



Monitoring Tips for Parents – Social Networking Sites

According to Kevin Farnham, author of the book *MySpace Safety: 51 Tips for Teens* he said:

It's natural for parents to want to know what's going on in their teen's MySpace world. But what's the best way to do this? You ask your teen to provide you with the password to her MySpace account. She obliges, but then she feels like her MySpace account is no longer really her own. One reaction is to change the password to lock you out. Another common reaction is to create a secret MySpace account, while continuing to maintain the "official" account for viewing by parents.

Given the login email and password to your teen's MySpace account, you have the capability to sign in, change settings, grant or deny friend requests, delete friends, delete comments, upload or delete pictures, read private emails, etc. This is really much more than you need to effectively monitor your teen's MySpace activity. If you request all of this, your teen will likely feel like you don't trust them to make any decision on their own. This isn't what you're seeking. You just want to be sure that she's safe, that nothing she's posting invites trouble.

The best way for a parent to keep tabs on a teen's use of MySpace is for the parent to get their own MySpace account and become their teen's MySpace friend. When you do this, you're able to view everything that is publicly available on your teen's MySpace site, even if your teen has her account set to "private" (recommended to prevent unwanted contact from strangers). Since the site consists of information she feels comfortable broadcasting online to others, there's no reason she should object to you seeing her site as well. But, importantly, she still maintains control of her own account, and responds to all friend requests, comment postings, etc.

As parents, we want our teens to learn how to interact with the world at large in a responsible manner. To do this, teens need freedom. MySpace is a fun place, full of jokes and laughter and teenage posing. But potential dangers do lurk, and teens are frequently unaware of risk. By having your own MySpace account and being your teen's MySpace friend, you can have an effective presence in your teen's virtual world. If you see anything that looks awry, such as a new friend whose MySpace page looks a bit shady, you can bring that up in conversation and discuss why you don't approve of contact with that particular person.

Most importantly, by creating your own MySpace account and "friending" your teen, you establish your desire to be a part of this new "social networking" world, which has become so fundamental a means of interaction for today's teens and young adults. Wherever they go, as they grow into adulthood, you'll be there for them.

Setting up a Myspace Monitoring Account - for Parents

1. Go to <http://www.myspace.com>
2. Click on "Sign Up" (at the top right of page)
3. Fill out the profile form completely

<TIP: Click off check box for "show when logged on". Use anonymous email account and only first initial for first name. Do not give false information..just unrecognizable>

4. After account is created, Click on "Search" and search by first and last name, or email address, or state and zip

<TIP: You can narrow down search by zip with entering radius in miles around you>

5. Get a cup of coffee, browse through results for something that looks familiar.

-OR-

Look up your child's friends in the same manner. Chances are you will find your child as one of their listed friends. Click on your child's link from their friends' sites.

<TIP: Once you find your child, make note of their personal web address located near the left bottom side of the Communications Center. You can use this to revisit the site easily>

Searching for someone's space on Myspace

1. Use www.icerocket.com to isolate searches to myspace by clicking on "myspace" at the top menu bar and enter the name, email, or other identifiable search terms.

-or-

1. Search in Google with the search term: `intext:"my child's name"`

-or-

1. Login to Myspace with your monitoring user account
2. Click on SEARCH
3. Enter person's name in the NAME box
4. Click SEARCH
5. If results aren't found, narrow it down by entering a zip code in the advanced search area to the right of the page and choose a mileage radius to search within.

Warning Signs for Parents

1. Child spends a large amount of time on the computer with online chats, emails, IM, online gaming, surfing. Predators often lurk more at night and on weekends when they are not working and children are not in school.
2. If pornographic materials (images) are found on the child's computer. Oftent predators will send pornographic material and images to youth to show that child/adult activity is "normal".
3. Child begins to receive increased amount of postal mail, gifts, packages from people you do not know.
4. More junk mail is received addressed to the child. This could be an indication that the child's identity has been compromised or stolen.
5. Child receives phone calls or messages from persons unknown to you (regardless of presumed age)
6. Child becomes more withdrawn from family and friends. Predators work very hard to isolate their targets from their environment and those they associate with to cover their tracks and build stronger bonds.
7. Child uses online user accounts that are not theirs or unfamiliar to you. Predators often provide accounts to websites, systems, online tools in order to lure their targets to more private areas to chat, share photos, etc. This technique can also be used by the predator to give "rewards" for favors.
8. Child changes what is on the computer screen quickly when someone enters the room or is nearby while they are online.
9. Child receives increased number of text messages and text messages on their cell phones from unknown sources.

More Tips for Parental Monitoring of Child's online Activities

1. Many online monitor services (free and for a fee) for parents to monitor activity online (www.imsafer.com for example)
2. Many computer monitoring software (free and for a fee) for parents to install on home computer to monitor online activity through the creation of logs that can be viewed after the fact, or live from a remote location such as at work during the day.
3. Keylogging software and hardware; Systems that record all keystrokes from the keyboard to be viewed after the fact.
4. Setup an account on social network site (Myspace, Facebook, Youtube,etc.)
 - Openly become a "friend" of your child in order to monitor site
 - Only monitor activity. Do not participate in other friends' chats
 - Be open and discuss in a positive manner your observations
5. Turn off "page styles" in Firefox to view hidden content on sites.
6. Search using Icerocket or special search terms in Google and other search engines.