

## Back to School Brings Internet Fears

By Jay Nelson, *Editor*

Parents have a lot to worry about these days and the Internet has unfortunately added to them. An unrivalled research and communications tool, the Net can also open doors to everything from online predators and pornography to plagiarism and cheating. Among the sage advice parents need to share with kids these days is how to stay safe and appropriate online. Unfortunately, beyond "don't give out personal information" and "watch out for creeps", many adults are themselves at a total loss.

The simplest way to make it easier to monitor your kids' Internet activities and limit time spent online is to place your home computer with Internet access in an **open public area**, not in a bedroom. Giving your kids **secondary email accounts** (only \$2.50 per month from SWCP) attached your primary will give you some control over their email. Staying involved is also important. Actively checking the kids' computer out from time to time is a good idea. Everything should be looked at from browsing history to the working state of your firewall - the latter to make sure your budding geniuses haven't disabled it to make online gaming easier or to download new (and potentially spyware-ridden) software.

If you need to get more Big Brother about it, there are numerous gadgets and packages that claim they can help, more all the time. Here are a few:

**Website blocking** technology is somewhat controversial. Claims are often made that some sites that should be blocked aren't and vice versa, or that the blocks can be evaded by tech-savvy teens. Cybersitter ([www.cybersitter.com](http://www.cybersitter.com)) is said to be better for older kids, while the more popular Net Nanny ([www.netnanny.com](http://www.netnanny.com)) is aimed at younger ones.

**Internet monitoring** is also controversial but less intrusive. Webwatcher ([www.awarenesstech.com](http://www.awarenesstech.com)) can both monitor and block invisibly from anywhere. For peer-to-peer monitoring, there's Guardian Monitor ([www.guardiansoftware.com](http://www.guardiansoftware.com)).

If **time or access control** is a problem especially when you're out of the house, Hopscotch Bob ([www.hopscotchtechnology.com](http://www.hopscotchtechnology.com)) is a lockout device that physically limits time spent in front of the screen. It works for TVs and video games, too.

Worried about your kids **stealing others work**? Tell them about Turnitin ([turnitin.com](http://turnitin.com)), a site that specializes in spotting plagiarism in papers. Mainly designed for teachers, parents can use it too.

In a few school districts in New Mexico, you can control your kids' lunch spending with MealPayPlus, ([www.mealpayplus.com](http://www.mealpayplus.com)) an online prepayment system for school lunches designed to eliminate both lunchtime bullies and the temptation to blow it on candy.

Finally, there are devices to locate kids via cellphones, even notifying the parent by email when they wander out of a designated zone, or car GPS units, monitoring location, time parked, and speed.

You may not find it necessary to actually use these products. Just hinting about them to your children might be enough!

## Free Internet Class

*Back by Popular Demand!*

Southwest Cyberport is now offering its *free* "Introduction to the Internet" class, covering getting the most from your web browser, email, and other Internet basics. This class is intended for beginners, and focuses on Firefox and Thunderbird, two free Internet applications. It will also cover some basics on staying safe on the Internet, and offer helpful suggestions on how to get less spam.

Classes are available on **September 20th and 27th**, from **6-8 PM**. Space is limited, so call Southwest Cyberport at (505) 232-7992 to register today! (The class is free, but is only open to current SWCP, Thuntek, and NMIA customers at this time.)

## DSL Offers Continue

Until the end of September, SWCP is offering the first month of Internet access free to new Qwest DSL customers. Free activation and no sign-up fees can save new SWCP clients up to \$119, or current Qwest users can upgrade their DSL speeds for free.

Remember -- these great **offers expire 9/30** so call us today for more information or a free prequalification!

### Net Notes

Computers on the Internet use a system of **IP numbers** to identify the online address of each and every machine connected to it. These can be permanently assigned to machines or temporarily given to users when they get online.

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# What's in a Name?

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Like all things digital, the network of computers that make up the Internet functions by numbers. Most people, however, do much better with names. So a clever scheme called the **Domain Name System** (DNS) was devised whereby humans could use words to designate websites or regions of cyberspace. These translate into **IP numbers** for the machines so everyone can be happy.

You can get domain names for your business, your family, and your personal interests. A good domain name is not only easy to remember but tells something interesting about the site. Domains are not only essential for web-hosting, but quite useful for email addresses, too. But they must be hosted by an ISP to actually be used for either website or email addresses. They can be switched from ISP to ISP, too, so if you move across country, you don't have to change the email address you give out.

Each domain name *must* be unique, so to keep it all working, domain names must be officially registered. Anyone can have one, from the humblest cybercitizen to the mightiest institution — as many as one wants, too. However, they are not really “owned” by the registrants, rather they are leased to the user. Hence, the registration must be renewed on an annual basis, though you can generally pay for a number of years in advance if you want.

Domain names must follow a certain format. To make them machine readable blank spaces and certain characters such as . , \ / ! & and so on can't be used but capitals and lower-case don't matter. The names themselves are split up by periods (.).

Names must belong to divisions called **top-level domains**, which like in family names in our culture, is the last part. At first, all these were regulated, as those used by educational institutions (.edu), the government (.gov), and US military (.mil) still are, but otherwise it's all grown somewhat loose and confused.

The original intent was to divide the Internet along organizational or geographic lines. The top level now includes .com, .org, .net, .biz, .info, and many more all the time. It also includes two-letter **country codes**, like .uk for Britain, .cn for China, and so on.

To further complicate things, there are also **sub-domains**, smaller divisions of the namespace, that go in front like personal names. The most common is **www**. but it's by no means universal.

The naming system's fairly complex but does allow for a great deal of variety and flexibility. And also frequent confusion due to nearly identical names, an unfortunate effect which allows unscrupulous types to misdirect visitors. This is often used to create criminal **phishing** websites which try to deceive people into believing they are actually their banks or even the IRS and give them personal information.

To prevent this, some institutions have even tried to grab up every similar name to their website, now a nearly impossible task. But domains have become so vital for institutional identity that “**domain squatters**” will seize the best ones if they accidentally become available and resell them, often back to the original owner, for sometimes huge amounts of money.

As a full-service ISP, Southwest Cyberport hosts many domains and associated websites. You can transfer or register new domain names with us for only **\$30** for the first year and **\$20** thereafter. If you transfer your domain here, we'll add the time remaining from your previous registration to your new one, too.

Website hosting fees are extra. Call us for more information, including our convenient business web-hosting packages and available discounts.



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