SPACE

A few sensible
precautions give
children back
the power



BRAD HOWARTH
EDITORIAL
CONSULTANT

Brad Howarth is a writer and journalist who has contributed to numerous publications in Australia and the US over the past 10 years. For four and a half years Brad was a senior writer with the business magazine *BRW*, where he held the positions of both Information Technology Editor and Marketing Editor. Brad has also worked as a journalist for the technology section of *The Australian*.

Since leaving *BRW* in March 2004 Brad has worked as a freelance journalist, writing across a wide range of topics, including technology, marketing, entrepreneurship, entertainment and foreign affairs.



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CONTRIBUTOR

Ms Megabyte's mission is to take the hard out of hardware, the science out of software and remove the fears and frustrations often associated with everyday technology.

Having spent many years working with Microsoft in Australia and the UK, Mega has since spent her time advising high profile corporations and personal users how to get the most from their computers.

Mega regularly shares her everyday computing tips and tricks in the media. She's helped thousands of Australians embrace the technology, appearing regularly on *9am with David and Kim*, *GMA* and *The Today Show*. Not to mention writing for various magazines like *Woman's Day* and *Women's Weekly*.



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A keen and active member of the International Association of Business Communicators and an invited author to the highly respected *Journal of Employee Communication Management*, Lee is a widely-read commentator on communication issues.

Along with fellow business communicators he is at the forefront of new communication technologies and regularly showcases and demonstrates to businesses how they too can 'marry' proven communication practices with new technology. He is a highly-acclaimed practitioner who many have said is one of Australia's leading thinkers on communication strategy in an online environment.



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Ross Monaghan is a business communication and issues management specialist with more than 17 years communications experience in public relations, general management and journalism.

A former chief executive officer of the Australian Mobile Telecommunications Association, and chairman of the Mobile Carriers Forum, Ross has advised and represented some of Australia's largest organisations such as BHP, Telstra and Optus. He has a unique combination of communications theory and practical experience.

MINISTER'S FOREWORD



Welcome to the NSW Government's Information Communications Technology (ICT) Guide for parents.

ICT has revolutionised the way the world communicates and the way our students are taught at school.

Students have embraced ICT, using it with a familiarity and ease that can sometimes leave parents scratching their heads.

Computers are widely used in the school curriculum from K-12 and our schools are protected by strong internet filters that prevent inappropriate usage or access to offensive sites.

Given many families also use ICT at home, this guide has been developed to help parents protect their children at home or when they are out with friends.

This guide helps to explain what ICT does and is capable of doing. It explains much of the jargon and many of the buzz words that are unique to the world of the Internet, mobile phone and other technologies.

You may have concerns about who your child is talking to when they "chat" online or text on their mobile phone. You may also have concerns about certain sites you don't want your child to log onto or look at, or about who is looking at a personal site that your child has set up.

This guide will help you to find your way around those and similar issues, and give you guidance on

how to deal with them - and it does so in plain English.

It will take you through the world of blogs, wikis, vodcasts and podcasts. It will tell you about virtual worlds. And it explains what your child is doing on social networking sites like MySpace, Bebo, Facebook, and YouTube - and what you should ensure they are on their guard against.

The NSW Government is ensuring that our public school students are in the forefront of progress when it comes to ICT. We have rolled out computers in every school; every student has an email account and will have their own online workspace by 2011; and we are increasing the speed, security and reliability of our computer network.

This guide will give you a good understanding of our school technology, as well as the technology your child is using at home. It is also available on our departmental website www.schools.nsw.edu.au, and will be regularly updated with new developments in the ICT industry and in our schools.

The Hon John Della Bosca MLC
Minister for Education and Training

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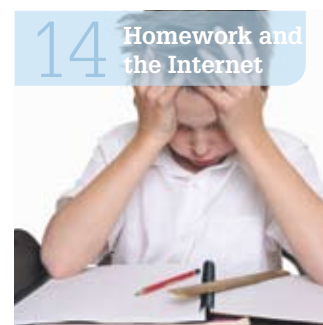
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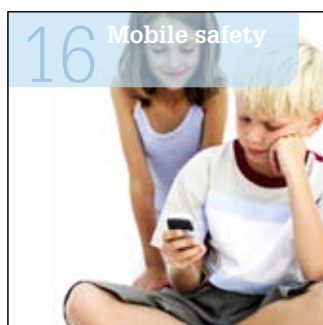
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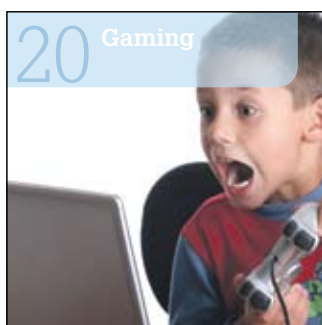
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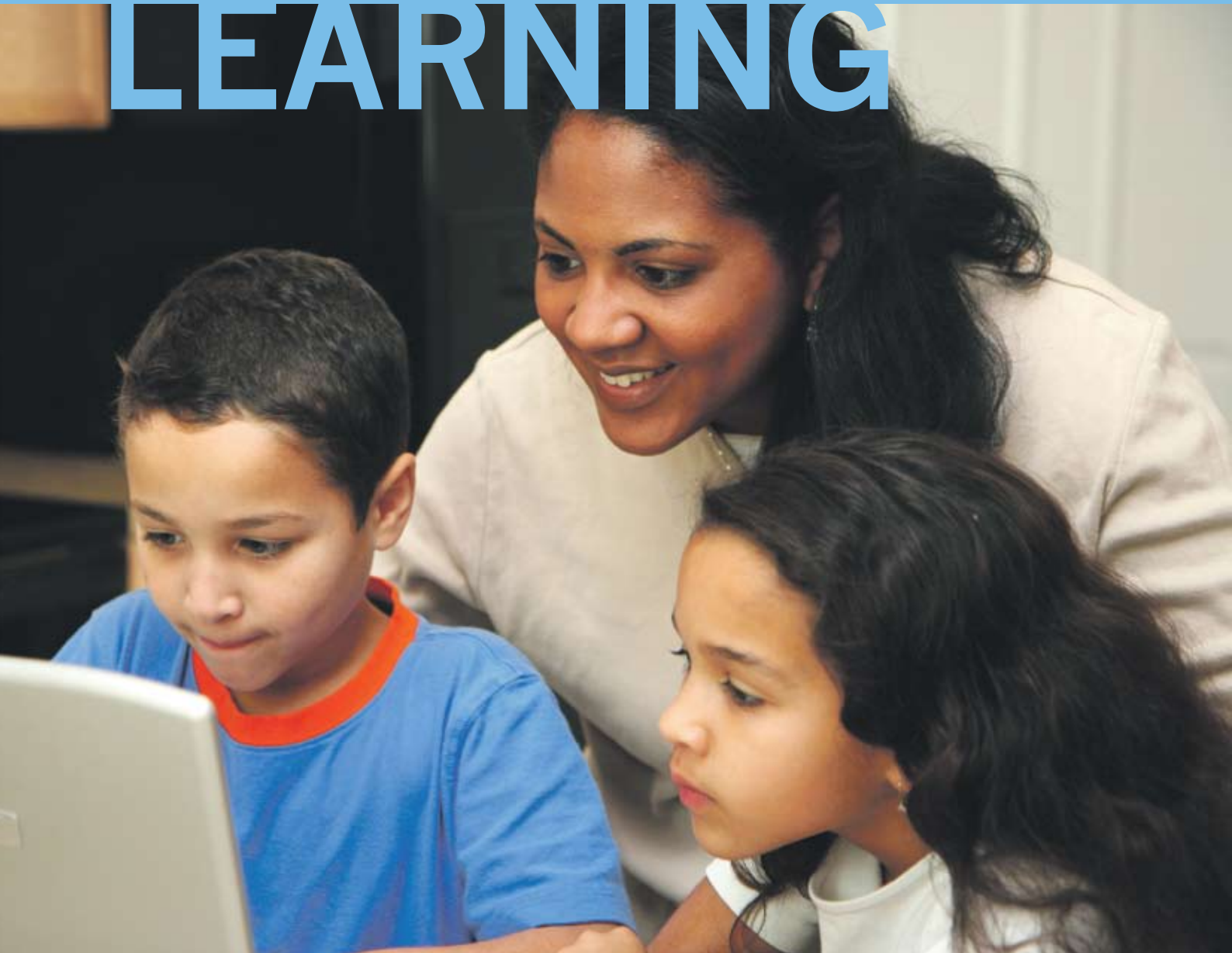
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Engaging in the online activities of your children can seem daunting, but the rewards are there for those parents willing to help their children make the most of the technology.

By Kim Cotton

A LOVE OF LEARNING



As a parent of a school-aged child you're likely to be busy enough without the pressure of keeping up with the latest gizmos your child may be using.

But rather than struggle to understand these strange online worlds, you may be better off considering how you can help your child make the most of technology to enhance their learning.

Despite the speed at which new technology is being downloaded into our lives, the challenges of raising healthy, well-connected children are really not that different from previous generations.

According to Jonathan Nicholas, of the Inspire Foundation (an organisation that looks after the wellbeing of children and young people), technology may change daily, but children don't.

"Children and young people still want to make friends; they still want to be older than they ever

are; they will still be jealous of their brothers and sisters - all those things [we] experienced."

One of the keys is learning how to manage technology in the home so that it can be used as a tool to reconnect families rather than a distraction to disconnect them.

"At some point in each day the whole of the family, including mum and dad, need to turn off all technology and just reconnect and actually hold that time as a really special time - therefore allowing technology to have a balanced role in family life. Technology should be approached in the same way that you would get involved and encourage your child to learn more about their soccer, ballet or tennis lessons."

"At the same time, you can get smarter about technology just by helping your child to learn the skills they need for their learning and school work. After all, the Internet has introduced

the libraries of the world to the family home."

"The hallmarks of a successful person in the future will not be how much they know but how quickly they can find the answers to the things they don't know," Mr Nicholas says.

Therefore, as parents you can utilise your child's natural inquisitiveness and the wonderful questions they ask as a catalyst for online learning.

"Acknowledge that you don't know all of the answers and, even if you do know some of them, actually encourage your child to find the answers on the Internet for themselves," Mr Nicholas says.

A love of learning is as important in children's lives as being adaptable to change. The ability of children to use what they are good at and apply that to different situations will also

become critical. And importantly, children should be encouraged to connect with others.

"If you accept the premise that most of the knowledge that will be created in the future will be created by groups, - the ability to connect with other people, the ability to bring out the best in yourself and the best in other people, will be really important," he says.

"The key parenting challenges that were there a generation ago really haven't shifted. The one thing we really need to encourage children in is to be excited about the unknown and to see that as a really wonderful thing, and to keep investing in them our confidence that even though we don't know what's going to happen, we're actually excited to learn about that with them." ■

When the family goes online

Parents can:

- encourage a positive approach to technology
- spend time exploring the Internet with your child
- set rules for Internet use
- direct your child to useful sites and save them as favourites
- ask your child to show you new skills they have learnt
- maintain good communication with your child and an active interest in their life
- teach your child to treat others online as he/she would like to be treated
- let your child know about potential dangers online and how to handle a situation if it arises.

