

# Web Safety

To safely use the Internet you need to make sure that you have an up-to-date security suite and also an updated operating system. This way you'll minimize security risks. Think twice before you click on something. If you've received an email that you don't recognize – don't open it, and never click on a link in an unknown email. Use common sense. Don't share passwords with others. A bank or company online will never email you or call you to verify your personal information. It is easy to become overwhelmed with all the new information, especially with technology which moves at such a rapid pace. GPS has made an effort to create a brief and easy to understand document about many aspects of Internet safety, particularly the areas that pertain to your daughter's use of the Internet.

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## Minimum desktop requirements

Here are our minimum recommended requirements for desktop computers:

- **CPU** – 2 GHz or faster Pentium processor.
- **RAM** – 1GB or more.
- **Hard Drive** – 120GB or more is recommended for storage. If you work with digital photographs and digital video, get a hard drive with at least 200GB capacity.
- **Optical Drive** - Fast optical drives come standard on Windows PCs, and we recommend a drive with the capability to also burn CDs and DVDs as a minimum.

### Additional recommendations for you home:

- **Internet Access** – High speed Internet (also called broadband) through fiber optics, cable or DSL. Dial-up Internet is not recommended. Read more at [Internet Connection](#).
- **Wireless capability** – A wireless router will allow an Internet connection without having to plug in your laptop to a cable. If you decide to purchase a router, make sure it has a built in hardware firewall. Read more at [Firewalls](#).

## Firewalls

In computer terms the meaning of a firewall is a piece of equipment that will protect the computer against intrusions from the outside and protect against unauthorized access to the files on your computer. A computer firewall consists of either hardware or software or a combination of both. With that said, never use two software firewalls at once.

GPS has a hardware firewall that protects everyone while they are on campus; however, our firewall is unable to protect anyone outside of our network. This means that your desktop at home is not protected, and once your daughter leaves GPS in the afternoons, she will be unprotected as well. If you have a [broadband connection](#), it is highly recommended that you install a software firewall on your home desktop and/or make sure that your router has a built-in hardware firewall.

Most antivirus and security companies sell software firewalls. There are also firewalls available on the Internet that you can download and use for free. Below are some suggestions in no particular order:

### Free firewalls:

[Outpost Firewall Free](#)

[PC Tools Firewall Plus](#)

[Online Armor](#)

[Comodo Firewall](#)

**Firewalls that require a fee:**

[Symantec Norton 360](#)

[McAfee Internet Security](#)

**Microsoft Updates**

Microsoft constantly finds out about security holes and problems in its software. Patches are released once a month and can be downloaded from the Microsoft website. Keeping your Microsoft Windows operating system updated will provide additional protection from the dangers on the Internet. Microsoft has made it fairly easy to update your computer with the latest security patches. Click on the link below for the update site:

Link: <http://update.microsoft.com/windowsupdate>

**Anti-virus programs**

Having an up-to-date anti-virus program in place is the first and most basic line of defense in your computer. Any antivirus program has to be updated to be effective. New information, called virus definitions, needs to be downloaded regularly to keep your virus program updated about any new viruses. Most paid versions of antivirus programs will update themselves automatically. Free versions will require you to update manually, but will often remind you to do so.

In addition to the updated virus definitions, one must always be suspicious. Never open an email with an attached document unless you know exactly what it is. Be careful downloading free software unless recommended by a reliable source. Downloading background pictures or free fonts, using file sharing programs etc. are other avenues through which viruses can infect your computer.

Malicious websites on the Internet can make it look like your computer has been infected and can fool you into purchasing their software to restore your computer to a normal state. Read more about it in our [Anti-Spyware programs](#) section.

To read more about viruses, click here to go to Microsoft's explanation:

<http://www.microsoft.com/security/antivirus/whatis.aspx>

Anti-virus program can be purchased online. Popular programs include:

[Symantec Norton 360](#)

[AVG Antivirus \(free\)](#)

## **Anti-spyware programs**

Spyware is software which uses your internet connection in the background without your knowledge. It contains functions which collect information about you, later to send the information back to companies and people which use it for profit. Spyware programs are usually installed by websites offering "free" programs, games, backgrounds or fonts. The most common purpose of spyware programs is to track the Internet surfing habits of the user. This information is later be used to send targeted ads in the form of pop ups and spam e-mail to your computer.

There are excellent anti-spyware programs available on the Internet that will scan and remove spyware from your computer. Some anti-spyware programs to be downloaded are:

[Spybot - Search & Destroy \(free\)](#)

[PestPatrol](#)

[Webroot Spy Sweeper](#)

For more information about spyware, please visit The Anti-Spyware Coalition at <http://www.antispywarecoalition.org/>.

## **Malware programs**

An insidious type of program that claims to rid your computer of viruses but instead introduces viruses onto your computer is referred to as malware. Malware can slow down your computer to the point where it becomes unusable and it may even prevent you from accessing the Internet.

The spreading of malware has expanded beyond the traditional suspect emails to infected websites with automated downloads. This makes malware much more difficult to avoid.

