

## Email Confirmation



**Subject: Children Online Newsletter**

# ChildrenOnline

Devoted to the safety of children and teens online

Phone: 413-214-1225

A Division of Web Safe Consulting

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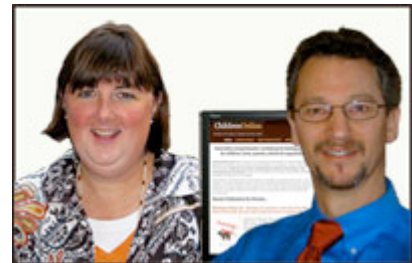
According to Barry Schnitt, Director of Corporate Communications and Public Policy at Facebook, only 15 - 20% of FB users have ever changed their privacy settings before. Privacy advocates believe this is because most people have **assumed** they have privacy when signing up for an account. This means that with FB's recent privacy changes in December, 80 - 85% of users are sharing ALL of their information with everyone on the web!

**Issue: #33**

**February 2010**

### **33rd Edition of the Children Online Newsletter.**

If you've been one of those parents or teachers who's been keeping their fingers crossed and hoping that your younger teen or child hasn't discovered Facebook, or some other social



network, it is time to face the reality that we are out-gunned and out-maneuvered. We all must now personally evaluate the risks and issues inherent with these sites, decide what is healthy and appropriate for our own children, and set strict rules and guidelines.

On February ninth Google announced that it had launched a new social network called 'Buzz' and everyone with a Gmail account was already opted in! Google has since taken a great deal of heat over the loss of Gmail privacy that occurred when Gmail users were suddenly able to see a Gmail account-holder's email list as 'Buzz friends'. Their launch essentially exposed everyone's list of personal emails to everyone on the list.

In this month's issue of our newsletter we, once again, focus our attention on Facebook and the social networks.

As always, we welcome your comments and suggestions. Our

1. [A security researcher demonstrated how easy it was to to manipulate Facebook's security and privacy mechanisms and perpetrate a simulated attack on users.](#)

2. [Could a rubber duck steal your identity on Facebook?](#)

3. [Facebook unveils privacy changes.](#)

4. [Ten Privacy Groups File FTC Complaint Against Facebook for Recent Privacy Changes.](#)

### ***How Internet-savvy are 7th graders?***

Recently a group of 7th graders completed a unit on Internet scams and fraudulent marketing practices. To evaluate their Internet-savvy skills they were given a quiz and asked to review seven Internet websites/services/software and determine which were good/legitimate and which were scams/fraud/malware designed to take advantage of Internet users. Overall, the 7th graders were able to use Google and their own search skills to correctly identify the scams/malware /fraud 89% of the time! However, some questions were more difficult than others. 18% of them mistakenly identified [Spybot](#).

telephone number for Children Online is 413-214-1225.

Best wishes,  
Marje Monroe and Doug Fodeman

Contact Marje or Doug via email at [marjem@childrenonline.org](mailto:marjem@childrenonline.org) or [dougf@childrenonline.org](mailto:dougf@childrenonline.org) for information about our programs or consulting services.

### **Facebook or Not?**

Talking to a group of parents recently, a parent asked the question why there was so much controversy and variety of reactions to Facebook. It was a good question. Since its inception Facebook has been a lightning rod for strong feelings for and against its use by teens of all ages. What complicates a parents' perspective is that parents are eager to have their children keep up with technological advances and also view Facebook as a tool to keep their children socially engaged. What, however, should be the limits for its use? Children as young as 9 and 10 now have accounts on Facebook. In fact, when dealing with children and teens about Facebook, it is easy to understand the issues and boundaries that parents need to consider. [View a graphic](#) from one of our recent Powerpoint presentations to parents that summarizes the key difficulties for young teens and children when using Facebook and other social networks. (Note: Though we focus on Facebook in this newsletter because of its popularity amongst teens, we are also speaking more broadly about social networks.)

### **Here are a few Facebook facts to provide some clarity and understanding.**

1. Facebook is an amazing social networking tool. It is revolutionizing the way people connect and communicate with one another.
2. Facebook began as a communication tool for Harvard University students but today is opened up to include anyone age 13 and over.
3. Facebook is a commercial venture with profit as the guiding force. Estimated profits from Facebook in 2008 were 300 million.
4. Facebook's increasing popularity, similar to other sites

[Search and Destroy](#) as spyware or a scam when, in fact, it is a good anti-spam product. 30% thought that [VLC](#) was a piece of spyware as well. It is an open source software used to play various video formats. Also, only a few students could, after reading through [Gamevance's privacy policy](#), identify statements that should concern users.

**Conclusion from this exercise? Even with education specifically focused on these issues, not all 13-year-olds can correctly evaluate online threats from safe sites and software all of the time.**

### Book for Parents:

[Racing to Keep Up: Talking with your kids about technology use and strategies to protect the home computer](#)



Strategies for parents to talk with their kids about technology use and ways to help the home computer safe.

