Sm@rt e-Team

Secondary School Students

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It is fun to use the Internet nowadays. We can connect with our family and friends through different ways online including instant messaging and social networking sites. We can also get different kinds of information you want or play games for fun. In the digital world, we can share opinions, express ideas and update our status.

If we use Internet inappropriately, there will be many potential risks that may cause harm to us. Therefore, we need to raise alertness and be a good "digizen". We have to adopt a positive and responsible attitude to communicate others online.

The following are suggestions for us to use Internet and electronic screen products safely and healthily. These include the "General Principles (DARES)", "Frequently Asked Questions" as well as "10 Health Tips".

Let's join the Smart e-Team and make declaration on "DARES":

1. Development

We should develop a variety of interests and hobbies and have a balanced life, including physical activities. We can also participate in different kinds of group activities in real life, learn how to manage time and develop positive manner in using Internet and electronic screen products.

2. Awareness

Internet, electronic screen products and the related technology bring a lot of fascinating experiences to our daily lives. However, we should be aware of the potential risks and traps in the use of Internet. We should learn how to minimize the risks and to protect ourselves from the harmful effects arising from the misuse of the Internet.

3. Respect

The reason for parents to set rules and make agreement with us on using Internet and computers is not to restrain us but to provide us with guidelines for better use of computers. Therefore, we should respect our parents and teachers. We should also respect other users, show good manners and avoid attacking others.

4. Effective Communication

It is a good practice to share our experience in the digital world with our parents, as with your peers and friends. We can let our parents know how and why we enjoy using the Internet and electronic screen products. Through open communication, we can share our feelings, joys and concerns with our parents.

5. Seeking Help

We can seek help from parents, teachers or a trusted adult if we come across problems which we may not be able to handle by ourselves when using Internet and electronic screen products. We should immediately seek advice from adults when we encounter matters that are of our concerns such as issues related to exposure to obscene and indecent material, cyber-bullying or excessive use of Internet.

Smart Talk

Whenever I am online, my mum always complains that I have spent too much time on the Internet. What can I do?

Answer

1. Prove to your parents that you have self-control and discipline. Besides going online, your daily activities including study, entertainment and rest are well-managed.

2. Tell your parents how and why you enjoy using the Internet, and share your feelings with them through open communication. Discuss with your parents about when and how long you can stay online, and what activities you can do online beforehand. It is very important that you and your parents have an agreement based on mutual trust and understanding.

3. Set a time out by switching off computer or putting aside the smartphone.

4. It is important for you to live a balanced life and develop different interests such as sports or music.

5. Arrange time offline for socializing with your friends and family, spend some time for physical activities every day and play computer games or surf the Internet after you have finished your homework.

6. Take note if you have too much time on computer and smartphone which affects your study, daily life or becomes irritable when offline. If it happens, you need to take it serious and find out the underlying cause e.g. feeling bored, encountering learning difficulties or interpersonal relationship problem. Seek help from parents, teachers or social workers when necessary.

Question 2

I enjoy playing online video games with my friends. My parents always try to stop me from playing and it is often difficult for me to stop in the middle of a game. It really upsets me when they try to disturb me. What should I do?
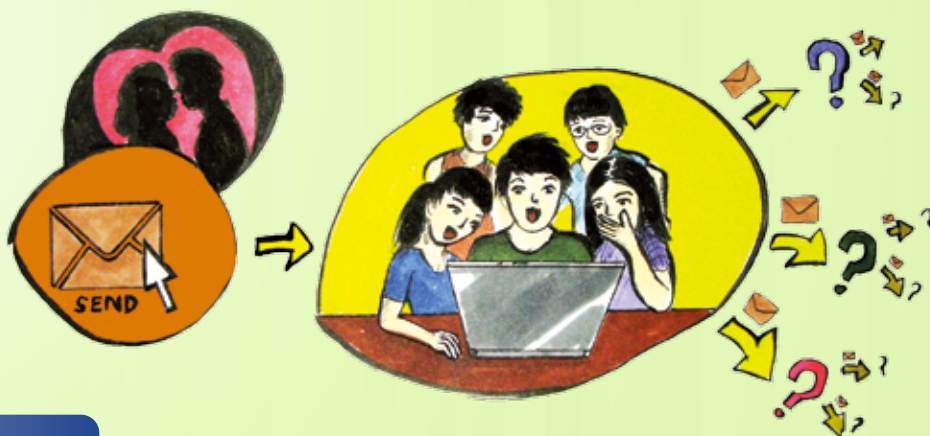

Answer

1. Communicate with your parents and invite them to play the games so as to give them a better understanding of your Internet use. Listen and try to understand their concerns and worries.

