OWN YOUR SPACE
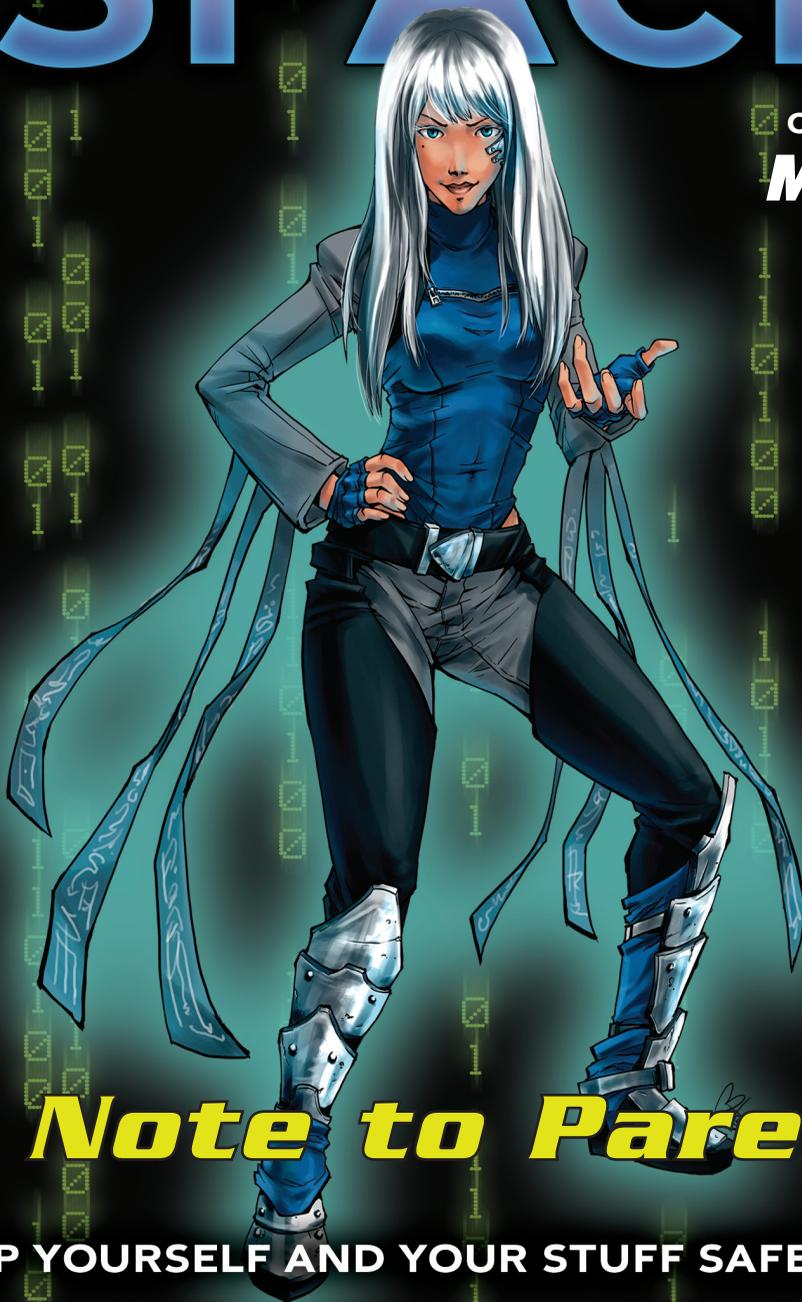
A Note to Parents

KEEP YOURSELF AND YOUR STUFF SAFE ONLINE

Edited by Linda McCarthy and Denise Weldon-Siviy

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Appendix A

A Note to Parents

Congratulations! By allowing Internet access from home, school, or your local library, you've given your teen an onramp to the information superhighway!

With a few simple keystrokes, your teen now has access to encyclopedic knowledge, easy research on colleges and universities, and fast, reliable global communications. If you're like us and grew up just ahead of the digital generation, you're probably also still in awe of just how much the Internet really provides. Hopefully, you've not also been caught up in the backlash—distorted media coverage that seems to ignore the multitude of cyber-achievements and focuses almost entirely on the dark corners of cyberspace.

If your Internet savvy were based entirely on television news, you might think the web was filled with nothing but phishers, con artists, and potential molesters. Somehow, the billions of upright, honest netizens don't rate the evening news. Still, the dangers do exist. And avoiding those dangers requires knowledge, protection, and reasonable precaution. After all, you had your teen vaccinated against devastating diseases even though the odds of contracting polio in the Western world in the twenty-first century are much more remote than the odds of being phished online. It was a sensible precaution.

It's important to think about the technology you hand to your kids. Did you give your 10-year-old and your 16-year-old each an iPhone? Did you realize they'd have 24x7 100% access to the Internet? Are you concerned about what they might see or do online? Did you buy your 16-year-old a $1,000 laptop without knowing that you needed to add a firewall, apply patches, or set the antivirus software to automatically update?

You wouldn't hand your 5-year-old a book and expect him to find his way to school alone on the first day of Kindergarten. Even teens need your guidance on their way to the World Wide Web. To protect your teen online, consider these sensible precautions:

- Do what you need to do to protect your equipment. That includes antivirus software, spyware protection, and a good firewall. It also includes applying patches and updates.

