



## Cyber Tips

by Lori Getz, M.A.

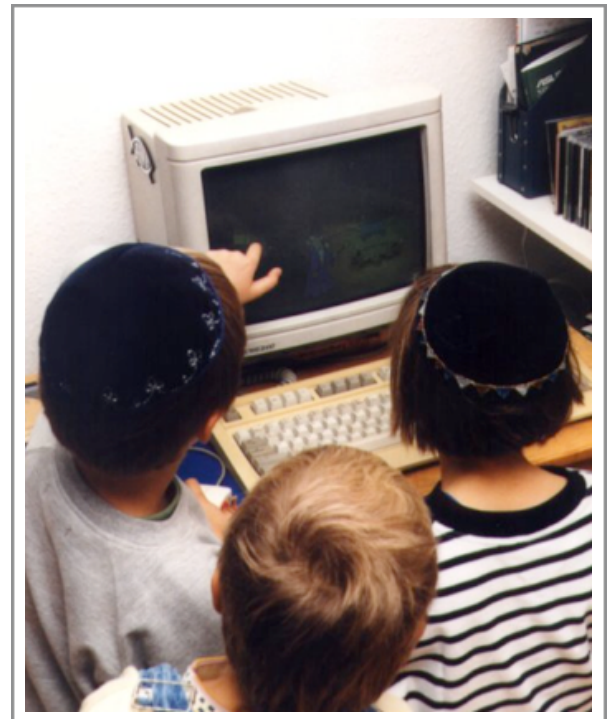


Now that the new school year is underway, for many families life is returning to busy schedules and juggling multiple responsibilities. Parents are balancing their own obligations with their children's homework, carpools, and extra-curricular activities. Amidst, all of this, parents must remember the importance of supervising their children and keeping them safe, not only when they are out of the house, but when they are at home as well. Research is showing that children of all ages are spending more and more time Online. They are doing schoolwork, chatting with friends, and playing games in their spare time. Because parents cannot oversee every moment and every Online communication, it's time to set some rules!

### Tip #1: Time management!

Kids need to find a balance when it comes to media time management. We want our children to be well-rounded and healthy people. A sedentary lifestyle in front of the computer or X-box will not accomplish that. We also want to keep our kids safe, and the longer they are Online, the more opportunity there is to become exposed to inappropriate content, cyber-bullying, Online predators and Internet addiction.

Don't fight the technology! You will only start an argument with your 'tween or teen about how "you don't get it!" Instead, talk to them about Ergonomics. Health experts are beginning to see earlier onset of hand, eye, neck, back and wrist problems in our children. It is recommended that children rest their eyes every 15 minutes by looking past the computer to something far away and getting up from the workstation and moving every 30-60 minutes.



### Tip #2: Treat the behavior, not the technology.

Again, don't fight the technology! Understand that the Internet is comparable to our own communities. There are just a lot more places to go and a lot more people to meet in cyberspace. The rules you have at home about where your kids can go and whom they can hang out with are the same rules that apply on the Internet. If you wouldn't let your children wander in a mall alone, do not allow them to wander the Internet unsupervised. If your kids are older and more responsible and you would let them go to the mall alone, but not see an "R" rated movie, the same should apply Online. They may have more freedom, but children still need to be told that they may not visit adult sites, especially those that are inappropriate. And, children need to let you know if one of these sites pop up.

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It's also important to know your child's Online friends, the same way you want to know them in the physical world.

When you start comparing these "cyber questions" to the questions you ask of your children as they walk out your front door, the issue stops being about the technology and starts being about parenting.

## Tip #3: Set expectation and limitations.

Parental controls are a great way to set expectations and limitations, but they are not foolproof! Your eyes and ears are still the best parenting tools you have. Kids have access to technology, not only from your home, but also from a friend's house, the public library and even mobile devices. You need to make sure you are talking about what you believe is appropriate for them. Learn how to check your child's Online history. If they know how to clear the history you may want look at the parental controls within your operating system and check out the Web log feature. This tracks every place they visit on the Web whether or not they clear the history.



## Tip #4: STOP BLOCK and REPORT Cyber-Bullying.

If your child is a victim of cyber-bullying, encourage them to do the following:

**Stop** - Do not respond to the bully.

**Block** - Stop the bully from sending any more messages.

**Report** - Tell you or another trusted adult about the incident. The victim, who in this case is your child, should print out the ENTIRE conversation and show it to you.

Children do not tell their parents about cyber-bullying for fear that the parents will take away the technology. It is important to remember that the technology did not cause the problem. Support your child and help them decide the best course of action in dealing with the situation.

**One thing to remember as the parent, the technology is not the culprit; it's the person behind the technology.**



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