2. Setting time limits for gaming or using time limiting tools may help to avoid excessive use of Internet. Show your self-control to lessen your parents' worries.

3. It is helpful to talk to yourself: "I should stop playing in 10 minutes. I have many other things to do offline." Be assertive and tell your friends: "I have to do homework now. Let's play together next time." or "It is time for me to sleep now. I have to switch the screen off. "

4. Actively participate in different activities for fun. There are different forms of entertainment other than online video games, such as ball games, building models, reading comics and different sorts of outdoor activities.

5. It is fun to develop new interests and hobbies. Join your friends to participate in healthy group activities.

Question 3

I like chatting with my friends using instant messaging and social networking sites. Recently I find that some of my "private" messages are shared by others and widely spread online. How can I stay safe while I am chatting online?

Answer

1. Bear in mind that all electronically circulated content is hard to control. The audience can be very large and reached rapidly. All information you give out on your profile and all your messages could stay online forever as anyone can save and repost before you delete them.

2. Think twice before you put anything on your site, especially those sensitive information that embarrass your friends or yourself. Ask yourself: "Why do I need to post these pictures?", "Who can see it?" or "Will they misunderstand or misuse these information to attack me?"

3. Make clear to your friends to seek your approval before uploading or sharing any photos or messages related to you, and vice versa.

4. Making strong passwords and changing passwords regularly to secure your computer and online accounts are also important. Do not share your passwords with anyone. Adjust the privacy settings on the social networking sites so that only your approved friends can view your profile and instant message you.

Question 4

What should I do if my "online friend" asks for my information and requests meeting up with me?

Answer

1. "Friends" made online are still strangers. It is very easy to lie on the Internet. There is no way to find out whether a person is telling the truth or not. Never make friends online. Some adults may pretend to be your age and try to befriend you on the Internet but actually have bad intentions. Be aware of news about cyber-crime to raise your alertness.

2. Never chat or arrange face-to-face meeting with anyone you know online but do not know in the real world. No matter how long you have met them online, they are still strangers, meeting them can be very dangerous.

3. Be careful not to share your personal information and daily routine, with people you meet online but do not know in the real world. Strangers may be able to find you or even hurt you with the information you shared.

4. Try to participate in different kinds of group activities in real life to develop your social life in the real world, e.g. voluntary services, sports activities and interest groups, etc.

Question 5

Someone I meet on the Internet send nasty messages and images about me to others within different interactive online sites. Is it cyber-bullying? What should I do to stop it?

Answer

1. Cyber-bullying refers to someone uses technology, like Internet or mobiles, to deliberately and repeatedly bully another person. It can be in the form of nasty and hurtful messages, pictures or videos.

2. If you encounter cyber-bullying, report the incident to a trusted adult right away to discuss ways to solve the problem.

3. Report to the moderator of the site or service provider that you have been bullied. Check providers' websites to see where to report incidents. If the cyber-bullying is serious and if the messages include threats, report to the police.

4. Try to block all communications with the bully and save all the messages, emails, pictures or videos as well as record the user name, date and time of the cyber-bullying incident as evidence.

5. Do not retaliate or respond to the bully. Replying to the bully may trigger more bullying messages.

Question 6

A friend of mine forwards to me a video about a classmate. I find that it is a video of my classmate being humiliated and bullied. What should I do if someone I know is being cyberbullied?

Answer

1. Bullying is never a joke or something funny. It may lead to serious consequences. If you receive a nasty message or a picture about someone, do not forward it. You could be assisting a bully, and even be accused of cyber-bullying.

2. Before you post or forward a funny picture of your friend or make a joke about someone online, ask yourself whether you want everyone to see it. What you think is a joke may really hurt someone else. Always think before you post or forward messages to others. Do not incite any cyber-bullying. When someone you know is being cyberbullied, support the victim by reporting the incident to a trusted adult.

3. Respect the privacy of others by not disclosing information of others when using the Internet. Always seek permission before sharing, posting or forwarding messages or pictures publicly online.

4. Always check and verify online content or message you receive from others. Analyse information and its sources critically. Be aware of biased opinion and inappropriate content.

Question 7

If I say something negative online about someone while remaining anonymous, is it true that I am really "invisible" and no one will identify me online?

