



Social Networking



MySpace might be a household name for most parents - but the significance of social networking in the lives of young people is only going to increase. Companies like Gaia Online, Kaneva, and others are trying to revolutionize online networking by adding new features like **VOICE** so you can talk to friends anywhere in the world for free, **ENDLESS CUSTOMIZATION** so you can always be changing your look, your friends, and your online scene, **LOCATION GPS** technologies so you can find out where people are and meet them in the real world, **CELL PHONE** compatibilities so you can socialize anywhere, anytime, and increasing interface between social networking sites and **ONLINE VIRTUAL WORLDS** where you can create your own **AVATAR**, spend **VIRTUAL MONEY**, hang out with friends, throw virtual parties, and play **ONLINE GAMES**.

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- **Online predators.** This risk won't go away - especially in increasingly interactive and engaging sites where kids are encouraged to share more information and generate personalized content.
 - **Watch out for "risky behaviors."** There will be more opportunities for kids to attend virtual parties, view sexually explicit material, date online, gamble, and more. Talk to your kids about who they are hanging out with and where they are going online.
 - **Anytime, anywhere.** As social networking sites become more compatible with cell phones, social networking will only be as far as their backpack or pocket. Talk to them about limits and etiquette.

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- **Networking for good.** More and more companies will be looking to harness social networking for a positive social agenda - MTV just launched a site dedicated to getting kids involved in volunteer / social development activities.
 - **Engaging kids in school.** Teachers and librarians can integrate social networking into curriculum. Posting pictures, blogging and chatting is a great way to engage kids with content in a monitored environment.
 - **Kids as technology experts.** There is great opportunity to engage youth in creating the content for school, library or organization Web pages.
 - **Online tools.** Calendars, blogs, file sharing and more can help students collaborate on and manage school projects.

Online TV - On Demand



More and more Internet start-ups are promising the instant enjoyment of free full-screen TV with just the click of a mouse. Up until now long download times, delays, and fuzzy pictures have made online TV more of a farfetched idea than a compelling reality. But the online information highway can hold more and more traffic—meaning that big screen quality television can be streamed to an Internet connection near you.

Kids will be able to create their own “**SMART**” CHANNELS customized to their preferences, interface with online **SOCIAL GROUPS** where they can rate shows, chat, create favorites and share them with friends.



- **More commercials.** Free television content does come with a price - advertisers can create targeted ads based on your child's viewing history and preferences.
- **Too much screen time, too much kid.** There is a relationship between screen time and risk for overweight and obesity. With Internet TV it will be easier to get hooked and lose out on time for real-life activities.
- **Anytime, anywhere.** Anywhere there's an Internet connection (cell phones etc...) there is now a TV.
- **Difficult to monitor.** It's hard to monitor screens in the living room, much less unlimited access to TV on phones, laptops and



- **Creative Content.** Difficult to find documentaries, educational shows, and more are available with just a click of the mouse instead of an expensive cable package.
- **Appointment television.** It's easier to plan ahead to watch specific age-appropriate shows rather than just “seeing what's on.”
- **Kids as technology experts.** Some companies are looking to youth to develop mini-films and TV shows. Youth can learn about the media industry and participate in moderated, safe film competitions.
- **Smart Channels.** With more control, you can plan a Smart Channel dedicated to age-appropriate content you can enjoy together with your kids and chat with other parents about good shows.

Lights, camera, action!



Just one year ago we released a MediaWise Network Parent Guide to YouTube.com. At that point, nobody had heard of this new video sharing site, and many doubted it would take off. Today, there are dozens of popular video sharing sites, and kids spend hours watching home videos, rating them, sharing them with friends and posting their own.

Kids will be able to post bigger and bigger video files as the programs grow. In many ways, as video technology gets integrated into cameras, cell phones and more - videos will become the new pictures of this generation.



- **Risky content.** Despite some efforts to regulate content, the most popular sites like YouTube and Google Video still host disrespectful and inappropriate content. In addition, there are plenty of sites off the beaten track where anything goes.
- **Cyberbullying.** With virtually unlimited access to video cameras, kids can post any footage for the world to see. Unfortunately, some take advantage of this and post unflattering or incriminating videos of others online. Talk to your kids about cyberbullying and appropriate "netiquette."
- **Incriminating content.** Kids forget that posting videos on a public site of illegal drinking or other risky behaviors can have serious consequences.