Benefits of going online

Children can:

- improve their research, reading and writing skills
- get help with homework
- find a wide variety of educational resources
- make and maintain friendships
- learn and have fun with others
- express themselves
- access information and view live events from around the world
- develop independent learning skills.

blogs...youtube...email...sms...myspace...gaming...chatrooms...

moblogs
sms
im
rss feeds
tagging
podcasting
MP3 players
wikis
podcasting
MP3 players



THE 'A to Z' OF TECHNOLOGY

Bringing up kids in this day and age is made all the more confusing when they start talking about technology. This guide has been compiled so you can understand the technology trends that are happening right now with your child.

Each section highlights a different technology. You will see what it is, how it works, how you can make it safer/cheaper/available, how you can get involved and whether schools are using this technology too.

BLOGS

What is it?

A blog (which is an abbreviation of a weblog) is a personal website that can be easily updated. Blogs usually look like online diaries.

How does it work?

Anyone can blog, and there are countless websites that provide tools to do so.

Why are blogs useful?

Blogs are a great way of keeping up with friends and reading about the interesting lives and opinions of other people.

What do you need to keep in mind if your children are blogging?

Explain to your child that whatever they write represents them and can be seen by anyone online. They should always consider the repercussions of publishing information. If they don't want you to read their blog, then you may have something to worry about.

Want to know more about blogging?

Try the following websites for more information:

www.technorati.com

www.blogger.com

<http://blogsearch.google.com/>

CHAT ROOMS

What is it?

A chat room is a place on the Internet where you can meet and chat with other people. Users may want to find others with common interests, or just chat with random strangers.

Depending on the chat room, you may be able to exchange written messages instantly, talk into a microphone, and perhaps show

video of yourself using an Internet video camera (webcam).

How do they work?

Usually people register at chat room sites and log in to the room. They are free to chat with anyone else. In general there is no moderation and people can say what they like.

Why are chat rooms useful?

People use chat rooms to share information and discuss subjects of interest. They are usually free to use and members can remain anonymous or pretend to be someone they are not.

What do you need to keep in mind if your children are going into chat rooms?

Most chat rooms require users to be at least 14 years old. You need to be aware of what types of chat rooms your child is going into and who they are talking to. Always remind your child that the person they are chatting to could be making everything up.

Anything your child says in a chat room can be seen by anyone else in the room at that point in time. Remind your child to:

- Not say anything they wouldn't want the public to know — this includes any personal information
- Never arrange to meet up with anyone they meet through a chat room unless they speak to you first
- Choose a handle (online computer nickname) that doesn't give away their real name or age
- Don't reveal their location or school and don't use photos in their school uniform
- If someone says or does something that makes them feel uncomfortable they should tell their parents.

Want to know more about chat rooms?

Some of the more popular chat rooms include:

chat.myspace.com

chat.yahoo.com

www.stickam.com

EMAIL

What is it?

Email is short for electronic mail. Email is a way of writing and sending electronic letters from your computer across the Internet, including documents, videos, photos and just about anything else.

The NSW Department of Education and Training provides all students with an Internet and email account to help improve their learning opportunities in a safe environment.

How does it work?

If you want to send an email, you need to get your own email address, then use email software to create a message. Type an email address in the "To" line of who you want to receive the message, type your message and hit "send".

Why is email useful?

Email is a quick and easy method to transfer messages and/or documents to anyone, anywhere who is connected to the Internet.

What do you need to keep in mind if your children are emailing?

Remind your children to be friendly and speak to people as they would like to be spoken to. Remember that once they hit "send" the email can't be taken back. They should not reply to emails or open pictures or attachments from email addresses they don't know; they could contain viruses or spyware

Want to know more about emailing?

Why not get your own free email account through Hotmail, Gmail or Yahoo! mail.

Check out:

www.hotmail.com

www.gmail.com

www.yahoo.com

FILTERS

What are they?

Filters are programs that block websites based on certain key words or types of content. The NSW Department of Education and Training filters Internet access on all school computers to prevent students from looking at inappropriate material on websites, such as pornography. Filters can be used on home computers as well.

How do they work?

Basically, filters act like a sieve and only let websites through the Internet that aren't blocked. Certain websites and web content are blocked because they contain information that is deemed inappropriate and cannot get through the filter.

Why are filters useful?

Filters are great at helping your child avoid inappropriate or dangerous websites. Most are set up to block websites that contain "adults-only" content.

What do you need to keep in mind about filters?

No one Internet filter is fool-proof. So it's good to keep in mind that as websites become more advanced, they may find a way to get through your filter. Always remember a filter shouldn't replace basic parenting, the best way to avoid your child looking at inappropriate material is if you are

involved in teaching your child to be safe online. On another note, a lot of filters can become annoying – they end up blocking a lot of sites that aren't inappropriate for your child to see, which means you will need to be there to "unblock" any of these sites.

Want to know more about filters?

You can download a free filter at:

www.netalert.gov.au

GAMING

What is it?

Gaming involves playing any type of the many available electronic games.

How do they work?

Most games come with instructions on how to operate them and what you need to do to win.

Why are computer games useful?

A lot of electronic games require coordination and use of logic to work out how to win!

What do you need to keep in mind if your child is playing electronic games?

Some games are for adults only. If a game is classified for 18+ it might be violent or sexually explicit. Games can also be addictive or emotionally involving. Try setting a time limit on playing games.

Want to know more about games?

Find out more about the games your child is playing or wants to play and ask them to show you how to play.

INSTANT MESSENGER (IM)

What is it?

Instant messaging (IM) allows people to chat to each other instantly using online text messages.

How do they work?

Most IM services require you to subscribe and add contacts in as "buddies".

What's great about Instant Messaging?

IM programs are usually free and are a great way for kids to help each other do their homework without tying up the phone.

What do you need to keep in mind if your children are using Instant Messenger?

IM is very addictive and may take up time that should be used for school work. Like email there is no opportunity to take something back. Once your child has an IM account they can log into any computer and start chatting, meaning they might not be under your supervision when they next log on.

Want to know more about Instant Messenger?

Sign up and add your children as your buddies and test it out!

Try some of these popular IM sites:

www.ninemsn.com.au and follow the MSN messenger links

www.aim.com

www.messenger.yahoo.com

MOBLOGS

What is it?

Using your mobile phone to publish information on the Internet.

How does it work?

You can publish information, photos and videos directly from your phone to the Internet. Another method involves sending an MMS (Multimedia Messaging Service - like an SMS but with photos) to a moblog online site.

What's great about moblogging?

You can easily put your photos and videos from your mobile phone online where your friends can view them.

What do you need to keep in mind if your children are moblogging?

If your child is constantly sending MMS to moblog sites or is logging on to the Internet from their mobile phones, this will increase their phone bill.

Want to know more about moblogging?

Some examples are:

www.busythumbs.com

www.moblogs.com.au

www.twitter.com

MP3 PLAYERS

What are they?

An MP3 player (one of the more popular brands is the iPod) is used to play MP3 audio files. 'MP3' is a type of compression technology that minimises the size of audio files.

How do they work?

To put music onto an MP3 player, you need to either load (called "ripping") your CDs onto your computer, or buy music online at places like iTunes.

What's great about MP3 Players?

MP3 players can keep all of your music in the one convenient and portable location.

What do you need to keep in mind if your children are listening to MP3 Players?

Noise levels and your child's hearing is important to consider. Pirate music has become a problem so it is important to remind your children that copying music that they haven't purchased is stealing.

Want to know more about MP3 Players?

See the following websites for more information:

www.howstuffworks.com/mp3-player1.htm

www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MP3



PHOTO SHARING WEBSITES

What are they?

These let you share your photos with friends or the whole world.

How do they work?

Once you are signed in to a site you can add your own photos and view other people's.

What's great about photo sharing websites?

These sites are perfect for people who never print their digital photos.

What do you need to keep in mind if your children are using photo sharing websites?

Anyone who is signed up can potentially view your children's photos. The more popular photo sharing sites have guidelines that ensure any offensive photos uploaded are removed as soon as possible. Make sure any photos of your children cannot be viewed in an objectionable manner.

Want to know more about photo sharing websites?

Try signing up to one!

www.flickr.com

www.facebook.com

PODCASTING AND VODCASTING

What is it?

A podcast is like a pre-recorded "radio"-style program available on the Internet and can be downloaded to your computer or MP3 player. A vodcast is the video version.

How does it work?

You need to go to the podcast website and download the software, then click on the links for the podcasts that you would like to listen to.

What's the benefit of listening to podcasts?

You can download video or audio of any topic you like, from your favourite bands, news, events and radio shows to television clips and listen to it when you want.

What do you need to keep in mind if your children are downloading podcasts/vodcasts?

Check that the information/material that they are downloading is suitable for your child.

Want to know more about podcasting?

Try looking up a radio station website that you are interested in, and following the instructions to download the podcasts available.

ABC Radio – www.abc.net.au/radio/

itunes – www.apple.com/itunes/

RSS FEEDS

What is it?

Really simple syndication (RSS) feeds are an excellent way for web users to keep up-to-date with news headlines or blogs. With an RSS reader users can scan hundreds of news headlines from one location.

How do RSS readers work?

Web users sign up to a website's RSS feeds that interest them. Anytime that website is updated, a notice will appear in their reader.

What's the benefit of RSS feeds?

If you are interested in a topic, you don't need to keep checking the site for updates.

What do you need to keep in mind if your children are using RSS feeds?

Just be clear on the types of sites they are subscribing to – make sure they are appropriate for your child.

Want to know more about RSS feeds?

Try a free online RSS feed program and add whatever feeds you are interested in.

www.pageflakes.com

SEARCH ENGINES

What are search engines?

Search engines are websites that help you find information online.

How does it work?

Search engines index web pages and rate them in terms of relevancy on all possible topics. So when you type in a subject and hit "search" the most relevant website will appear at the top of the list. Paid advertising websites can appear first.

What's great about search engines?

You can type in a question or subject and thousands of results can appear.

What do you need to keep in mind if your children are making use of search engines?

Remind your children that just because information is on the Internet, this doesn't make it accurate.

Want to know more about search engines?

Check out the sites

www.google.com.au

www.yahoo.com.au

www.ninemsn.com.au

Other great search engines for children include:

www.kids.net.au

www.dibdabdo.com

www.askforkids.com



SMS

What is SMS?

SMS stands for Short Messaging Service. It is also known as a text message sent from mobile phone to mobile phone.

How does it work?

All mobile phones have the ability to send SMS. Users create a new message using the key pad and send it to a number from their contacts list or just type the number in directly.

What's great about SMS?

It is cheap, and can be used to send important messages when you don't have the time to talk or it's too noisy.

What do you need to keep in mind if your children are SMSing?

Let your child know there is still a cost attached to this service, so large bills will arrive if your child is a big texter. Encourage them to only text when necessary.

Want to know more about SMS?

Go to your mobile phone providers website to view charges:

www.telstra.com

www.vodafone.com.au

www.optus.com.au

SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

What are they?

Social networking sites are websites that expand your group of friends by making it easy to meet your friend's friends. These are websites used to socialise, such as MySpace, Bebo and Facebook.

How do they work?

All you need to do is sign up to a social networking site, and then you receive a profile page to do whatever you like with. Once your friends find your page, they can add you as a friend. You can also look through your friend's friends and ask them to be your friend. You can look on any of your friends' profile pages. Users have the ability to block others from being their friends and to block others from seeing their profile page.

These sites are blocked from being accessed in NSW Public Schools.

What's great about social networking sites?