Answer

1. Although most people who cyberbully may attempt to remain anonymous, there are ways to find out information about where cyber-bullying originated. Evidence can be gathered from online and mobile communications. Remember that when you send a message to someone, you cannot see the impact that your words or images have on the other person. Something sent as a joke may be deeply upsetting or offensive to others. You may not be fully aware of the potential seriousness or impact of your actions.

2. We should learn to respect people with different opinions and think critically. Try to make positive use of technology and create a positive footprint. When publishing information or having conversations with others online, always show respect to people and be a responsible "digizen".

3. Be mindful of how you present yourself online, who can see your content and how others are going to respond to your messages. Be aware of how others may be hurt by what you do, whether you intend to harm or not. It may cause serious emotional disturbance even suicidal ideation to the victim.

4. Be aware of the potential legal consequences of cyber-bullying. Many cyber-bullying incidents can themselves act as evidence. The bully will leave a "digital footprint" that can potentially be used as evidence. To identify the perpetrator, the police may request the service provider to disclose the data about a message or the person sending a message which can be used as evidence against the bully.

Question 8

Lately, one of my "online friends" invites me to video chat. He shows his naked body and asks me to "nude chat". What should I do?

Answer

1. Some people you meet online have bad intentions. They may try to befriend you so as to gain your trust and then persuade you to post sexual content online, including appearing naked and performing sexually suggestive acts, either via your digital camera, smartphone or on webcam. Hence, try not to use webcam or video chat face-to-face with anyone whom you do not know in the real world.

2. Exposing private body parts can be regarded as an illegal act, with offender subject to criminal liability. Victims should report to police. You should also take caution to avoid falling into trap by being videotaped and blackmailed.

3. If someone you do not know add you to their contact list or send messages to you, make sure you block them, never reply to them and do not open the file that they sent you.

4. If anyone asks you to do anything you feel uncomfortable, you should say "no" to the request and block or delete that person from your friend list. You should report it to a trusted adult.

Question 9

My classmate sent me a link to websites with nude images and sexual content. I am worried that my parents will find it out but I am really curious and seem "addicted" to these websites. Is it a problem?

Answer

1. Young people are naturally curious about sex but we should be aware of the appropriateness and credibility of the information we get from the websites. Inappropriate content on the Internet may contain inaccurate information which may have a negative impact on us and distort our views and attitudes.

2. Exposure to sexual content is associated with high risk sexual behaviour. Adolescents involved in online sexual activities have greater likelihood of being involved in early onset of sexual intercourse and multiple sexual partners.

3. Understand how to determine credibility of Internet websites and critically evaluate any materials you find. Avoid exposure to inappropriate sexual content.

4. We should gain knowledge about sex from appropriate sources. Turn to your parents, teachers or social worker for help and advice if you have any concerns about sex or personal development.

HEALTH TIPS

The following 10 health tips aim to serve as reference to encourage healthy use of the technology through minimizing the potential harmful health effects that may be relating to its use.

1. Be physically active, go outdoor

- Consecutive use for more than one hour of Internet and other electronic screen products including smartphones, tablet personal computers, video games, or televisions is discouraged.

- Adolescents (12 to 18 years old): Accumulate at least one hour of moderate- to vigorous-intensity physical activity daily.

  - Moderate-intensity physical activity e.g. swimming, cycling or playing volleyball.

  - Vigorous-intensity physical activity e.g. playing basketball, football or rope skipping.

2. Engage in interactive activities in real life

- Group activities are encouraged for development of social and communication skills as well as emotional management.

3. Limit screen time and choose screen activities wisely

- Adolescents (12 to 18 years old) should be trained to develop good time management skill and self-discipline to work independently and prepare themselves to be responsible adults. Regular breaks should be adopted if prolonged screen time e.g. for academic purpose, is unavoidable.

4. Blink, break and rest

- 📶 Rest for 20-30 seconds after every 20-30 minutes when using electronic screen products.

- 📶 Change position, blink eyes and do muscle relaxation exercise.

Keep back and neck straight with elbow supported

Keep palm up and stretch wrist downward

Stretch fingers backward

Circle shoulder blade backward

Tuck chin in

Stretch neck sideway

Stretch chest wall

Source: Hong Kong Physiotherapy Association

5. Adopt proper setting

📶 Adjust brightness, font size and workstation.

A Eyes should be slightly above the top of the screen and no less than 50 cm from the screen.

B Sit upright and close to the desk.

C Forearms should be approximately horizontal and supported by the desk. A space in front of the keyboard to allow hands and wrists to rest when not typing.

