

Tell Me About MySpace!

There are three definitions for “MySpace:”

1. *My Space as defined by Google* – www.myspace.com (or MySpace) “a free service that uses the Internet for online communication through an interactive network of photos, weblogs, user profiles, e-mail, web forums, and groups, as well as other media formats. This all-inclusive service is sometimes called a social networking interface. MySpace is a very active site, and additions and new features are being added constantly.” ***In other words:*** MySpace is a place where you can have your own website, meet people and keep in touch through blog, forums, email, groups, games and events.
2. *My Space as defined by teens* – MySpace is a place where I can be myself. A place where I can share my most secret thoughts with my friends without having to face them.
3. *MySpace as defined by parents* – A bad place where kids can get into a lot of trouble!!! There can be a lot of good in using MySpace as it was intended—networking between teachers and students; youth leaders and kids; etc., but most parents agree that they can’t seem to find anything good about it.

What do kids like most about MySpace?

- “Having my own website gives me a chance to express myself and to be me or to be someone else if I want to! ***It’s my space!*** I can add pictures, music, anything I want to!”

So what’s wrong with that?

- What kids don’t understand is that they are making their personal information and private thoughts ***public*** knowledge. Posting all of this makes them feel grown-up. What they don’t realize is that in doing this they are becoming like a puppet on a string. They are making it possible for a complete stranger to take control of their life.
- Any time personal information and pictures are posted on the Internet, they may be there forever and for the whole world to see. Most teens think only their friends will see their website.
- Personal websites, chat rooms, all areas of Instant Messaging are where predators hang out looking for their next victim.
- When a teen posts their information they are also making it available to other teens who may want to cause problems for them. With the click of a mouse another teen can create a bad reputation for your child. They can take a picture and personal information and change it to be anything bad they may want it to be and then send it out to everyone they know ***and*** everyone you know! It is hard to overcome a bad reputation—even one that is not deserved.

What should you do if your child is involved in MySpace communication?

- Set ground rules. Just as you make certain places away from home off limits, agree together about places on the Internet that may be off limits.
- Teach your kids to use common sense and not post personal information that can lead strangers to them. Using the computer is a privilege. You can’t get a driver’s license until you learn safe driving rules and pass a test. The same should be true of the computer. Be sure they know the rules and earn the right to enter the highway of the World Wide Web! Social Networking websites are dangerous if the rules of Safety On The Internet are not followed! Don’t let your child become a puppet on a string.