Many malware programs have colorful warning messages telling you that your computer has become infected, often accompanying a swift virus scan. The fake scan usually reveals a number of infections and urges you to purchases a specific antivirus program to remove the infection.

We have found the following program to work effectively when removing malware

[Webroot Spy Sweeper](#)

[Malwarebytes Anti-Malware \(free\)](#)

## **Internet connection**

Chattanooga has several broadband (also referred to as high-speed Internet) services available. Please visit any of the providers below for more information:

Comcast – <http://www.comcast.com> | 1-800-COMCAST (1-800-266-2278)

EPB Fi – <http://epbf.com/> | 423-648-1EPB (423-648-1372)

AT&T Fast Access DSL – <http://www.att.com> | 1-866-949-0023

We do not recommend dial up Internet unless it is the only option available in your area.

## **Backup**

Backing up your important files is not difficult, but doing it regularly is. Keeping your files in at least one alternate location is important in you have problems with your computer.

The easiest way to back up your files is to use an external hard drive and to remember to copy your important files to it. Another fairly new option is setting up a subscription with an online storage site. Below are sites you can visit for more information.

**External Hard drives** (minimum 500GB)

[CDW](#)

[TigerDirect](#)

[NewEgg](#)

**Online Backup Solutions**

[DropBox](#)

[Mozy](#)

[Carbonite](#)

[Storegate](#)

## Social Media

Teenagers today use technology to connect to each other and to the world. In many cases sites like Facebook, MySpace and Twitter have become more popular means of communication than email.

Checking chat logs, emails, files and social networking profiles for inappropriate messages, images or friends is perfectly fine, but let your daughter know what you are doing. Your daughters might be more digitally savvy than you, but in comparison they lack the maturity which could unknowingly put them in a undesirable position. A great way for parents to learn about these new technologies is by having profiles of their own on social media websites, like Facebook, to show their daughters that they are there.

An excellent source of information for parents about social media websites and the effects of the Internet on kids is [www.common sense media.org](http://www.common sense media.org). We highly recommend it.

Popular social media websites are

### Facebook

[www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)

Users build their space with text entries, photos on the Web and then invite others to be their friends

### MySpace

[www.myspace.com](http://www.myspace.com)

### Twitter

[www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com)

Allows users to send and receive short messages similar to text-messages (SMS).

### Flickr

[www.flickr.com](http://www.flickr.com)

A photo-sharing site that allows users to upload and tag images

## Instant Messaging

Instant messaging is a service on the Internet for one to communicate with others. It can be compared to a text-based telephone conversation. These kinds of services give children, adolescents, and adults an opportunity to communicate with people from all over the world who have common interests, friends, family members, teachers and others.

This availability for open communication can create risks for children. It is important to teach children the potential dangers of the Internet and to set rules for safe computer/Internet use.

Instant messaging services are active, as they occur in real-time. Another form of communication, discussion boards, are often bound to a specific interest.. Discussion boards are static. The participants in a group are able to read posts from other users and are able to add their own posts. Posts may contain text, pictures and sound.

## Parental Controls

The best parental control is to spend time with your children online. They will show you their favorite online destinations.

It is a good idea to keep the laptop in a common room in the house during the day and not allow your daughter to take it with her during the night. Be up front with your daughter about her access to the Internet and why.

Make sure your daughter knows that she can tell someone if something uncomfortable happens on the Internet. She needs to know that she will not get in trouble.

**If you suspect your child has come in contact with a predator on the Internet,  
a report can be submitted to the proper authorities.**

**[Click here to submit a report](#)**

There is software available to help controlling your daughter's Internet use. The most popular are [eBlaster](#) and [K-9 Web Protection](#).

[eBlaster](#)

(Important: EBlaster is very effective; however, it might be difficult to configure at first. If you are not familiar with the Internet, proper configuration may require the help from an IT professional.)

[K-9 Web Protection \(Free\)](#)

## **Internet Filters**

There are filters available which will block Internet sites not suitable for children. At GPS we use a constantly updated Internet filter which will block Internet sites with inappropriate content. With the right software you can add a filter on your home computer to protect yourself from unwanted Internet sites.

[K-9 Web Protection \(Free\)  
Net Nanny](#)

There are Filtering Service Providers that can do the Internet filtering for you. The benefit of using a filtering service provider is the constant updating of filtering definitions. Some filtering service provider's can be found here:

[Clean Web  
Integrity Online  
bsecure](#)

It is important to understand that using filtering service providers, a firewall or other parental control software will still not provide 100% protection.

## **File-sharing programs**

Popular among teens are programs that allow sharing and downloading files (mainly music and movies). The programs are often free and allow you to download files stored on other people's computers; in return it asks you to share the files on your computer. Several hundred thousand people join these networks and it allows viruses disguised as the latest music hit song being spread very easily. Many files being shared are protected by copyright laws which make them illegal to download. File-sharing communities are widely watched by RIAA (www.riaa.com - Recording Industry Association of America) and lawsuits against private individuals are becoming more frequent.

## **Other recommended websites**

<http://www.inmyday.org.nz/> - A parent's guide to cyber safety

<http://www.internetsafety.com/>