These sites are great places to meet up with friends, make new friends and post photos and stories.

What do you need to keep in mind if your child is registered on a social networking site?

Discuss with your child what they go on these sites for – who they talk to, what they like about it. Other things to keep in mind:

- Remind them to never give out private information like their full name, age or address
- Make sure they stick to the age rules of the various sites – if they are under the limit, they should wait until they are old enough. Age restrictions are in place for a reason
- Remind them that anything they put on their profiles can be seen by all of their friends (and the rest of the world depending on settings), so only put up things they are proud of
- Be careful when making new friends online – they might not be who they say they are, and your child shouldn't meet any new online friends without a trusted adult present
- If your child comes across anything that makes them uncomfortable, encourage them to talk to you about it straight away.

Want to know more about Social Networking Sites?

Check out these sites for yourself:

www.bebo.com

www.facebook.com

www.myspace.com

TAGGING

What is a tag?

A tag is a word, or words, assigned to a piece of information (such as a picture, article, or video clip), that describes the content of the item and you search and cross-reference information online.

How does it work?

You might tag a picture of a parrot as "animal", "bird" and "colourful". You might then tag a picture of a tropical fish as "animal", "fish", and "colourful". Later when you want to find information about colourful animals, you could search your tagged items for "animal" and "colourful". There are websites that allow you to store your tags in one location, and for you to share your tags and see other peoples.

What's great about tagging?

Tagging helps you remember your favourite web pages and cross-reference information you've found. By sharing and looking at other people's tags, you can quickly find even more information other people like.

What do you need to keep in mind if your children are tagging?

There is no structure in the way people assign tags, so following some links could lead your children to inappropriate web content.

Want to know more about tagging?

<http://del.icio.us>

www.technorati.com/tag

www.flickr.com/photos/tags



VIRTUAL WORLDS

What are they?

Virtual worlds are simulated worlds created on the Internet that people can visit from their computer. "Residents" can create a new identity (known as an "avatar" – a 3D representation of themselves) and interact with other avatars in real-time, in a relatively lifelike social setting.

You can socialise, visit places, even catch public transport. Businesses are also starting to appear in virtual worlds, so you can buy anything from real estate to clothing, using virtual currency.

How do they work?

Sign up and create your virtual self, then you can start looking around the world.

Why are virtual worlds so popular?

Building a virtual "life" can be quite addictive. It can offer a world of possibilities that may not be achievable in real life.

What do you need to keep in mind if your children are visiting virtual worlds?

Make your child aware of some ground rules:

- They shouldn't reveal their personal details
- They should be honest about their age when signing up. Some virtual worlds won't allow children under certain ages to join due to the adult nature of the content
- Not to respond to any comments or actions that make them feel uncomfortable – report it to the site administrators and parents

- Keep their parents in the loop about their virtual life
- If they want to meet offline, seek parental permission and take a trusted adult with them.

Want to know more about virtual worlds?

If your child is visiting virtual worlds talk about it with them and see if they will show you around and how it works.

Popular virtual worlds include:

- Second Life – www.secondlife.com
- The teen version is www.teen.secondlife.com/
- Zwinkytopia – www.zwinky.com
- Club Penguin – www.clubpenguin.com
- Millsberry – millsberry.com/
- Star Doll – www.stardoll.com – a virtual paper doll world

WIKIS

What is a wiki?

Wikis are an online group of documents/web pages that many different users can add to and edit freely online. The most famous wiki is Wikipedia.

How does it work?

Wikis work on the basis that whoever is in that particular wiki's community will edit and add to the information available.

What's great about wikis?

The community that works with the wiki maintains the integrity and volume of the information.

What do you need to keep in mind if your children are using Wikis?

Remind your children not to assume information is correct – there is definitely room for errors and bias.

Want to know more about Wikis?

Try the big one – Wikipedia – www.wikipedia.org

YOUTUBE

What is it?

YouTube is a video clip sharing website.

How does it work?

Users can log on and add video clips, or simply look through the site and see the video clips available.

What's great about YouTube?

A lot of the film clips on YouTube are really fun to watch and some are educational. It's kind of like watching television on the Internet.

What do you need to keep in mind if your children are hanging out on YouTube?

YouTube content isn't age specific, so your child might be viewing clips that aren't appropriate. YouTube is not for children under the age of 13.

Want to know more about YouTube?

Take a look for yourself!

www.youtube.com





STAYING SAFE ONLINE

Chances are, your child uses a computer, mobile phone and the Internet more regularly than you do. Here are some tips to keep your child safe in an online world that you might not be part of.

Eight ways to keep your online experience a good one:

1 Keep computers out in the open!

Your child might think twice about looking at inappropriate websites, and won't be able to chat to their friends all night while you think they are doing their homework.

2 Mind your business

Remind your child to keep information such as their name, address, phone number, school, and even your credit card number to themselves. When signing up to a chat room, they should use a screen name that is a nickname and not easy to work out. The same goes for choosing passwords - don't make them easy to figure out. If your child is going to put photos on the Internet, ensure they don't show them wearing their school uniform - this can be enough to identify your child's school. Also ensure that any photos are not the type

that would attract unwanted attention from strangers.

3 Just because it's on the Internet, it doesn't mean it's true!

Make sure your child uses multiple sources for research, and is careful not to plagiarise

4 Stranger danger is online too

Ensure your child never organises to meet up with any strangers that they have met online. If they really want to meet up, encourage them to talk to you about it first, and insist on going along with them. Remind your children to also be wary opening emails from strangers too. They could contain spam (online junk mail), a virus (which will harm your computer), or be from a stranger looking for trouble.

5 So get a filter!

Internet filters can help block inappropriate sites for children. You can download a free filter at www.netalert.gov.au. These aren't completely reliable, and it's best if you talk about what websites are appropriate with your child so they understand and make the right choice on their own

6 Encourage your child to talk with you about their online experiences - good and bad

This will make it easier for them if they see something inappropriate or are emailed something unsuitable. If they are embarrassed to tell you, persuade them to at least tell a teacher or another trusted adult.

7 Life online works better when people maintain good manners and treat each other as they'd like to be treated

Talk about this with your child and it may lead to a decline in bullying behaviour, not to mention the many disagreements that children have amongst themselves.

8 Forever is a long time

A lot of blogs and websites maintain information as part of cyberspace forever - long after your child may have changed their minds about "hating boys" or whatever is the hot topic of the day. By publishing without thinking of the future, your child's innocent work online of today may be something that comes up down the track and negatively impacts their career and personal life.

Danger Signs

- Your child constantly sits on the computer in chat rooms or instant messaging, from straight after school to very late at night.
- Your child begins showing unexplained money or items that they might explain as from "a friend you don't know."
- Your child starts to be secretive about what they are doing online - this could include anything from minimising screens as you walk past, to not letting you see their blogs/chat/social media sites.

HOMework AND THE INTERNET

We've all probably had a laugh at the expense of the dad in the "Great Wall of China" broadband ad — "Too many rabbits in China" — which makes a great case for using the Internet for researching school assignments. The Internet is a fantastic tool for finding out all kinds of information but there are pitfalls that parents need to help guide children around when searching online.

By Judith Ridge



Today's children have never known life without the Internet and are accustomed to having a world of information at their fingertips, free of charge. But it is easy to forget that information on the Internet is not always reliable or accurate, and isn't necessarily available to be copied for school assignments.

For example, a few years ago students were using an apparently professional and legitimate website about human rights activist Martin Luther King. But the website was in fact published by an organisation whose intention was to damage Dr King's reputation by reporting malicious gossip and rumours about his private life. The website no longer exists, but while it did the potential for wrong information to be included in assignments was high.

So how then do we help our kids work out whether a website contains accurate information that is written by someone who knows what they're talking about and has no ulterior motives?

There are a few simple ways of checking out whether or not a website is the real deal:

1. Find out who wrote the information on the site and check their qualifications. A reliable website should include details of the people behind it – if you can't find this information relatively easily, then proceed with caution.
2. Determine how old the information is, and how often it is updated. Many sites include a line at the bottom of the main page to say this. If the information is more than a few years old you may be better off searching for a more up-to-date site.
3. Look for bias contained in the information. Some websites might appear to be neutral in their tone, but if you dig a little deeper you may find that they are sponsored or even created by a company with a vested interest.

It's important to encourage your child to find multiple sources of information when researching, including using traditional sources such as encyclopaedias and reference books.

And don't forget your local library. Public libraries across NSW have access to a wide range of online research material and librarians are always happy to help guide students to find the best, most accurate information available from any source.

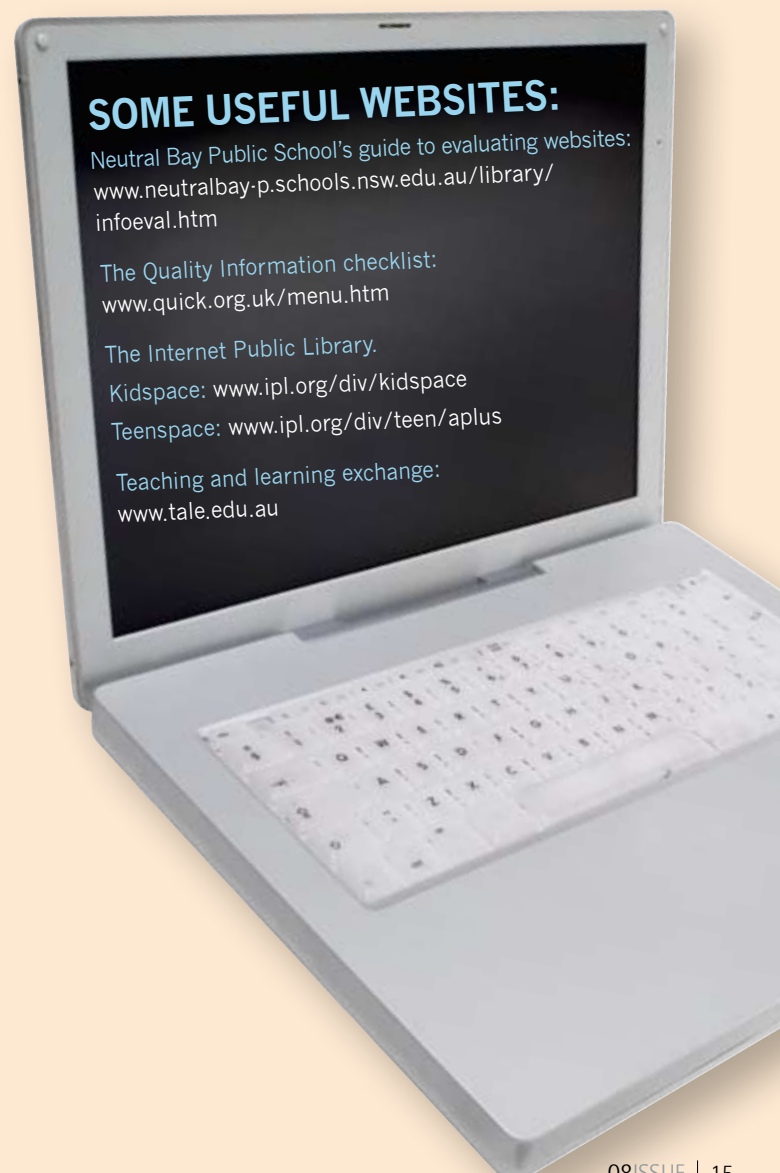
It's also important for your child to understand that just because something can be read for free on the Internet doesn't mean

they can simply copy it. Doing so without acknowledging the source is plagiarism and is not permitted. If they quote a book or website, they must always note where they got the information from.