- Realize that social networking sites aren't going away. If you're concerned, sit down together and review your teen's page on MySpace, Facebook, or Bebo. Drill your teen and friends about not giving out full names, addresses, school names, or other personally identifiable information.

- Keep young kids' computers in a public place. That means an open space where you can see what's going on—not behind a closed bedroom door. Once they become teenagers with laptops and have access everywhere they go, hopefully they will have learned the important safety tips.

- Keep your family business in the family. If you have a wireless network, make sure you're not broadcasting your network to the neighborhood.

- Avoid webcams. Teens are too often drawn to use webcams to post photos they may deeply regret in later life. Remove that temptation! Beware of laptops including bundled webcams.

- Don't be afraid to be the grownup. If you're concerned about your teen visiting inappropriate sites, install software with parental controls to block those sites. Remember when you child-proofed your kitchen with safety latches and electric plug guards? Especially if your child is a young teen, it's OK to "kid-proof" the Internet a bit as well.

- Don't be afraid to play the cop either if you need to. If you suspect your teen is doing something wrong online, strongly consider purchasing monitoring software. If your teen is doing something inappropriate, it's much better to be caught by a concerned parent than a real law enforcement officer.

- If you can, keep important data on your own computer, not the one your kids use. Think of this as protecting your teen's allowance or college fund! Particularly if your teen downloads software, music, or other items, you should keep your financial details and banking information on your own computer—not the one your teen uses to play games and download software from the Internet.

- If you can't afford a second PC, consider buying software designed to protect your financial transactions and personal information. Make sure you install that software if you're banking online or using the family computer for other financial transactions such as online bill paying or shopping.

- Remember that applying patches to close security holes isn't a one-time "do it, forget it" thing. New security holes pop up continuously. Configure your systems to use automatic updates to keep new holes patched.

- Remind your teen to think about the future. What teens post today will still be hanging around the Net years from now when they're working on developing real careers. Stupid comments and photos today can translate into unemployment in years to come.

- Watch out for social engineering. Just because someone calls you on the phone and tells you he is from the FBI, it doesn't mean he really is! Verify it. Teach your teens not to give out any personal information over the phone, email, IM, and so on, that could identify their location or provide key personal information.

- Be aware of cyberbullying. Lately, we've seen FAR too many news stories about teens who've been bullied to the point of suicide. Teach your kids to report cyberbullying if they see it and never to engage in it themselves.

- *Scan the photos in your kid's phone from time to time.* Sexting among teens (sending nude or semi-nude photos via text message) is a growing problem. Many teens caught doing this have been charged with sex crimes and labeled sex offenders for life. Don't let your kids get caught in this nightmare and ruin their lives. Teach them not to send or forward any photos of their private parts, or their friends'.

- Keep it positive! With the right security software and sensible precautions, there's no need to be afraid of the Internet. Your teen should take advantage of the wonderful opportunities it provides, and you should too!

- Get educated. You are the first line of defense when it comes to the safety of your kids on the Internet. Some great sites for you to learn more about on-line safety are Commonsense Media (commonsensemedia.org), Cyber Smart (cybersmart.org), FTC (ftc.gov), Get Net Wise (getnetwise.org), iKeepSafe (ikeepsafe.org), i-Safe (isafe.org), Look Both Ways (lookbothways.org), Microsoft Online Safety (microsoft.com/protect), NetFamilyNews (netfamilynews.org), Netsmartz (netsmartz.org), On Guard Online (onguardonline.gov), Stay Safe Online (staysafeonline.org), Stop Cyber-bullying (stopcyberbullying.org), Web Wise Kids (webwisekids.org), and Wired Safety (wiredsafety.org).

OWN YOUR SPACE
KEEP YOURSELF AND YOUR STUFF SAFE ONLINE

THE BOOK FOR TEENS THAT EVERY PARENT SHOULD READ!

A collaborative project to provide free security learning to teens and families online, made available under the Creative Commons Licensing, and made possible by the support of individual and corporate sponsors.

Every day, millions of American school children log on or log in and make decisions that can compromise their safety, security, and privacy. We've all heard the horror stories of stolen identities, cyber stalking, and perverts on the Internet. Kids need to know how to stay safe online and how to use the Internet in ways that won't jeopardize their privacy or damage their reputations for years to come.

Learn how to

- Kill viruses, worms, Trojans, and spyware
- Deal with cyberbullies
- Give SPAM the curb and smash web bugs
- Understand just how public your "private" blogs are
- Keep wireless freeloaders off your network
- Prevent sexting from ruining your life

About the team

Linda McCarthy, the former Senior Director of Internet Safety at Symantec, wrote the first edition of *Own Your Space*. With 20+ years experience in the industry, Linda has been hired to test security on corporate networks around the world. For the 2010 edition, Linda's expertise is backed up by a full team to provide the best security experience possible for teens and families online. That team includes security experts, design experts, anime artists, and parent reviewers, as well as a dedicated group of teen reviewers, web designers, and test readers.

General Computing

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