Doug Fodeman  
Mary Mounis

### About Children Online

**Children Online offers innovative and comprehensive workshops on Internet safety and online education to**

such as YouTube, has created a tremendous opportunity for unscrupulous marketing tricks, scams and links to infectious malware all over the site.

### Here are a few facts for understanding the social and emotional development of tweens and adolescents:

1. Tweens and teens tend to have difficulty understanding the value of privacy online and the implications of losing that privacy.
2. Children and teens tend to be impulsive and often act without thinking especially when in front of a screen and free from immediate social consequences.
3. Teens and especially younger tweens tend to be trustworthy and naive when online. A quote that sums this up: "Kids often believe what is written to them online even when they easily and often lie themselves."
4. With frontal lobe development still in progress for children and teens, decision-making skills are not strongly developed yet and this fact often leaves them vulnerable to risky behavior.

### Putting it all together:

Facebook is an outstanding tool that allows networking, communication and sharing like never before. When used well, Facebook transforms both social and professional relationships. However, like anything else on the Internet without strong regulation, and in many cases virtually no regulation, Facebook contains risks including a place for bullying, harassment and humiliation. Facebook estimates that its average user only checks their privacy settings once and therefore unknowingly allows the public to have entry to their "private site". With rapidly changing Facebook rules and settings, users risk being defaulted to "public" (meaning 'everyone') after each change to the terms of service. With the combination of impulsivity, naivety and poor decision-making skills, children and teens are most at risk for falling prey to the many scams, harassment, or to posting/viewing humiliating, harassing and inappropriate material on the site.

Many web sites set user age limits, such as age 13 on YouTube. It is important to remember that these guidelines are made by the site owners for commercial purposes and

**students, parents, faculty and administrators. Our approach, unique in the field of Internet safety, combines a thorough understanding of Internet technologies, child development and counseling, to focus on the impact of the internet on the social, emotional and language development of young people.**

**Doug Fodeman and Marje Monroe, experts in technology, counseling and education, work together to provide invaluable research and tools for parents and schools with practical real-life solutions to the issues faced by young people online. Since 1997, Marje and Doug have spoken to thousands of students, teachers and parents. They have several publications in the area of Internet safety and offer a free online newsletter. More detailed information can be found at [ChildrenOnline.org](http://ChildrenOnline.org).**

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are not necessarily in the best interests of children. Facebook, which started as a site for 18 year olds and older, and now open to the public at age 13, is really most appropriate for the development and social reality of teen's age 16 and over.

When in front of a screen, research has shown us that even the most thoughtful and caring kids often act without thinking, and in some cases, with meanness and bullying. The anonymity of the screen acts as a buffer to thinking ethically and thoughtfully. This can be seen by the often competitive nature of Facebook where collecting "friends" is a currency and creating provocative pages considered cool. In today's world kids often seek revenge on another teen through Facebook. A recent example in the news concerned three teens in Newburyport, Massachusetts who created a fake Facebook page of another teen that was humiliating, rude and extremely hurtful. [[Newburyport News Article](#)] [[WHDH TV](#)]

Facebook is a wonderful tool that helps bring people together like never before. Used with thought and care, it can transform the way people communicate. The key is that it should be used with thought and care. Understanding this, parents should make the best decisions for their own kids. As a guideline, we recommend age 16 and if used at a younger age, parents should have any-time access to a child's account AND visit their child's account regularly.

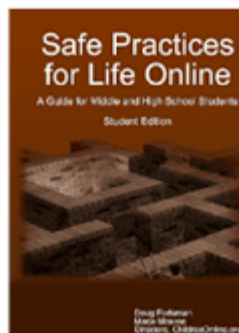
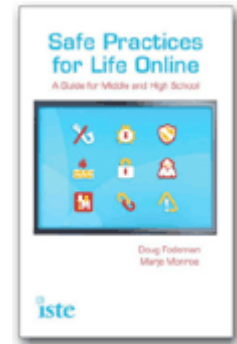
**One eleven year old recently told his mom that he would be jeopardizing his future without Facebook. The mom panicked and asked us how she should respond. We said:**

**Be clear and be firm. Love your son and tell him about the risks and benefits of Facebook. Tell him he may join when he is older and you feel he is ready. He will be ok and you will be there for him when he feels left out or ignored because he doesn't have a Facebook account. Oh Yeah, we also told her to ignore the eye rolling and door slamming that might follow her announcement.**

## INTERNET SAFETY CURRICULUM

### Safe Practices for Life Online

Children Online has a curriculum on Internet Safety that includes nearly 100 student exercises and lots of information on many topics including social networks, instant messaging, cyberbullying, online marketing, scams directed at kids, protecting privacy online, avoiding identity theft and impersonation, creating strong passwords and more.



There is also a student edition which includes cartoons and "Did you know" sections of interesting facts for students.

To learn more or place an order visit our [publications page at ChildrenOnline.org](#) or go directly to our publisher's pages: [Teacher's Edition at ISTE](#) [Student Edition at Lulu.com](#)

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