Some material on the Internet may be covered by copyright laws. For example, there are thousands of websites that publish song lyrics but many of them are breaking copyright laws by publishing those lyrics without permission or paying royalties to the writer. The same may be true of poetry or short stories, or even non-fiction material. Look out for the copyright symbol (©) on

websites, but even if there isn't one stick to the golden rule – if you quote it, acknowledge it!

Finally, you will be reassured to know that when your child is using the Internet for research in their school library or computer lab, you don't need to worry that they may stumble across inappropriate content. The NSW Department of Education and Training has filters or "net nannies" in place right across the NSW public school Internet network that safeguard your child from accidentally accessing obscene or otherwise unsuitable websites. ■



MOBILE *Safety*



When it comes to mobiles for kids, safety should be a parent's first call.

By Ross Monaghan

Mobile phones have quickly become part of everyday life.

It's never been easier to keep in touch with family and friends. Keeping up-to-date with the latest mobile phone technology, however, is another matter.

There are several competing networks, varying price options, and handsets come with different features such as video, web browsing and games.

It's important for parents to understand what is available so they can ensure their family has the most appropriate, safest, and cost effective mobile handsets and contracts.

According to Chris Althaus, from the Australian Mobile Telecommunications Association (AMTA) between 80 and 90 per cent of secondary school students use, or have access to, a mobile phone.

Most young people say they have a mobile phone for the convenience of being contactable almost anywhere, or for the security of being able to contact their family.

But many of today's mobile phones are more like hand-held computers than a traditional telephone.

New mobile phone features, together with the fast download speeds of the latest networks, mean that we are going to be increasingly reliant on mobile technology, even at school.

"Increasingly the education environment is going to be using mobile services," Mr Althaus says.

"Schools will be using social media tools to allow, for example, downloading podcasts of lectures or classes."

Young people already use social media such as MySpace and YouTube on their home PCs to connect with family and meet new friends around the world. New mobile phone features allow the same thing on the move.

There are advantages of having mobile access to the Internet but there are also dangers. Mobile access, for example, makes supervision more difficult and content filters are not readily available for handsets.

Your mobile phone service provider may be able to help you limit access to some services, but thinking about these issues before you buy a phone is the way to go.

Buying a mobile

If you've decided that a mobile phone might help your family stay in touch, there are a few issues you might like to consider.

Is the phone going to "belong" to one family member, or would a "family phone" work just as well?

Older teens may need their own phone, but if you have more than one young family member who may need a mobile phone occasionally, you might like to consider the benefits of a shared phone.

Where can the phone be used, and where can't it be used?

Many schools, libraries, sporting clubs and other venues such as swimming pools and gyms, have specific rules relating to the use of mobile phones. It's best to make sure it can be used where intended.

Do you really need all the latest features?

If you want the phone primarily to keep in touch, think twice about features such as cameras, and multimedia that will add to the purchase price and cost more to use. Phones with the latest technology may be a status symbol, but might also make the phone more likely to be the target of thieves.

TIP: To avoid possible pressure by sales staff and your child, agree on the features needed before you go shopping.

Fixed-term or prepaid account?

Whilst fixed-term contracts often provide cheaper call rates, prepaid accounts help you limit the amount of money you spend each month.

TIP: Only people over 18 can legally sign a contract. Think carefully before agreeing to sign a contract for your child's phone, doing so is similar to giving them your credit card. You may be held liable for all the costs and any ongoing costs if the phone is lost, stolen or damaged.

Playing it safe with your mobile

Parents often buy a mobile for their children for peace of mind. Remember though that there are a range of issues you need to

consider, discuss and agree upon to ensure everyone stays safe and happy.

As a parent, don't let the fact that your child has a mobile phone lull you in to letting your child get in situations that you otherwise wouldn't allow. Phones can be lost, stolen, out of credit, or out of range (although 000 can always be used if the phone is in a coverage area). At busy times, for example at the end of a concert, networks can be congested, and it may be difficult to immediately get a line in or out.

Agree on acceptable use and set a budget. Perhaps use the experience as a way to help teach your child about managing money.

Downloading ringtones, games, voting, entering competitions and other "premium" services, whilst fun, can be extremely expensive and sometimes have high ongoing charges.

Phone locks

Get to know the security features and locks on your mobile phone so that if it is lost, you have the best chance of getting it back and not having to pay for someone else's calls. If your handset is lost or stolen, you should immediately contact your service provider.

Bullying

Bullies can use mobile phones to make threatening calls or send harassing messages. Research suggests that this type of bullying is just as stressful to the victim as physical bullying. Mr Althaus points out that prevention is better than cure. He suggests young people should be careful when giving out their number or leaving it where the number can be seen.

"You should also consider using ID blocking when calling someone," Mr Althaus says.

If you are bullied, AMTA suggests you don't respond, consider turning off your phone when you don't need it on, and consider getting help. Remember the law is on your side.

More information

www.understandingmoney.gov.au

www.cybersmartkids.com.au

www.acma.gov.au

Australian Mobile
Telecommunications Association

www.amta.org.au

SMS Lingo

BBL Be back Later

BFN Bye for now

CUL8R See later

F2F Face To Face

IOH I'm Out of Here

OMG Oh My God

POTS Plain Old Telephone Service

POS Parents are looking Over my Shoulder.

POTS Parents Over The Shoulder - (My parents are watching, I can't really talk)

ROFL Rolling On The Floor, Laughing

TYT Take Your Time

YW You're Welcome

SECOND LIFE FOR PARENTS

Three-dimensional online worlds and 'virtual' realities may seem daunting to newcomers, but they offer a world of possibilities for the adventurous.

By Lee Hopkins

www.secondlife.com

Every month around 750,000 people venture into Second Life, a three-dimensional online world that is the best representation yet of a virtual alternate reality.

It is a virtual world without parallel, offering many attractions that the real world can't match. Second Life "residents" can engage in games and other recreational activities, or create virtual objects such as houses, furniture and clothes for fun or profit, while mingling with people from around the globe.

For some parents this will ring alarm bells, in terms of the potential for children to be exposed to adult-only content or cyberstalking by paedophiles.

Thankfully, many of our fears are largely unwarranted. Contrary to expectations, the average second life inhabitants are not socially-backward teenagers or shady old men sitting alone in the dark.

Residents of Second Life are most often in their mid 30s, equally likely to be male or female, well-educated and reasonably affluent in terms of both time and money. The online world is a very accurate reflection of the real world—what you find in our streets is what you will find online—with all the beauty, kindness, generosity and, yes, ugliness of our daily experience.

That is not to say that less desirable elements of the population do not exist, but they are tiny in number compared to the other 10 million residents.

Like other online communities Second Life is taking every action possible to ensure the safety - both physical and psychological - of its community members.

For example, Second Life requires every new 'resident' to provide their credit card details, which are validated when they join - not to bill them, but to ensure that the person signing up is a 'real' person and is old enough to be accessing

the virtual world. Under 18s are unlikely to have a credit card, and so the risk of them gaining access to the adult-only areas within Second Life is therefore small.

There is also a special version of Second Life created specifically for teenagers under 18 years of age called Teen Second Life. This is a well monitored area where any suspicion of adult content is pounced upon by the owners of the world, Linden Lab. Those guilty of misconduct are immediately banned for life from accessing any of the Second Life worlds.

In addition, there are very strict join-up checks that act as deterrents. Adults must apply to Linden Lab if they wish to gain entrance to Teen Second Life, and so far only academics and teachers who have the full approval of their academic institution have been granted access.

But lastly, and most importantly, the teenagers in Teen Second Life are themselves the best police. According to many academics and teachers who openly work with them, the teen "residents" run contests amongst themselves and take great pride in "sniffing out" adults who are pretending to be teenagers. Once "sniffed", the reporting mechanism works incredibly quickly.

Teen Second Life and Second Life are two fantastic 3D worlds, where "residents" have the opportunity to create, buy and sell objects, to meet others, to try new personalities and "play" at being adults before they enter the real world. Teen Second Life also happens to be one of the safest areas on the Internet for your teenage children.

Why not join Second Life yourself and see what the fun is all about? ■

VIRTUAL WORLDS APART

A plethora of virtual worlds are now appearing online, offering many forms of safe amusement for young adventurers.

By Lee Hopkins



TIP: Share the experience with your child. Ask to be taken through the site and determine for yourself if it's appropriate.

There are plenty of online virtual worlds that your children may be visiting, with bizarre names including Millsberry, Kaneva, vSide, Entropia, HiPiHi, Odoglio City, Habbo, Club Penguin, *There.com* and MTV's worlds. Many of them use human-like avatars (2D and 3D characters) and allow the player to make choices about their personality, clothing, type of environment and much more.

While Second Life is geared more towards adults, for many worlds the accent is strongly on teen and/or pre-teen members. The owners of the worlds taking great care to ensure that content and interactions remain very age-appropriate.

Most of these worlds place visitors safely inside a preconceived environment where they can interact with others and even buy clothes, visit the school cafeteria (even avatars need food to survive!) and borrow school books (and pay fines with virtual money if they're returned late!).

These worlds are moderated 24 hours a day, every day, by professional moderators. The moderators are fully trained and players can ask them for help at any time. Conversations are logged and can be monitored at any time without warning, with any questionable behaviour reported to the police.

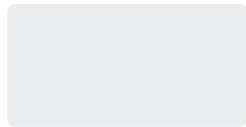
Some worlds even put every conversation through filters before they appear on the screen, to eliminate swearing, racist and sexist terms and other words unsuitable for children. The filters also remove email addresses and phone numbers so that they can't be accidentally or deliberately given out.

In addition, all of these worlds work hard to educate members about being safe online. Many worlds produce regular newsletters containing articles on safety, along with prominently displayed safety information. ■

GET IN THE GAME

Setting boundaries around computer games is a much better idea than banning them, especially as some can be beneficial to their players.

By **Katrina Lobley**



START SELECT

As the father of three boys aged four, eight and 10, Dr Jeff Brand knows how hard it can be for parents to set rules about playing electronic games. As the electronic games expert from Bond University's Centre for New Media Research and Education, Dr Brand brings a lot of practical experience to the lessons that he preaches.

Dr Brand says it's important that parents try, whenever possible, to have a gaming session with their children.

"Families who play together tend to bond very strongly."

With 79 per cent of Australian households owning an electronic games device – which includes everything from PCs and handheld games to advanced consoles such as Sony's PlayStation3, Nintendo's Wii or Microsoft's Xbox 360 – Dr Brand is keen to spread the word on how to set effective game-playing guidelines.

Along with embracing a positive attitude towards games, parents should develop rules for the kids who are playing them – and stick to them.



THE RULES

STARTING GAME PLAY

"We need to understand there's no such thing as a mini-session," Dr Brand says. "Most games have a story and require somewhere in the order of 20 hours to complete. That means they're fairly complicated ... you can't just jump in for 10 minutes.

"In my house, we have a rule where you can either play for a half-hour or play for an hour, but your total screen time all day is two hours. We also have a limited number of goes in a day – you can only have two start sessions."

