

Summer Vacations Mean Kids Have More Time to Spend Online, so Verizon Is offering 10 Tips to Keep Them Safe From the Risk of Cyberthreats
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NEW YORK, June 9, 2011 /PRNewswire/ -- Millions of American school children are, or soon will be, singing "no more pencils, no more books," the theme song marking the official start of summer and the [annual school break](#). That usually means more time spent online.

Taking steps to help keep their kids safe online can be daunting for parents, so Verizon is providing help for reducing cyberthreats by offering tips and links to resources.

"The first line of defense against online threats is quite naturally in the home," said [Wade Baker](#), a Verizon security expert and one of the authors of the company's annual "[Data Breach Investigations Report](#)." "So many of the things we do online today -- from using social media to keep in touch with school buddies to downloading movies and music -- can carry some risks. Like sunscreen and staying hydrated, cybersafety is part of staying safe during summer vacation."

In recognition of Internet Safety Month in June, Verizon is working with national experts to raise awareness about important online safety issues. During the month, [Verizon's Parental Controls Center](#) will release series of educational videos on cyberbullying to highlight actionable advice for parents. (The first video can be found [here](#).) Verizon, along with Verizon Foundation partner [Common Sense Media](#), will also run a national public service advertising campaign across its television, online and wireless platforms to raise awareness about the integral role parents play in their children's digital lives.

Verizon is also offering parents these 10 online safety tips:

1. **Your information is private.** Parents should make sure their kids are not sharing personal information on [social networking sites](#) that might endanger them or family members and friends. The same goes for online games and other applications.
2. **Take a few minutes to monitor.** The best approach is for parents to [monitor](#) what their kids are doing online, Verizon security expert Baker suggests, and don't just assume they're doing all the right things.
3. **Free downloads aren't always free or safe.** A [recent study](#) by Verizon security partner McAfee indicates that online media is one of the biggest moneymakers for [cybercriminals](#). With demand for online music, movies, television and more at an all-time high, it is an attractive venue for crooks. The McAfee study counsels against searching for free content because of the potential risk associated with some sites carrying such content. For example, the study found that using the word "free" when searching for ringtones resulted in a threefold increase in the risk of visiting sites returned by major search engines in English.

Besides the fact that [downloading free music](#) or [movies](#) from suspect sites may be illegal, it could also lead to viruses and other malware being downloaded to a family computer.
4. **Find great resources.** While June is [Internet Safety Month](#), there are great resources available year-round. The Verizon [Parental Controls Center](#) features links to many free resources for parents, educators and kids to help families manage the digital experience that is right for them. In addition to free controls for computers and other devices, the Verizon Parental Controls Center provides insight on such topical issues as [cyberbullying](#), [online gaming](#) and [managing online privacy](#). The site also links to public service sites such as [WiredSafety.org](#) and [Webwisekids.org](#) and educational resources from Verizon Foundation's [Thinkfinity.org](#) website. Verizon is also engaged in the [STOP. THINK. CONNECT.](#) campaign, the national effort by government and industry, led by the [National Cyber Security Alliance](#) (NCSA) and the [Anti-Phishing Working Group](#), to educate people about how to stay safe and secure online. In addition to the campaign, the NCSA offers a host of resources, tips and information for parents and educators.
5. **Have a clearly defined set of rules.** Kids have just spent the better part of the year following the rules at school, so [a few house rules](#) during the summer shouldn't be onerous.
6. **Talk to your children about how they use technology.** It's easy to get caught up in our busy lives and

neglect the opportunity to ask children about what they do online or to discuss such topics as inappropriate content and [cyberbullying](#).

7. Install Internet filters. Whether they're looking for it or stumble upon it while browsing, kids can be exposed to inappropriate online content; so make sure you have the [latest net filters](#) installed and activated. Schools have them, and they can be helpful in the home.

8. Make sure your online security tools are up to date. You need [online security tools](#) to protect your family from accidentally [downloading viruses](#), worms and other online threats. You should also determine how comprehensive your protection is. Will it protect from phishing and spyware? Does it include [security for your home Wi-Fi network](#) or a customizable firewall?

9. Keep your files safe with online backup. When all else fails, [backing up important files](#) -- photos and movies, music, documents, etc. -- will help minimize the impact of a cyberattack or computer failure.

10. Give kids alternatives. Encourage your children to participate in worthwhile traditional [activities](#) such as sports, dance, camp or extracurricular classes. Some children will do better with structured activities and others may prefer to be self-directed, but you should help your children [find something that keeps them from sitting](#) in front of a computer all day.

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