

2001

# How Can I Encourage My Child To Use The Internet Properly?

Glen Jenson

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## Recommended Citation

Jenson, Glen, "How Can I Encourage My Child To Use The Internet Properly?" (2001). *All Archived Publications*. Paper 249. [http://digitalcommons.usu.edu/extension\\_histall/249](http://digitalcommons.usu.edu/extension_histall/249)

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**A weekly question/answer column**

**How Can I Encourage My Child To Use  
The Internet Responsibly?**

*Glen O. Jenson\* answers:*

The Internet allows us access to global information on nearly any topic through the stroke of a computer key. At least half of youth ages 9-13 have been online, and that number is rising. According to a recent edition of "Sports Illustrated for Kids," youth used the Internet most to be involved in chat rooms. Other uses include playing games followed by seeking information, either for fun or school work.

- Online chat rooms allow people to discuss any topic they'd like with anyone who has access to the Internet. This can be a useful way to exchange information and a fun way to meet new people. However, it can also be used to discuss topics parents may not want their children to hear about. In addition, many games focus on violence and sex. Because of this, parents need to be aware of what their children are doing on the Internet. There are tools available to block access to certain topics as well as recall programs that show what has been accessed in the past. However, the best tool is parental involvement and awareness. Consider these tips.
- Become knowledgeable about Internet use and abuse. Teach children about the helpful and useful things on the Internet and monitor frequently to help prevent abuse.
- Hold family discussions to establish responsible guidelines for Internet use. Also discuss how the children can respond if they are at someone else's house where the rules are different. Set guidelines on time spent on the Internet, similar to those set for watching television. Youth who spend inordinate amounts of time on it should be monitored closely.
- Keep the computer in a central place in the home where it is easy to intervene if something objectionable is accessed.
- Encourage family members to share information they have found on the Internet.
- Be an example of responsible Internet use. Generally speaking, what is not good for children and youth is not good for adults either.

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\* Glen O. Jenson is Utah State University Extension Family and Human Development Specialist