"The problem for parents is monitoring which child is on which device or is actually playing versus watching. Our rule is a simple one: if you're sitting there watching another person play, you're having screen time."

STOPPING GAME PLAY

"The stopping rules start with what I call a 21st-century bookmark," Dr Brand says.

Most games will either save the progress of the player automatically, or require them to go to a certain location in the game to save. "Most games have either ongoing saves, so you can stop the game and start where you left off, or you have to get to a place in the game – your character goes to a platform or whatever – and you can choose to save."

This is another reason parents should have a turn playing, to learn which ones have save points and which ones don't.

"My children understand that stopping is unconditional. We have a timer and when the timer beeps, they should be at a save point or within a couple of minutes of a save point."

Then there should be a follow-up activity, such as extending the game's creative world to the post-game activity by asking the child to draw a character, island or map from the game.

"It's a nice transition – it gets children to a desk or a table," he says. "If the next activity is

homework, that's probably pretty rough. It's really hard to go from playing Super Paper Mario on the Wii to working on your times tables."

If a child still doesn't want to stop play, Dr Brand says a simple hand on the shoulder is so much more powerful than yelling or screaming.

"One of the biggest mistakes we make as parents is we unplug. If you put your arm around the back of the child, it's a loving gesture – it's also an attention-getter. It's a gentle way to help the child break out of that world." ■



ELECTRONIC GAMES

The Pros

- Games can improve reading, writing and improve children's understanding of how stories work.
- Games can help maths skills by providing opportunities for counting, subtraction and other maths concepts.
- Games can help children to develop problem solving skills and improve hand-eye coordination when played in moderation.
- Games encourage children to explore the creativity of other worlds.
- Children can use game making software to develop their own games. This develops a range of skills including flexible thinking, reading and writing and problem solving.

The Cons

- Games are expensive. Encourage children to budget for a new game or encourage them to put it on their birthday or Christmas lists – prices will often fall as they wait.
- Children can get emotionally involved in the challenges and rewards built into each game – so ensure play is regulated.
- Many new game consoles include online access. Parents should apply the usual online safety rules.
- These games can take up a lot of children's time. Ensure their lives are balanced with other activities.



SENDING CYBERBULLIES INTO SPACE



Bullies have existed since humans first dragged their knuckles off the ground and found they could form a fist. The schoolyard environment is far from immune.

Now technology has provided a new medium with which to intimidate and cyberbullying has become a highly unwelcomed side-effect. And it can have far-reaching and highly targeted effects. A child's humiliation and hurt can now be streamed to limitless computers and camera phones.

Dr Marilyn Campbell is a psychologist and teacher specialising in anxiety disorders in young people. Working at the Queensland University of Technology, she is considered one of the country's leading experts on cyberbullying and is currently spearheading a national study into its ramifications.

Dr Campbell says that bullying is all about humiliation and rejection of a person, an "intent to hurt" in a relationship where there is an imbalance of power. This should not be confused with fighting between equals.

"We can only hypothesise at this point whether the effect of cyberbullying is worse than face-to-face bullying – but there is certainly a thought that consequences of cyberbullying could be more severe because of the 24/7 nature of the medium," Dr Campbell says.

"There's no real escape – even at home you can be threatened or invaded. Cyberbullies have a much wider audience, and of course there's the power of the written word or pictures – seeing or reading something about another person, the victim, means it sears into the brain much more than just hearing it."

Ironically, despite the instant effect of cyberbullying, Dr Campbell says there's evidence to suggest that it does not have the instant gratification of face-to-face bullying.

"Bullies have to wait to see the reaction of their work," she says. "This has shown there may be a stepping-up of the frequency of bullying – more taunts are sent, it's more pronounced, to make up for the wait. The critical issue is

the extent of the damage done to the target."

Experts have categorised bullying into teasing, exclusion, physical bullying and harassment. Elements of all of the above translate into cyberbullying, often more powerfully.

Often cyberbullying comes out of the blue and from totally unexpected sources. For example, a child might have had a schoolyard tiff with his/her group of friends. In normal circumstances in a couple of days all is forgotten and everyone is friends again.

But in cyberspace snide remarks are displayed for all to see. It's easy to "take back" comments in person, but not so easy if you've gone to MySpace and called someone terrible names and accused them wrongfully of bad behaviour.

A recent US study has shown girls are among the worst offenders in cyberbullying, stating: "very often it's the girls who use the Internet to bully other girls. It's called relational aggression. It's the way girls bully as opposed to the way boys bully. With girls, it's more

insidious. They use relationships as weapons.

"For example, a group of girls could be sitting around the computer, instant messaging their target. (The target thinks she is only communicating with one person.) At first, they befriend her. They gossip a while about mutual friends and eventually the bullies ask leading questions, hoping to get their target to say something negative about one of the girls present. Once the target falls for it, the bullies use the gossip against her. This leads to social isolation."

Dr Campbell says she was surprised at the result of a recent study she undertook for a paper on cyberbullying. She was expecting most online bullies would be face-to-face bullies as well, but her findings proved otherwise.

"We took a sample of 581 girls from two schools in NSW and Queensland and, of the five per cent who said they were cyberbullies, only 30 per cent also bullied face-to-face."

This was also reflected in figures on girls who were bullied pointing to the fact that cyberbullying

There's no easy way to get rid of bullies, but ignoring their online taunts and taking a few sensible precautions can give kids back the power

By Julie McGlone



is creating a whole new social problem rather than simply extending existing behaviour.

Students who bully and those who are bullied are, says Dr Campbell, most likely to be girls found in middle school.

"It peaks at 13 years and goes through to 15 years. By senior school most kids have figured out that it's not the way to act and, apart from those who will go on to be bullies in the workforce and in life, the problem is largely gone."

Dr Campbell says long term solutions must come from early intervention in the home and schools.

"Parents need to change bully behaviour as soon as they see it – they need to instil that you can get your own way without hurting other people. Often bullies have been the victim of bullying themselves."

While it is complex, with no quick fix, cyberbullying can cause serious emotional problems and needs to be addressed quickly and efficiently.

As a parent or carer it is important that your child feels comfortable

reporting any incidents which they find upsetting or which they are unsure of handling.

There are some key behaviours to watch for:

- Your child rushes home to the computer and appears agitated or unnaturally reserved afterwards
- SMS messages come more frequently than usual and your child answers quickly or seems stressed
- Your child is unhappy for no apparent reason or says he/she doesn't want to go to school or social functions
- You notice your child changing the computer screen or closing emails when you enter the room
- Your child is spending too much time on the Internet or being online late into the night
- You notice changes in behaviour, such as secretiveness, sleeping problems, neglecting school assignments, avoiding normal social activities or withdrawing from the family.

www.netalert.gov.au/advice/risks/cyberbullying

www.bullyingnoway.com.au

Here are some practical tips for kids dealing with an online bully:

- Tell the bully in simple terms to leave you alone. Tell them not to contact you again. Log off immediately and stay offline for at least 24 hours
- Do not reply to any future mail from the bully. Do not reply to taunts, emails or gossip written about you. By ignoring taunts, you take the power away from the harasser and refuse to play their game. You are now in charge
- Never give your password or logon details to anyone, even your best friends. It's really easy for someone to log on to your Facebook, Bebo or MySpace site and post any kind of rubbish if they know your password
- Stay out of chat rooms where you don't feel comfortable
- Keep all harassing emails (and any replies you've made) as evidence
- If you feel you are in physical danger or if the bully has made physical threats against you, tell your parents immediately and they can decide if it's appropriate to contact authorities. ■

STRANGER DANGER

Cyberspace is making communication more exciting every day, but there is a dark side. Responsible parenting means putting safety measures into place to ensure your child's online life is predator-proof.

By Julie McGlone



There is a world of interaction going on in cyberspace, most of it fun and educational.

But there is a dark side – the equivalent of “stranger danger” is a threat online, and many parents don't fully understand how to identify or combat it.

David McKie and Alison Benoit from the Department of Education and Training's Student Welfare Directorate are well aware of the issues in keeping children safe.

“Our focus is on getting students to raise issues when they get uncomfortable with anything online,” Ms Benoit says.

“It's up to parents and teachers to ensure children have the skills they need to identify risk and take extra precautions against predators.”

Mr McKie says schools have very strict filtering programs installed.

“But of course, online access is provided by parents in the home as well, so kids have to feel safe in their environment and know they can let adults know when they've strayed somewhere or been contacted by someone who is

making them feel uncomfortable, without the fear that they'll be cut off from accessing online activity.”

And that's the crunch. Children today use their online world for virtually every learning and social activity. The fear of being “cut off” is often far greater than the discomfort or confusion they might be experiencing through communications from potential predators.

There are horror stories of teenagers being lured into chatting with new “friends” who, over a period of weeks or even months, build up an online relationship of trust and kindness. Eventually, they will ask for more information – phone numbers, photographs, addresses – and then will suggest a meeting.

A child may think they're off to meet another teenager but could, in fact, encounter an adult.

Law enforcement agencies all over the world, including New South Wales Police, have set up a special arm to deal with cyberstalkers and online sexual predators.

Senior Constable Sascha Lipman from the NSW Police Force Media Unit says sexual predators are

being brought to justice through the special Child Exploitation and Sex Crimes squad (CESC).

“Parents will find some good information about how to monitor and detect problems online at our website www.police.nsw.gov.au which has links to the CESC squad and gives tips and links so you can better understand who is chatting to your kids.”

Mr McKie and Ms Benoit point out that there is a collaborative program in place with NSW Police and NSW Public Schools with modules on all types of issues, and one of these is cybercrime. The modules aim to raise students' awareness of the consequences of involvement in crime and anti-social behaviour.

“Police talk to individual principals and come up with a joint program of crime prevention workshops,” Ms Benoit says.

“Police will then go into the schools and talk to kids with the teacher – there is a specific module for cybercrime and anecdotal evidence says that it's been extremely successful and well received by the kids.”

Mr McKie says that it is important that parents take an active interest in their children's online activity – especially if they provide access at home.

“They have to have knowledge of the technology, the benefits and the risks involved,” he explains.

“Trust has to be the driving force behind this interest – the child needs to understand that parental monitoring of a situation is not ‘snooping’ but supervision.”

While it might take a bit of negotiation, Mr McKie insists that some monitoring should happen in the home. “If it's just left to go unchecked, then that's not good.”

Not all doom and gloom

Parents face the real challenge of keeping a clear head when it comes to monitoring their child's use of the Internet or mobile phones, as children will react badly if their access to this vital communication tool is heavily restricted. It is up to parents to be diligent and protective without letting their child feel it is their fault that precautions are necessary.



Get involved: If your child has a Bebo, Facebook or MySpace page. Ask to see it. Without being judgemental, make sure the photographs that are posted are not in any way suggestive and don't link your child to any geographic region that can be easily identified, like a school, your home or regular sporting venue. Make suggestions to change anything you find worrisome or inappropriate, but discuss the reasons why with your child and ensure they know it is not arbitrary censorship, rather it is for their safety and your peace of mind.

Mobile phones: Sexual predators who chat to children on the Internet frequently go on to make calls to the child, but monitoring calls is becoming increasingly difficult for parents. And with the new generation of phones, Internet and email access is possible.

- Choose a mobile for your child that does not have Internet access or speak to your carrier to block Internet access and any other features not required by your child.
- Check your child's phone bill for numbers other than known family or friends and ask if you

don't recognise frequently dialled numbers.

