

Safe Talking in Cyberspace

At age-appropriate levels, **CyberSmart!**® lessons teach children to safely manage their online experiences.

One of Michael's favorite activities is visiting a Web site where he plays games. He also visits a chat room to swap game tips and learn new gaming strategies.

One day he chats with someone called "Gamester13." They trade game tips, and after a while the conversation turns to other subjects. It turns out they both like science fiction books. They also saw and liked the same movie recently.

After about 30 minutes of chat, "Gamester13" asks, "Do you like to play sports?"

Michael answers, "Yes."

Gamester13 asks, "Which sport do you like best?"

"Soccer," Michael replies. Gamester13 then asks, "What's the name of your team?"

Before Michael can answer, Gamester13 says, "Gotta go. My boss is coming."

Michael is surprised and upset. Worried, he stays away from cyberspace for a few days.

Michael believed he was talking to a boy his own age.

Michael's team is called the Tenafly Tigers. Tenafly is the name of the town he lives in.

Test Yourself

1. What made Michael believe that he was talking to someone his own age?
2. Why should Michael not give out the name of his soccer team?
3. What should Michael do when he feels uncomfortable in cyberspace? What would you do?

Michael was very upset when he realized that "Gamester13" was not a 13-year-old but a grown-up with a job. People in cyberspace aren't always who you think they are. Maybe "Gamester13" was pretending to be a kid. Maybe he was up to no good. Then, again, maybe he just likes to play online games for fun. The point is, with strangers in cyberspace, you can't be sure.



Chat Room Safety Checklist

- My parents say it's okay for me to chat in cyberspace.
- I will only go into chat rooms for kids that have monitors.
- I will never reply to, or click on a link in an IM from someone who is not a face-to-face friend.
- My screen name does not tell my name, age, or whether I am a boy or girl.
- I know what kinds of information are private.
- I will not give out private information when chatting.
- I will not answer questions that make me uncomfortable.
- I will tell a trusted adult if someone bothers me in cyberspace.
- I will never meet someone face to face that I met in a chat room.

Get Ready to Chat Safely

- Can you really know if a cyberpal is male or female? Can you know for sure how old he or she is? The answer is **NO**—you can't know for sure. That's the difference between a cyberpal and a friend you know face to face. So, treat cyberpals like strangers. Never give them private information about yourself without first asking permission of your parent or guardian.



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