Best Practices for Internet Use for Parents

Create rules for internet use for your family.

1. Have your children ask for your permission before they access the Internet.
2. Set time limits for computers and other devices, per day or per week, and what time of day.
3. Share your child's first email account for older children.
4. Pre-approving your child's list of "buddies" if you decide to allow them to use instant messaging, and requiring them to get your permission before adding any new names.
5. Limit your child to social networking sites that you approve. Remember that many sites have an age requirement for a minor to have an account.
6. Join social networking sites that your child uses, so you can monitor what they share.
7. Sign an Internet safety contract with older children in order to outline your expectations for its acceptable use. Evaluate it with your child regularly to keep it relevant and age-appropriate.
8. Exhibit behaviors of personally balancing time that is spent online as well as time that is unplugged.
9. Never permit video games, game boys or other electronic devices at table.
10. Discuss with your child the importance of privacy as well as what is "ok" to post/picture about others.
11. Read acceptable use policies and terms of use policies with your children before using that site.
12. Be a parent, not a friend.

Know what your children are doing online.

1. Check the Internet history to see which sites your child is visiting. Use filtering and monitoring software on your internet-enabled devices. For younger children, install a children's safe search engine.
2. Use Internet filtering and tracking software. These programs allow you to block certain content and Web sites and allow you to see where they go while online.
3. Discuss with your child about communication that is responsible and respectful.
4. Review apps and games that are installed on smartphones and gaming consoles for age appropriateness.

Use the internet with your children

1. Discuss with your child family as well as faith values that might be contrary to society's expectations.
2. Spend time with your children while they are online.
3. Allow your child to teach you about the internet and their interest with it.
4. For older children, assist them with an examination of conscience with their technology use.
5. When you hear your children speak of sites and services that are unfamiliar, research them.
6. Discuss with your children that "just because you can, doesn't mean you should".

Be cautious and clever

1. Be aware that the personal computer is no longer the only device with internet access and that your modem is no longer the gateway to the internet. Be mindful that phones, music players, televisions, gaming consoles, and other household devices can now access the internet.
2. Set up the family computer in a central, open location - like the kitchen or family room. Wireless devices should not be used behind closed doors.
3. Don't post pictures of your children on public websites. Make sure your social networking pages are private.
4. Make sure that your child's school does not include names of the students on the pictures which they post to their websites.
5. Teach your children not to give out any personal information online. This includes information about themselves and other family members. Personal information includes names, addresses, phone numbers, e-mails addresses, passwords or credit card numbers.
6. Encourage them to talk with you or a trusted adult if they see something online that makes them feel uncomfortable or if someone they don't know sends them inappropriate material.
7. Make sure you talk to your child about the good and bad sides of the Internet. Discuss with him/her about values that are taught in the faith about truthfulness, honesty and integrity.
8. If you agree to let your child meet an online buddy in person, go with them. Be sure to meet in a public spot, and let the buddy know you will be accompanying your child. If the online buddy is against meeting this way, it's a tip-off that you probably don't want them meeting anyway.
9. Don't rely solely on technology as a substitute for you. Technology will never replace good parenting. It's important that we talk to your child about the dangers that they face online and help them to understand the safeguards that we put in place to protect them.
10. Be aware of the fact that the internet can become an addiction and should be used within healthy and reasonable parameters for both work and play.
11. Use privacy settings and sharing controls for sites that share photos, videos. Get into the practice of reviewing them regularly.