- Stress the importance of not responding to messages from strangers. If your child receives persistent messages or calls from a stranger, note the number and report to police. Save any messages or pictures on the handset to show police.
- Remind your child about never giving out their mobile phone number to strangers.

Watch out for:

- Your child receiving phone calls from people you don't know or is calling numbers you don't recognise. (Police investigations show that most predators want to talk to the child on the phone to set up a meeting.)
- Your child spending a large amount of time on the Internet. (The longer your child is online, particularly in 'chat' rooms, the more likely they will be approached inappropriately, or be exposed to objectionable material.)
- Pornography on your child's computer. (Pornography used by predators to convince victims

that sex between adults and children is acceptable.)

- Your child changing the screen or turning the computer off when you enter the room. (If your child is engaged in inappropriate conversation or is looking at pornography they will attempt to hide this from you.)
- Your child becoming withdrawn or displaying behavioural problems. (Child sex offenders are masters at exploiting the everyday issues that trouble children.)
- Your child receiving gifts or mail from people you don't know. (Sex offenders use many strategies to gain the trust of a child. They will send letters and use gifts as part of this process, and have even sent plane tickets in order for the child to travel across the country to meet them.)

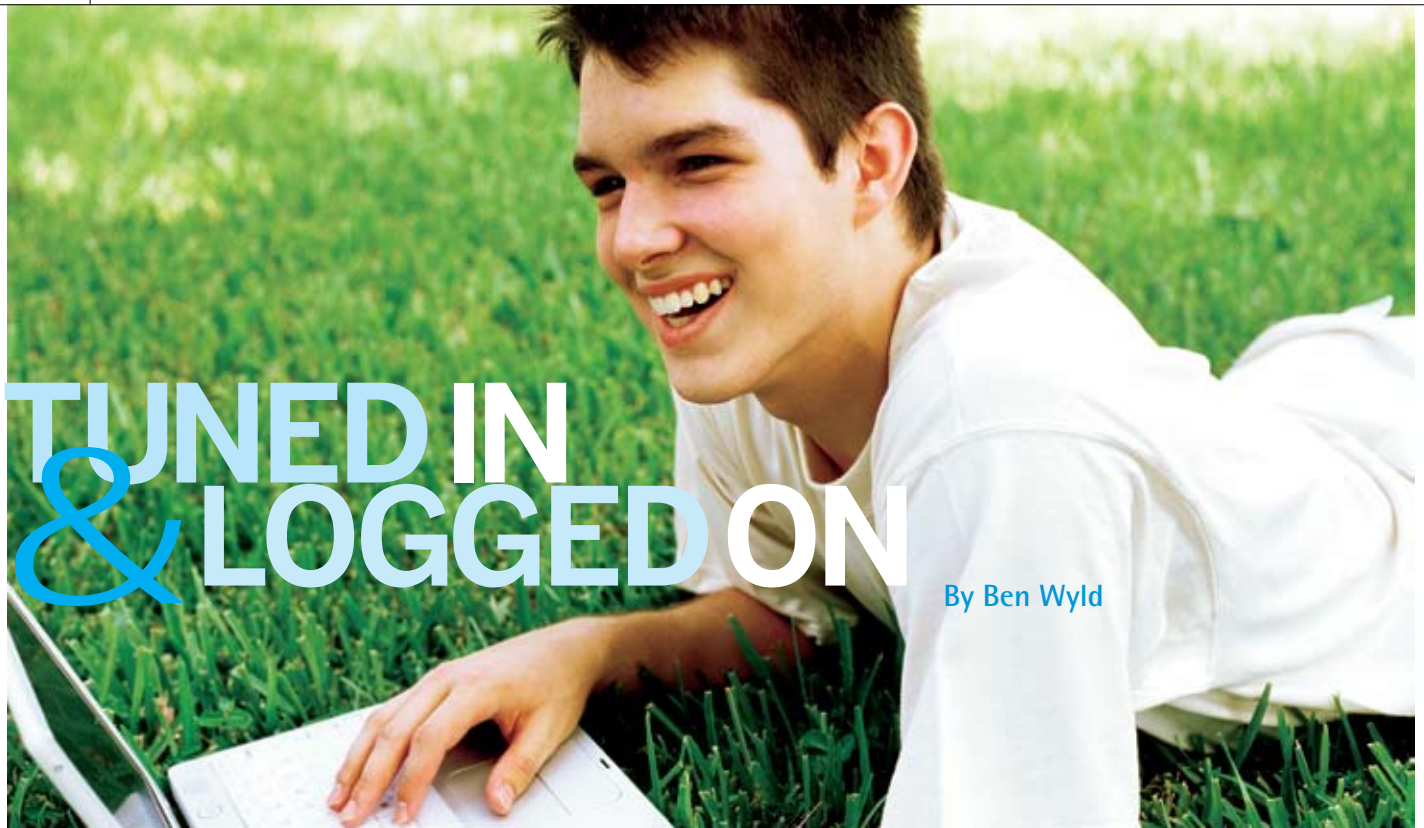
Try to save a copy of the chat log between your child and the suspected paedophile. You can do this by highlighting the text with your mouse, creating a copy, and pasting it into a document that can then be saved.

You can also install software that will record your child's conversations for chat software such as Yahoo and MSN. Note any particulars such as websites, email addresses, user nicknames and any telephone numbers.

Then go to your local police station to make a formal complaint against the suspected paedophile. If you do not have a copy of the chat log, try to provide police with as much detail as possible from the conversation, such as where the predator might live, the handle/name he used in the chat room, what chat room you were in, and their mobile phone number.

You could also report the activity of the person to the chat room provider or moderator. This may prevent the person from returning to that particular chat room and looking for their next victim.

You can also call Crime Stoppers 24-hour line 1800 333 000 or if you have information or a question for the Child Exploitation Internet Unit you can send an email to the unit: ceiu@police.nsw.gov.au ■



In the online age of emails, blogs, wikis, chat and SMS messages, just what do young people think of technology and importantly how are they using it?

Talking to a group of children ranging from primary school to Year 12 shows that while all have access to mobile phones and computers, they are protecting their identity and mostly behaving in a responsible way.

Students say they protect their identity when communicating online. Details such as phone numbers and addresses are not divulged, and most use avatars or images other than photos of themselves on their profile.

Ruby, 13, says: "It's just like stranger danger - you have to be careful what you say and who you talk to and keep your details to yourself."

The students also know they can authorise who gets access to their page or profile and who they communicate with.

Vignesh, 11, was once contacted by someone he didn't know while using an instant messaging service.

"I asked them who they were and they didn't reply - they just gave me random names I didn't know - so I deleted them [as a contact]," he said.

Josephine, 15, also once blocked someone she didn't know while Alice, 15, only adds people she has spoken to.

The students say the incidence of cyberbullying - and its effect - is blown out of proportion. Lisa, 13, was once bullied at school through email, but she simply printed the letter out, took it to her principal, and the situation was resolved.

"You can block them, you can control it," she says. "For me you have more control in cyberspace than you do in the real world".

However all the students say they have seen "inappropriate content".

Vignesh says: "I usually tell my parents that something inappropriate has come up or I just close the web page and ignore it."

Lance, 17, says: "You usually decide what's appropriate for yourself ... most of those bad sites give your computer viruses anyway so that's why you avoid them."

While a few parents trust their children's judgement, most directly monitor their children's use of the Internet and some check the history tab to see what websites their child visits. But children are sometimes ahead of their parents.

Josephine says: "I've found a way around it by deleting the history."

Soren, 12, uses software that allows him to access restricted websites without detection.

"That's how you can access other websites that are blocked," he says.

Teenagers also have ways of letting their online friends know a parent is in the room. Typing "pos" on an online messaging service or forum was a traditional way of alerting friends there was a "parent over shoulder" observing

the communication.

"But then a while ago some parents actually found what that meant so there was a change," Lisa says. "If you typed the number 7 it means your parents are watching so you start talking about homework."

William, 17, recently introduced his mum to instant messaging.

"I added my mother as a friend and she messaged me from the other room once so I asked her to get some snacks."

The Internet is also used for entertainment, with YouTube a clear favourite. Marehandro, 17, says: "When I want to kill some time I go onto YouTube and watch crappy videos and listen to music videos on there while I'm doing some study."

The site is also popular with Ruby who uses it for help with her French language studies.

"There are clips of movies and songs, there are French cartoons on there so I look at the characters." ■



Netiquette

There are rules for being polite online too! Here are the top 10 Internet Etiquette (Netiquette) rules for kids to survive the online world.

1 Never type all in capitals. THIS LOOKS LIKE YOU ARE SHOUTING! People will think you are being rude. Stick to normal sentence case when typing emails and messages to anyone.

2 Always speak to others the way you'd like to be spoken to. Don't speak rudely or swear to other people – how would you like it if someone spoke that way to you?

3 Use emoticons like :) or : - (to get your message across. Sometimes what you write on an email or message may be

misunderstood – using emoticons helps with understanding your message. They can also make messages look fun.

4 Be patient – if you are upset about something, wait 10 minutes before you write a message. You might need to calm down and rethink your wording. Remember, once you hit send it has gone into cyberspace forever!

5 Get to the point! Try to keep your emails and messages brief so that the person receiving your message is clear on what you mean to say.

6 Be careful with sending to "Reply All". Do you really want everyone to get this message or only the person who sent it to you?

7 If someone bullies you or writes something bad to you, tell your parents or your teacher.

8 Don't reply to messages from people or email addresses that you don't know. It could be spam or a virus which will crash your computer. Worse still it could be a stranger who might try to hurt you.

9 Don't forget to say "hi" and "bye" – it makes your email friendly.

10 Don't forward chain letters or spam – it only fills up your friends inboxes and might stop them from getting more important information, may carry viruses and can annoy some people.

Good emails

- Address the email to the person you are talking to. If someone else needs to know about it, but they aren't directly involved, put their address in the CC line.
- Always put a subject heading in the subject line. This will encourage people to read your email if it is something they are interested in.
- Think about how you will write your message and read it back to make sure it says what you want it to say.
- Sending an email is like sending a postcard. Along the way, people can look at your message. Don't say anything in an email that you wouldn't want anyone else to read.
- Keep your emails brief and to the point – it will make your email clearer and easier to read.
- Sign off – don't forget to end the email with your name and contact details in case the person you are emailing needs to ask you questions.
- Spell check! Check your spelling and grammar before sending your email – it's frustrating to receive emails that don't make sense.

Mum and Dad's GUIDE TO BUYING A COMPUTER



So here is the list of all you need to know before you step foot inside the store.

By Ms Mega Byte

1 Ask your friends and colleagues for recommendations on what you need and where to get it. Even the IT guy at work can be a great help.

2 Set your budget upfront. You should get a good family computer with a printer/scanner combo for under \$1300. But take note of the power of the microprocessor (also called a CPU) at its heart. A budget processor will save you a few hundred dollars, but you may have to upgrade your PC in a couple of years to run newer software. Things to look out for are:

a Clock speed (eg: 2.0GHz) - the higher the number, the faster the processor will do your bidding.

b Front-side bus speed (eg: 800MHz FSB) - once again, look for the highest number available.

c Level 2 cache (eg: 1MB L2) - this is a small storage area right next to the processor which temporarily holds information that is frequently used. The more L2 cache, the faster your computer will be.

