

KIDS KNOW TECHNOLOGY – NOW IT’S YOUR TURN

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NARRATOR

Let’s face it, kids know a lot about computers. And, it’s really no surprise. After all, most of them were born with a mouse in hand. For them, technology is second nature; for most parents it is not. But, don’t give up; here are some basic computer terms that deal with today’s technology that even your child will be impressed that you have learned.

If you haven’t noticed already, a lot of kids today seem to be constantly connected – day and night. When your child goes online it means he or she is now connected to the Internet with millions of other people - not only with those in your neighborhood, but also from all over the world.

The Internet is a global network of information accessible by your computer that provides news, entertainment, research, education, and access to just about everything including, friends and family members. It is a giant network of computers that connects people and information all over the world.

One method of communication that is especially appealing to people of all ages is electronic mail. You’ve probably heard about people emailing someone else about this or that and quite frankly with our busy lives, it is one of the best ways to stay in touch with family and friends.

Children, teenagers and young adults often log on to check their email, but generally speaking, it is too slow for them. Instead, they prefer instant, real time communication with their friends by instant messaging or texting on their cell phones – often on phones capable of connecting directly to the Internet.

Computer language is similar to language that refers to travel using such terms as superhighway, engine, cruising, surfing, and navigating. It also uses words you hear in restaurants like menu and server; and in our environment - Web, mouse, windows, and site. Computer vocabulary also describes everyday sounds like "click" or "drag".

For schoolwork and research, nothing beats the information available on the Internet. There is literally something available on every subject you can imagine.

A typical day for a teenager might go something like this. She arrives home from school, grabs a snack and announces she needs to get on the Internet to do some research for a school paper or project. In reality, this is where she may begin, but then it is equally

important to check other things on the Internet, like her email. Having instant messaging already on, she can quickly see who else is online. In the past kids used the telephone to recap the school day, now they communicate through their computers. Instant messaging can stay activated while they go other places online.

Social networking sites like MySpace, Facebook, Classmates, MyYearbook, Bebo and others provide another stop on the computer to see who is on-line, look at their pictures and post comments. These social networks attract millions of people who create personal profiles for self-expression and to interact with other people having similar tastes and interests. While much is good about social networking, one of the downsides of sharing personal information and photos is the possibility of becoming targeted by online predators or cyber-bullies. When children share information about themselves online, they are exposing their identity to classmates, friends and strangers. It can be a very dangerous risk.

Kids also like to post blogs online. A blog is short for web log that is an online diary. They can be journals of personal thought, expression or experiences that others can then respond to. Another place kids might visit is a chat room where there is a quick conversation with any number of people who are also in the room. When this ceases to be of interest, they can simply click to leave the virtual chat room.

The Internet is also a place to play online games. Teenagers are naturals when it comes to multi-tasking, or so they think. Along with all of the already mentioned online activities, it's very likely your teen has received several text messages on his cell phone while attempting to focus on homework.

With so much to do on the Internet, kids also spend a lot of time listening to music and watching videos. For the most part, everything mentioned so far is easily accessible and relatively safe for kids when they are online. The Internet is truly a great place to visit, play, talk with friends and explore the world.

Sometimes, however, children accidentally or in some cases intentionally come across things that are not in good taste. As parents, grandparents and guardians, it is important to help keep your children safe while on the Internet by using security and filtering devices. While nothing is totally foolproof, you can buy filters that will clean the material before it gets to you. You can also install firewalls that create a barrier between your computer and the Internet. It is like a security checkpoint that information must pass through before being allowed to enter or exit your computer.

The most important way to protect your children when they are on the Internet is to be interested in how they use technology – see what they are doing and educate them on the possible dangers they may encounter.

It is also very important to locate the computer in a central location, never in a child's bedroom. With computer technology immersed in our society, there is no better time than now to get educated and learn more about the technology our children use every day.

For more information go to netsafeutah.org

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