- **Video producers.** Videos have always been fun for kids. Now with video sharing, kids can send videos to relatives out of town or friends that live in other cities. Talk to your kids about making their videos "private" and appropriate.
- **Teaching tool.** Teachers often assign videos as extra credit or term projects. Now it is easier than ever for teachers to incorporate this technology into their lessons. Kids can add educational videos to class Web pages!
- **Access to information and creative content.** There are plenty of great video clips on sites like YouTube. Teaching kids how to sift through the trash to find the treasures is a valuable skill.

Gaming in the virtual world.



It wasn't that long ago that video game producers rocked the world with the introduction of games where two players could play against each other at the same time. Now young people can play games with hundred of players at once from around the world—in online environments that are increasingly difficult to distinguish from real-life.

Technology is making games feel more and more realistic. **FIRST PERSON SHOOTERS** tend to be the games that are most **IMMERSIVE**, positioning the player to direct their own actions, rather than watching it unfold on screen. Consoles like the **WII** allow players to actually perform actions in **ENDLESS ONLINE VIRTUAL WORLDS**.



- **Sex and violence.** Some of the most popular games today are rated M for mature. This means that kids can directly engage in virtual violence and sexually inappropriate material.
- **Internet Addiction.** Online multiplayer games can be very difficult to quit. The never-ending virtual world and online competition are alluring and can get out of balance quickly. Watch for warning signs of addiction.
- **Virtual and real-world aggression.** Research shows that there is a relationship between playing violent video games and real-life aggression. Follow the rating system and limit violent content.



- **Getting active.** More and more games get players out of their seats and on their feet. Look for titles that encourage physical activity. Try dancing or playing the guitar with your kids!
- **Games for brains.** More companies are creating engaging games whose goal is to teach as well as entertain. Look for games that focus on everything from math to chemistry to world history.
- **Cooperation.** Many problem-solving and fantasy games require cooperation to win. This can be a great way to promote communication and teamwork among players.

A cellular world.



It's been a while since cell phones just made phone calls. Now they are mini-multi-media machines. Media companies are working hard to make sure that their products are cell phone compatible - meaning that everything from TV programs to MySpace to video games are accessible through a phone small enough to fit in your pocket.

A dizzying number of entertainment features popular with teens are now accessible through phones. These include **MP3 PLAYERS, ITUNES, VIDEO CAMERAS, INTERNET ACCESS, GPS, YOUTUBE, TV** and more. But cell phones aren't just for teens anymore. More companies are looking to expand their market, phones designed specifically for **YOUNG CHILDREN** are on the market, sporting bright colors, fewer buttons, and 'age-appropriate' games.



- **Difficult to monitor.** It's hard to manage entertainment centers that fit into the palm of our kids hands. Make sure to carefully pick the features available to your kids.
- **School disruption.** Ask any teacher and they'll tell you the challenges of teaching in the cellular age. Find out your school policy and support teachers and administrators in enforcing it.
- **Big minutes, big bills.** Teenagers struggle to stay within their minutes and often look to parents to bail them out. Talk with teens about managing their time, limiting their minutes, and building a budget to pay for it.
- **Wired but disconnected?** Don't let phone calls replace face-to-face conversations. Young people need quality time with caring adults.



- **Safety.** Cell phones are a way to avoid your kids feeling stranded without being able to call for help if they need it. This is especially true once they get their driver's licenses.
- **Staying in touch.** We all lead busy lives and sometimes a check-in phone call after school is just the thing to stay connected and up-to-date.
- **Budgeting.** Cell phones are incredibly important to young people and they are often very invested in maintaining their rights to it. Helping kids plan a budget, select a plan and stick to it is a great way to teach them about saving and prioritizing (even if you share a piece of the bill).
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Take advantage of other FREE MediaWise Network resources!



MediaWise Back to School Guide

Get help answering these questions and more: Will computers help my kids succeed in school? How do I encourage my kids to read? What's the deal with multitasking?

Learn more about media ratings

Confused by TV, video game and movie ratings? Download the MediaWise ratings guide to learn more.

Download MediaWise Internet Respect Plans

The Internet can be a great resource and source of entertainment but be sure to get off to a good, healthy start by establishing rules and expectations.

Spread the MediaWise message!

Request a MediaWise Awareness Kit and we'll send you what you need to talk to your family, friends and colleagues about MediaWise.

Tell your friends about the Network

Connect with others, get access to FREE tools, resources, and ideas. Create positive change for your family and community!

Make a gift to the Institute

A tax-deductible gift to the National Institute of Media and the Family will help us bring tools and resources to more families who need them.