3 Visit the store and ask them to show you the computers in your price range - and to explain the differences. If they can't explain the terminology to you in everyday language, it's not the store for you.

4 Look for a computer with at least 2GB RAM (electronic memory which improves the

Walking into a computer store can be like visiting a foreign country, but doing a bit of research will give you the upper hand.



computer's performance) and a 256GB hard drive (for storing your data).

5 If you have a teenage boy in the family (or a young-at-heart dad!) who likes to play graphic-intensive games, consider a computer with a separate graphics processing card.

6 Go for a deal that includes a basic colour printer, or pay a little extra for a better printer which comes with an integrated scanner/copier.

7 Make sure you check what software comes with the computer. Most standard packages come with the very basic Microsoft Works package, but you'll need to upgrade to

Microsoft Office if you want the same suite as commonly used at work and school. This may cost an extra \$100-\$200.

8 Make sure the computer comes with a network card to access your broadband connection.

9 If you will need to send faxes directly from your PC, or if you want dial-up Internet access should your broadband service go down, make sure you get a fax modem included. It shouldn't cost more than \$20.

10 Consider disposing of your old PC properly, should you have one. Visit your local council website or www.ewaste.com.au

Jargon Buster

Processor or CPU the 'brain' of the computer.

Hard Drive the storage space inside the computer – where the programs and files/photos/music will be stored.

RAM built-in high-speed computer memory for running the programs and files you have open.



CONNECTING TO THE INTERNET

The days of dial-up Internet connections – where you'd use your home phone to connect to your ISP at slow speeds – are pretty much behind us.

Websites are now more complex and we want to view them faster and download larger files. The answer is high-speed Internet access – also known as broadband.

A broadband Internet connection has the added advantage of not tying up the phone line and it's always on, which means you're not making a phone call every time you want to access the Internet access.

There are four types of broadband:

- **ADSL** – uses your existing telephone line, but you can still use the phone to make and receive calls while connected to the Internet at high speed.

- **Wireless** – a little like the mobile phone network, a wireless modem connects to your computer and communicates with the closest transmitter.

- **Cable** – the fastest and most expensive form of broadband. It comes to your home through a separate wire, or can share your cable TV connection if you have one.

- **Satellite** – used in rural areas when no other connection is available. The Internet connection is made via a satellite dish connected to the home. Satellite connections can sometimes be high-speed in only one direction.

When it comes to price and speed, ADSL is the most popular for homes. However, the faster the connection the more you will pay.

Always check the plans details to determine that the "downstream" speed is faster than the "upstream" speed (eg: 256/64Kbps). This means your Internet connection will be faster

when you are pulling information down from the Internet, rather than the other way around. The most common upstream activity you'll be doing is sending email and you won't notice the speed difference.

The term "download" doesn't just refer to the music, programs, photos and other files that you download from the Internet. Every time you view a website, your computer has to download it to your PC. Every line of text, image, and advertisement that makes up that page is downloaded and is counted towards your limit. This is in addition to the files and programs you download.

A plan with a low download limit will be the cheapest, but you'll pay a price for every extra MB

downloaded after that (often around \$0.15/MB). Always use your ISP's usage meter to keep track of your limits. Opt for a provider that will let you change plans once you find out what your needs are. Some plans will only decrease your download speed after you've reached your usage limit, instead of landing you with extra charges.

You can get great discounts on plans if you're switching from another ISP or if you choose to have your home phone provided by the same supplier, so shop around.

For more information visit www.broadbandnow.gov.au.

Visit Ms Megabyte's free resources including a helpdesk and handy FingerTips newsletter at www.getmega.com ■



ISP – Internet Service Provider

ADSL – Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line

Kbps – kilobits per second

Net Nasties

Make sure your kids are safe with a free Internet content filter from www.netalert.gov.au



Photo courtesy of APPLE AUSTRALIA

FAST FORWARD

At an old high school in western Sydney the modern concept of emailing work to teachers is regarded by students as “so last century”.

By Kim Cotton.

Over the past 125 years the timber hallways and airy classrooms of Arthur Phillip High School in Parramatta had witnessed gradual changes.

But now using wireless technology or plugging a mobile phone into a teacher’s laptop is the preferred method of filing an assignment. School principal Lynne Goodwin says the venerable old school has been “wirelessed to within an inch of its life” to keep up with the blinding pace of technological advancement.

“The revolution started when we were able to make the whole campus wireless,” she explains on a school website “vodcast” (video webcast).

“It means every classroom is internet-ready. It means any time you need to work on something you just get a laptop and you do it in the class.”

At any time of the school day students are contributing to their online learning blog. They are producing electronic magazines on their favourite destinations for geography class, and creating vodcasts for the school’s Year 7 transition program.

At the beginning of the year, all Year 7 students attend “Boot Camp” – a four-day technology orientation program run by teachers and student leaders in Years 8 to 10.

Subjects include how to navigate the network and how to use the suite of multimedia programs such as iMovie, GarageBand for audio recording and iWeb to create web pages and blogs.

Students acquire information technology skills in four days rather than over a term. They’re then free to work on their laptops wirelessly at the school. The main motivation for the school’s technology focus is to engage the students in learning, Ms Goodwin says. “If you talk to the kids and look at where they’re at, technology is part of their life,” she says.

“The way we teach technology is to really equip them to have sound learning practices that underpin what we do.”

“The world is moving so quickly now and it’s a challenge to keep up with it. What we’re trying to do is have that interactivity in a safe environment – I wonder what will be next?”

Arthur Phillip High School:
www.aphs.nsw.edu.au ■



TV HITS RURAL NSW

Drummond Memorial Public School students are embarking on an ambitious project of Hollywood proportions.

By Kim Cotton

It's not often that students get to produce their own television programs. But along with students from three neighbouring primary schools at Rocky River, Niangala and Yarrawitch, the students of Drummond Memorial Public School are compiling a series of television-style digital programs that will air on the internet via a webcast in collaboration with the Department of Education and Training's technology hothouse - the Centre for Learning Innovation.

Drummond Memorial Public School principal Phill Roberts explains, "What we're aiming for is a series of short video programs

that replicate the way a TV station programs - news, local interest articles, documentaries, and a range of genres."

Not only is he seeing his students embark on an exciting technology based project, but his Year 5 and 6 students are also gaining better results in their state-wide tests.

"Their writing skills have lifted ... what we're finding is that so many kids want to write and want to construct texts whereas traditional pen and paper [methods] weren't working," he says.



Microsoft Australia's academic programs manager Felicia Brown says the union is a flexible one.

"Microsoft provides the resources, in this case \$150,000 and access to two dedicated technology consultants from education project management company dk2," Ms Brown says. "The schools then go about converting their technological wish lists into real outcomes for the students and teachers."

The projects are facilitated using software that allows the students to produce social media such as wikis, podcasts, blogs, as well as cool music scores, using the same interface irrespective of time, space and the computer platform each school may be using.

"The teachers just love it because they find the kids love the engagement, the activities, and the collaboration."

The work has almost been three years in the making, initiated by Drummond Memorial Public's former principal, Graeme Ross. The four schools are part of the Microsoft Partners in Learning (PiL) project.

In all, 28 NSW primary, central and secondary public schools across NSW are taking part in the three-year connected learning project. PiL is a \$US253 million initiative set up to bridge the digital divide between and within countries

by improving basic access to technology and training. It has been operating in the Department of Education since 2006.

Mr Robert says the project has opened up the world of learning for the teachers and the students who "can't wait to be part of it and communicate with other kids electronically".

Part of the project involved the students telling the geographic and social stories of their local areas based on the theme 'Journeys'. The students produced video clips and other "artefacts" documenting the journeys of local rivers. The video clips also include information on the geography of

the rivers' journeys and the stories of people who live along the river.

Mr Robert says the Microsoft project has bought together four "quite disparate and quite isolated" schools.

"There is a real [sense] of teamwork to the development and building of the project – building the vision to make sure it happens for the kids."

Anne Stevens, the Office of School's manager for planning coordination, says the project is realising the notion of virtual classrooms.

"Teachers are developing skills in organising and managing their

own teaching resources and approaches to teaching in ways that just weren't possible when I started teaching in the late 70s," she says.

"In those days you had a couple of manila folders full of fordigraph stencils that faded over time. Now the tools allow teachers to develop digital materials and learning objects, store them in ways that make them readily accessible and reusable with other people," she says. ■



WHAT'S HOT IN

Schools

Public schools are using the latest in technology to motivate students to learn and providing new opportunities for children in remote locations.

You probably remember your teachers writing on a blackboard with chalk, but these days they are more likely to be using a state-of-the-art interactive whiteboard capable of showing almost anything.

These large, touch-sensitive display panels can be connected to a computer and data projector, allowing a computer image to be projected onto the board. The image can be controlled by touching the whiteboard with fingers or a stylus, or by using a computer mouse or keyboard.

Teachers can show their lesson plans or use the Internet to download web pages onto the whiteboards and print off images.

The NSW State Government announced during the 2007 election that it would spend \$66 million by 2011 to provide every NSW public school with an interactive whiteboard to add to the existing stock in schools.

The Dubbo school education director, Ann-Marie Furney, said the technology was "shrinking the world" for teachers and students in remote areas.

"I've been in classrooms where children in outback NSW are looking at fractal ice in Antarctica through a live webcam on Google Earth,"

Groups of students can be linked together by videoconferencing lessons through the whiteboards. This has significantly expanded the subject choice available in more remote public schools – if one school has only two students studying Ancient History for the Higher School Certificate, they can join up with other schools to make up a viable class.



Connected classrooms

Imagine sitting in a classroom and being instructed in a particular subject by a teacher in another classroom – or even another school. This is the vision that the Connected Classes program is delivering.

While this is particularly handy for rural schools, even in suburban Sydney, Connected Classes is giving more options to students. It delivers real-time lessons to students from two or more schools using videoconferencing through interactive whiteboards.

Students at all schools can see and interact with the same learning materials and share brainstorming, discussions and active learning with their peers and teacher. Students have also been linked by the technology with museums, NASA astronauts and university academics.

It's never too early to learn

Since 2000 IBM has donated more than 500 computers and training to preschool teachers in disadvantaged communities across Australia. The IBM KidSmart program was developed to educate young children in the etiquette and evolution of technology. Almost 100 public preschools in NSW have participated in the KidSmart program and more will come onboard in 2008.

Teachers are trained on strategies to stimulate children's interests in computerised learning using play and technology.

The principal of John Brotchie Nursery School in Botany, Rebecca

Andrews, says the preschool-aged children quickly become confident computer users.

"The computer is just part of our classroom," she says. "It's just there, set up like the play dough table and the art easel."

Software that's special

Whether it's making music, working on speech difficulties or just making a good old-fashioned ruckus, students with special needs can do it all with "banana keyboards" loaded with specialised software. The keyboard has an ergonomic shape, which can be fitted to a wheelchair or modified so that children with limited use of their limbs can use switches.

The software ranges from standard keyboard sounds to drumbeats, music tracks, sound effects and voice recording and can be used for creativity or to help students undergoing speech therapy.

The kits are provided by the Soundhouse Music Alliance, a not-for-profit organisation that focuses on music and multimedia technology, and are being used by some public schools seeking to provide new opportunities for students with intellectual and physical disabilities. ■

IS YOUR CHILD LOOKING FOR INSPIRATION WHEN IT COMES TO SCIENCE OR ENGLISH?

