



# NetSmartz.org: A New Tool to Keep Kids Safe on the Internet

by Christopher Weber

**Teresa thought she was acting safely on the Internet. Within 20 minutes, we found out her full name, age, her parents' names, her street address, phone number, the time of day she and her parents were home, and high schools near where she lived.**

- from "Tracking Teresa", NetSmartz Video for Teens

If you think you are up to date on the issue of Internet Safety, think again. With other leaders from the area, I attended a recent C.L.I.C.K.S. training sponsored by the Office of the Attorney General. There I received a chilling update on the dangers of Internet use. I also learned about a fantastic new resource to teach kids of all ages about Internet safety.

[The NetSmartz Workshop](#), a project of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, teaches children how to be safer while online and in the real world. Parents and guardians, educators, law enforcement, and community leaders who want to understand more about the Internet and the possible dangers children face online can learn dynamic ways to teach personal safety by visiting [www.NetSmartz.org](http://www.NetSmartz.org). Anyone can access innovative tools such as animated videos, safety pledges, and classroom activities at no cost.

### Resources for Teenagers

Tweens can visit [www.NSTeens.org](http://www.NSTeens.org) to watch comic-book-style characters learn about Internet issues such as social networking and cyberbullying. With

the recent popularity of comic book films and TV shows, the NSTeens are a great way to impact that hard-to-reach tween audience.

Teen materials are more serious, as they focus on [Real-Life stories](#) shared by actual teens who have experienced victimization firsthand. These powerful narratives teach teens to examine their behavior and encourage them to communicate with trusted adults.

### Resources for Kids

[www.NetSmartzKids.org](http://www.NetSmartzKids.org)

is a fun, interactive site for kids in grades K through 6. **Clicky**, the friendly and hip spokesrobot, teaches young children in very simple terms about the possible dangers on the Internet, how to avoid them, and how to practice good "netiquette." After introducing





basic uses of the Internet, Clicky introduces children to the "Webville Outlaws." These villains represent different Internet dangers. For example, **Follow-You Fiona** shows children that people may not be who they say they are on the Internet. **Spamozoid** sends junk e-mail to lots of people, usually stuff that kids don't want to see.<sup>1</sup>



The site features age appropriate videos, games, and activities, all designed to give kids an early start at Internet safety, and help them know what to do if they encounter something that frightens them or makes them uncomfortable while surfing.

### Resources for Parent and Guardians

[www.NetSmartz411.org](http://www.NetSmartz411.org) is for parents and guardians. The site contains vital information about Internet safety, computers, and the Web. The Frequently Asked Questions alone are worth a visit! Parents can ask an expert for advice, or cull an extensive library for information about everything from video/photo sharing to social networking.

### Resources for Educators

[www.NetSmartz.org/education](http://www.NetSmartz.org/education) is a must-see for teachers, catechetical leaders and youth ministers. This site offers guides for using the NetSmartz materials and web sites, downloadable videos and activities, plus complete presentations, available at [www.NetSmartz.org/Presentations](http://www.NetSmartz.org/Presentations), for teens, kids, and parents/guardians. All of these resources are free! I downloaded the Teens and Tweens presentation, and was very impressed. With these tools you could easily offer an in-depth Internet Safety presentation yourself.

**If you are interested in learning more about the NetSmartz.org resources, get in touch with me!**

There will also be another **free** C.L.I.C.K.S. Train the Trainer Program: September 26, 2007 - 2-4 PM, at the Montgomery County Council Hearing Room, Rockville, MD. It would be well worth your time! Visit <http://www.oag.state.md.us/clicks.htm> for more information.

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<sup>1</sup>Source for descriptions and images: <http://www.netsmartz.org/overview/overview.htm>

"When I was 13 I started talking to Tom. He didn't act or even sound like a 56-year-old man..."

"It went from just friends to best friends to a more personal relationship than best friends..."

"He mentioned, wouldn't it be nice if we were together all the time and then the thought came up of running away..."

"I ran away for 3 weeks...Somebody reported us and saw our truck. I knew pretty much, it's over..."

"He sent a letter to me saying that he was going to kill me if he ever got out of jail..."

"I would never do it again."

- real quotes from "[Julie's Journey](#)," a NetSmartz video for teens