D Keep wrists straight when keying.

E Position a mouse within easy reach so it can be used with a straight wrist.

F Legs should have rooms to move under the desk.

G Choosing a chair with round edge or curved cushion seat can avoid excess pressure from the edge of seat on the backs of legs and knees. A footrest may be helpful.

📶 Keep reading distance no less than 50cm for a computer, 40cm for a tablet personal computer or 30cm for a smartphone.

30cm

40cm

50cm
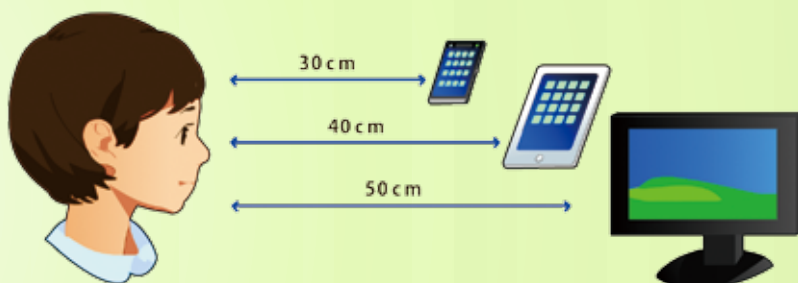
6. Protect hearing, prevent accident and pay attention to hygiene

📶 Adopt the 60 – 60 Rule: Listen at no more than 60% of the mobile device's maximum volume for less than cumulative 60 minutes a day. Prolonged use of earphones should be avoided to prevent accumulative noise induced damage.

⚙ Sound with sudden rise and fall of noise level e.g. shooting, hammer, and firecracker in video games (Impulse sound) and sound of noise level change drastically over time, e.g. road traffic noise, rock music (fluctuating sound) are more damaging than continuous noise with the same sound level. Adjust the output to a lower volume setting for music / game / film that include impulse and fluctuating sound.

⚙ Use the built-in "smart volume" feature which help to regulate the volume and cap the possible maximum output in the products, if available.

- Avoid using mobile electronic screen products while doing other tasks requiring attention e.g. crossing the roads, etc.

- Pay attention to personal hygiene, clean the surface of the screen regularly and avoid sharing the electronic screen products with others.

7. Ensure adequate sleep time and appropriate environment

- Total amount of adequate sleep time in a day for adolescents (12 to 18 years old) is 8.5 - 9.5 hours.

- Encourage a quiet, dim and comfortable sleeping place. Turn off the computer and keep other electronic screen products out of reach during sleep.

- Establish a soothing pre-sleep routine with a period of relaxing activities an hour or so before bed, e.g. take a bath, read a book, avoid stressful and stimulating activities such as video game playing as well as vigorous exercises.

8. Be aware of cyber-safety

- Protect our privacy and avoid exposing too much personal information.

- Learn how to set password and not to share with others, except your parents, if it is found necessary.

- Not to meet a "friend" only known online.

- Not to respond to messages or photos that make us feel uncomfortable or scared, and we should report the incidents to our parents or teachers and seek their help.

9. Behave oneself when using Internet and social networking sites

- Avoid gossiping, harassing or flaming others with mean or scornful messages that would harm other's reputation or relationship with friends or family. We have to be respectful and polite online and avoid sending mean messages or making someone look bad, which may remain in the Internet for a very long time with damages out of imaginations.

10. Restrict access to inappropriate content

- Install software for cyber-safety (e.g. filtering software) to limit access to inappropriate content, websites or other activities.

Hotlines for Healthy Use of Internet

Name of Organization	Telephone
Hong Kong Family Welfare Society & Education Bureau – Counselling Hotline on Healthy Use of Internet	2922 9222 Monday to Saturday 9:30am to 9:30pm *WhatsApp : 5592 7474 Monday to Saturday 9:30am to 9:30pm
Hong Kong Christian Service – Online New Page – Online Addiction Counselling Centre	2561 0363 Monday to Friday 10am to 1pm & 2pm to 6pm
Tung Wah Group of Hospitals "Say No to Internet Addiction" Project	2827 1000 Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday 10am to 7pm & Tuesday and Friday 10am to 10pm
The Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups – Youthline	2777 8899 Monday to Saturday 2pm to 2am *WhatsApp : 6277 8899 Monday to Friday 7pm -10pm

The above list is not exhaustive.

D *evelopment*

A *wareness*

R *espect*

E *ffective Communication*

S *eeking Help*

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Department of Health