Your child can now get inspired online! The Department of Education and Training has provided free online videos that discuss both science and writing.

This fantastic resource will enable your child to learn more about these topics from some of Australia's brightest minds.

Science talk has lots of interviews with some of Australia's most gifted scientists, including marine ecologist Melanie Bishop, chemist Adam Cawley and oceanographer Martina Doblin. Your child can listen to some of Australia's brightest minds discuss their passion and learn more about the many types of

science your child might like to become involved in.

On the other hand, Writers Talk is a mini website that interviews some of Australia's best writers about what makes them tick and advice to aspiring writers on how to get started. Fantastic writers that you can hear from include Peter Fitzsimons, Andy Griffiths, Anita Heiss, Ross Gittens and JC Burke to name a few. Encourage your child to have a look through the site today for some fascinating insight into the world of writing.

www.tale.edu.au

AUSSIE *history* AND DRAMA ONE-STOP SHOP

You can now view Australia's audiovisual history online through Australian Screen.

This free resource includes more than 1,500 moving image clips from Australian feature films, television drama, documentaries, animations,

home movies, news reels and other historical footage. An excellent source of information for history, drama and English students.

See video footage online at australianscreen.com.au

GEOGRAPHY CHALLENGES STUDENTS ONLINE

Wetland management comes to life for Year 9 and 10 geography students with the Geography Challenge. The online program combines environmental education, field studies and interactive mapping technology at Sydney Olympic Park.

Students are encouraged to use their problem solving

skills on environmental issues at the Narawang Wetland including water management, human interaction and pests.

This terrific resource is available to all students and covers curriculum areas for Year 9 and 10 geography– it just needs to be organised as a class excursion.

For more information go to www.geographychallenge.com.au

3...2....1... LIFT OFF!

Virtual excursions are now happening in NSW public schools – your child gets to see parts of the world on excursion, without actually leaving their school. This fantastic technology enables many exciting sites to come to the classroom.

One particular school excursion reached astronomical heights. Students from NSW public schools participated in a virtual international excursion to the NASA Space Centre and talked

to Australian astronaut, Andy Thomas.

Students from isolated properties have benefited from this technology as they can have "virtual" excursions to the maritime museum, the state library, the Anglo-Australian observatory and the National Museum to name a few.

With this type of technology, NSW public school students can go anywhere, regardless of their location.

LAPTOPS CHART PECKING ORDER

Year 6 students at Seaham Public School are living the education dream of the 21st century.

By Linda Doherty



Already proficient at emailing, blogging and text messaging, the Year 6 students at Seaham Public School are now using laptop computers in the classroom to write stories, create artworks and learn how to touch type.

School principal Stephen Palmer says Seaham Public School introduced laptops for all 28 Year 6 students to enhance their education and engage them in school by using technology they are familiar with.

"The students are still doing the Year 6 curriculum but the laptop is now the tool to get the work done rather than exercise books," Mr Palmer says. "The kids are just blossoming."

Bill Unicomb, the Year 6 teacher and assistant principal implementing the switch to laptops, says he is already seeing students producing higher quality written work.

"They always want to work, they are writing longer stories and experiment more with language," Mr Unicomb says.

These same students are also involved in traditional rural pursuits online like raising newborn chickens under heat lamps in their classroom and growing native trees from seed.

The laptops have come in handy to chart the growth rate of the chickens and create spreadsheets to work out the tree income and expenditure budget. The school – located near Maitland – is working with the National Parks and Wildlife Service to re-vegetate local wetlands. Last year students, teachers and parents planted 400 trees; this year the goal is to plant 1000 trees.

The saplings are also sold to farmers, Landcare groups and the local council. Year 6 uses these funds to sponsor a child in Nepal

as part of their global connections unit of study.

A self-confessed technology buff, Mr Unicomb says the students are at times discovering new uses for the laptops before even he does.

"It's a learning curve for me as well," he says. "It's two-way learning by experimentation. Everyone gets the chance to share the knowledge." ■



ONLINE RESOURCES

SURFING THE WEB

A sample of useful websites for homework help and research that can be found on the Department of Education and Training's Teaching and Learning exchange www.TALE.edu.au

A selected history of Australia

From the ABC Archives and Library Services, this site offers information on significant events in Australian history since the opening of the ABC in 1932. Material from the ABC archive presented in a timeline form with video and audio links, this is useful... www.abc.net.au/archives/timeline/history.htm

. A+ math (Aplus math)

This website offers students flashcards, games and worksheets on basic mathematical functions, fractions, currency calculations, and geometric shapes. www.aplusmath.com

ABC education resources: learn online

Entertaining educational material from the Australian Broadcasting Corporation suitable for all age groups from pre-school to tertiary. Resources are categorized by subject and by age group. There are also many professional development resources for... www.abc.net.au/learn

ABC science online

The ABC science unit is a gateway to science links with interactive games, forums and frequently

asked questions. It has a wealth of student material. www.abc.net.au/science

Abcteach

A user-friendly educational site that provides printable materials and worksheets for immediate use by teachers and parents. www.abcteach.com

Abiator's interactive English activities

A number of language skills-based activities. Scrambled sentences, word play, cloze exercises. www.berghuis.co.nz/abiator/lang/interlangindex.html

Aboriginal Australia map

This map of Aboriginal Australia from AIATSIS shows the tribal language groups and regions. It is possible to zoom in and look more closely at selected areas. www.aiatsis.gov.au/aboriginal_studies_press/aboriginal_wall_map/map_page

Aboriginal studies

This HSC Online site for students and teachers of the Stage 6 Aboriginal Studies course includes revision questions, information on syllabus outcomes, activities and resources. Topics covered include: social justice and human rights issues. www.hsc.csu.edu.au/ab_studies

About: education. Geography

Presenting information on a wide range of topics, this large site has much to interest the persistent geographer. Teachers will find it

a very interesting resource, while students may need some direction in their site research. The Search option clearly... geography.about.com

Abroad languages: in-country language schools

This site offers courses to learn English as a second language, Spanish, French, German, Italian, Russian, Japanese, Chinese, Arabic or Portuguese. It also has links to many language resources, including games, translation services, penpals, and photo... www.abroadlanguages.com

Absolute Shakespeare

A study resource for Shakespeare's plays, sonnets and other poems. Includes plot summaries, essays, character analyses, quotes, biography, and information about the Globe Theatre. absoluteshakespeare.com/index.htm

ActNow

ActNow makes complex social issues simple, provides practical advice and opportunities to take action. It gives young people a space to share their own story and the actions they are undertaking. www.actnow.com.au

Alive maths

A series of related activities that require spatial and numerical strategies. Activities are pedagogically well-designed and appealing to students. tapor1.mcmaster.ca/~sgs/cgi-bin/Maths/maths.cgi

Ancient history

This HSC Online site for students

and teachers of the Stage 6 Ancient history course includes revision questions, information on syllabus outcomes, activities and resources. Topics covered include: Ancient societies; personalities in their times; and... www.hsc.csu.edu.au/ancient_history

Ask for Kids

Ask for Kids (formerly known as Ask Jeeves for Kids) is a fast, easy and kid-friendly way for kids to search online. Designed to be a fun destination site focused on learning and "edu-tainment," Ask for Kids uses natural-language technology that allows... www.askforkids.com/?o=0&qtsrc=121

Ask now: for school students

A part of the Ask Now site that offers a collection of links especially chosen to help students with their homework and assignments. www.asknow.gov.au/schoolstudents.html

Behind the news

A fun weekly current affairs programme on ABC TV for upper primary and secondary students. www.abc.net.au/tv/btn

Children's Book Council of Australia

This web site is produced by the Children's Book Council of Australia. The Council aims to foster children's enjoyment of books. The site provides information on authors and illustrators and the Children's Book of the Year Awards. There are plenty of ideas... www.cbc.org.au

Dr. Karl

This website celebrates all sides of science; from sublime moments of deep thought to the most arcane and bizarre research imaginable.

Dr. Karl Kruszelnicki communicates fascinating applications of science in a colourful site within the ABC. www.abc.net.au/science/k2

Drawing now

Learn how to draw with step by step drawing tutorials. Includes Manga art, cartoons and 3D drawing. www.drawingnow.com/index.html

History of the Australian nation

A journey through the history of Australia based around materials held in the collections of the State Library of NSW. View online many rare artefacts dating from 1788 to 1901 and read Governor Macquarie's journal. Follow the early explorers and view... www.atmitchell.com/journeys/history

History world

An encyclopaedia of world history based on a database covering 400 interconnecting narratives and 6000 selected events. This site also includes interactive tours, timelines and quizzes. www.historyworld.net/default.asp

iLoveLanguages: your guide to languages on the web

iLoveLanguages is a comprehensive catalog of language-related internet resources. Whether you're looking for online language lessons, translating dictionaries, native literature, translation services, software, language schools, or

just a little information... www.ilovelanguages.com

Maths games for young kids

This website from Kaboose contains printable and interactive online maths activities for young students aged between 3 - 6 years. resources.kaboose.com/games/math1.html?trnstl=1

NSW Premier's Reading Challenge

The Premier's Reading Challenge is important in helping develop a love of books and at the same time improving literacy. A cross-sectoral strategy managed by the NSW Dept. of Education and Training. The challenge for 2006 is for students from K to year 9. www.schools.nsw.edu.au/premierreadingchallenge/index.htm

Sample Opportunity Class Placement Tests

This page assists applicants for Year 5 entry to opportunity classes to become more familiar with the Opportunity Class Placement Test and provides test samples. www.schools.nsw.edu.au/learning/k-6assessments/oc_sampletest.php

Sample Selective High Schools tests

This page assists applicants for Year 7 entry to selective high schools to become more familiar with the Selective High Schools Test and provides test samples. www.schools.nsw.edu.au/learning/k-6assessments/ss_sampletest.php

Science news for kids

This web site offers science news for children aged 9 to 14. News items of interest to kids are accompanied by suggestions for hands-on activities, books, articles, web resources, and other useful materials. www.sciencenewsforkids.org

SpeechTips.com

Your free guide to speech writing and public speaking for eulogies, graduations, best man, father of the bride and any other public speaking engagement. www.speechtips.com/index.html
Speedmath deluxe

This game can be played individually or students can challenge their classmates to create equations using four digits, remembering order of operations. education.jlab.org/smdeluxe/index.html

Spelling it right: learn to spell confidently

Spelling it Right comprises seventy pages of advice and free worksheets on spelling and is used by many parents, students and teachers throughout the world. www.spelling.hemscott.net

Teenreads.com

Teenreads.com offers teenage readers information and features about their favourite authors, books, series and characters. Includes book reviews, features, author profiles and interviews, excerpts of new releases, literary games and contests. www.teenreads.com

The yuckiest site on the internet

Science education in an entertaining format from Discovery Communications Inc. yucky.kids.discovery.com

W3Schools online web tutorials

A step-by-step guide to Web building using a variety of essential tools including HTML, XML and JavaScript. There is a comprehensive reference list and numerous examples, quizzes. www.w3schools.com

Note: Websites are selected for inclusion in Homework help where they met these criteria:

- have specific relevance to NSW school curriculum
- cater for independent learning
- are published by NSW Government, Australian Government or other authoritative sources
- have been evaluated and/or recommended by NSW DET and TAFE staff
- are available for use without charge and free of other commercial impositions
- use readily available technology formats.

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