

myprivacy.  
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## Attention parents!

The focus of this web site is to help your kids understand how technology affects their privacy, and what they can do to build secure online profiles while keeping their information safe. This page is to help you understand how many kids behave online – and will illustrate how important it is for them use this site as a reference point.

### Understanding social networking sites

Social networking sites, like Facebook or MySpace, are online communities of people who share interests and activities and who want to explore the interests and activities of others. The big draw is that you can share information and photos with many people, very quickly. Most sites require you to set up a profile, which is like an online bulletin board where you post messages and photos about yourself, as well as information such as your likes and dislikes, your birthday and whatever else you want to say about yourself. You can meet someone new in a class, go home and instantly look at that person's profile and send them a message. Once you are linked to a person you can then be linked to all of their friends – and you can't always control what information others are posting about you or who is looking at your information.

### Studies show that many kids ignore the safety rules on social networks

All social networking sites have privacy settings, which control the amount of information people can see. Some are automatically set on the strictest setting, while others are "open", leaving all the information open for anyone to see if the person doesn't adjust the setting. Studies have shown that millions of kids who use social networking sites expose themselves to unnecessary risk by leaving their personal details, such as phone numbers, e-mail addresses and photos, open for anyone to see. Research has also shown that many young kids by-pass age restrictions to publish profile pages on social networking sites like Facebook and MySpace.

### Kids think that what they post on the net is private

For kids today, the Internet is one of the most powerful ways of connecting with and making new friends. And while adults know that the Internet is the least private of spaces, many kids think that the messages they send online are private and that no one else will see them. Most kids don't realize that information and photos they post today can turn up years into the future. What kids should do is only post photos and messages that they would be comfortable showing their parents and teachers. Instead, they post whatever they want, thinking that their online space is private and that only their friends will see the content.

### Use this web site as a resource

This web site is for your kids, but you will find it valuable too. There are explanations about how people can capture information about your kids that's online and use it for their own purposes. There are also lots of details about how your kids can protect their information so it can't be used without them knowing about it. There is a blog that we will add to at least every week – the purpose of the blog is to generate conversation among young Canadians about how technology affects their privacy, and to help young Canadians learn how to build a secure online identities that involve thinking ahead before posting any information on the web. Our goal is to capture the attention of your kids and then to keep them interested so they'll be motivated to start protecting their privacy when they are online and out in the real world.



Office of the  
Privacy Commissioner  
of Canada

[www.youthprivacy.ca](http://www.youthprivacy.ca)