

# Parry Aftab's Guide to Keeping Your Kids Safe Online

## Facebook, Cyberbullying and Sexting, Oh! My!

What parents need to know the most

- Talk to your kids – ask questions (and then confirm to make sure they are telling you the truth!)
- Ask to see their profile page (for the first time)...tomorrow! (It gives them a chance to remove everything that isn't appropriate or safe...and it becomes a way to teach them what not to post instead of being a gotcha moment! Think of it as the loud announcement before walking downstairs to a teen party you're hosting.)
- Don't panic...there are ways of keeping your kids safe online. It's easier than you think!
- Be involved and work with others in your community. (Think about joining [WiredSafety.org](http://WiredSafety.org) or [WiredMoms.com](http://WiredMoms.com) and help create a local cyber-neighborhood watch program in your community.)
- Remember what you did that your parents would have killed you had they known, when you were fifteen.
- This too will pass! Most kids really do use social networks just to communicate with their friends. Take a breath, gather your thoughts and get help when you need it. (You can reach out to [WiredSafety.org](http://WiredSafety.org).)
- It's not an invasion of their privacy if strangers can see it. There is a difference between reading their paper diary that is tucked away in their sock drawer...and reading their Facebook. One is between them and the paper it's written on; the other between them and 250 million people on Facebook!
- Don't believe everything you read online – especially if your teen posts it on her MySpace!
- Even the good kids are sexting – if they are sexually active, they are expected to share a sexy image and their password.
- Passwords are the root of all cybervil – the mantra should be never share it and “easy to remember, hard to guess!”
- When something upsets you or your children online, Take 5! (Drop the mouse, walk away from the computer and no one will get hurt!)
- Teach your children to Stop! Block! And Tell! if they are the target of a cyberbully. (Stop – don't answer back. Block the person or message. And tell a trusted adult!)
- Don't overreact when your child comes to you for help. If you do, they will never come to you again! (Only 5% tell their parents when they are cyberbullied.)
- And, finally....repeat after me – “I'm still the parent!” If they don't listen or follow your rules, unplug the computer...the walk to the library will do them good. ☺