

Online safety.

YP4L is dedicated to making this site fun, innovative and safe for its users. But no matter how careful a site is, whenever lots of people hang out online, it's inevitable that some things will go wrong. Some people forget their manners when they're online. They may do this thinking they can't be discovered or held accountable. They may think they are invulnerable or not realize the risk involved. Sometimes they don't think at all.

While we can help address problems and abuses reported to us it ultimately is up to us to protect ourselves in cyberspace (and up to parents and guardians to protect their children and dependants).

The problems encountered in social networking or other anonymous online communities typically fall into three categories:

- ID theft, fraud and privacy abuses;
 - cyberbullying, cyberstalking and harassment; and
 - sexual predators, con artists and sexual exploitation.
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- **Minimum Age at YP4L:** YP4L sets the minimum age of their users at 13. and we mean it. While we can't know anyone's real age, if an underage user is reported to us and we can confirm from statements on their profile page that they are underage, they will be notified. Unless they can prove that they are 13 their profile page will be deleted.
 - **For Parents and Guardians:** Don't panic – as a Diocese we have worked hard to try and ensure that browsing this website is as safe as possible. With a little common sense, and good guidance, visiting our website should be a fun and safe experience. Make sure you're your child/dependant is not sharing too much personal information on their profile and that it is publicly viewable. Remind them to password protect anything personal and only allow their real life friends to have access. Make sure that your child/dependant does not communicate with strangers who try and contact them at the site. You can learn more about online safety by visiting WiredSafety.org.
 - **Keep Your Personal Information to Yourself:** Never divulge any personal information that could be used to find or identify you in real life in a public forum. Password protect this information. This information includes your real name, address, telephone number, mobile number, your workplace, health club, or links to websites or other profiles that might give this information away. It also includes this kind of information about your friends and family. You may be sharing more information than you intended to by including a pic with something showing in the photo. Your personal information could be easily abused and misused. Your password could be guessed, your identity could even be stolen, it could be used by people wanting to defraud you or groom a teen into an offline meeting, or used to cyberstalk or harass you or by cyberbullies. It's your personal information...PROTECT IT!
 - **They are Just People You Meet Online, Not Real Friends:** Remember that your online friends are not really your friends. You may like them, think they understand the real you and even connect. But, unless you know them offline, they are not real friends. They are just cyberfriends. You don't know if that cute twenty-year old guy is cute, twenty or even a guy. Treat them like strangers you encounter on a bus. Chat with them, but don't share too much with them. They should not be entrusted to provide you with advice about important life issues, or confided in, no matter how tempting it may be. No matter how often you have chatted with someone or how much you think you know about them, you never really know who you are chatting with online. People who are cleverer than you have been tricked. Don't become a victim! If in doubt, report a user immediately.
 - **Meeting Offline:** Don't!!

- **Protect Your E-Mail Address:** Use a free e-mail service, such as yahoo or hotmail. That way if things go wrong, you can just delete that account and don't put your own e-mail address at risk. Also, get a good SPAM blocker program and never reply to SPAM asking to be removed from their lists. At best, your response never makes it to the sender. At worst, you are now identified as someone who reads the SPAM and are in demand by all SPAMMER lists.
- **Are You Really Willing to Let Your Boss or Parents Read Your Profile:** Don't post anything in public that you don't want your parents, principal, boss, teacher, university president or boyfriend or girlfriend to see. These posts tend to last longer than any of us thought they could. They are passed around and discoverable by search engines. You are never truly private when online. Remember that. Password protect everything and guard your password.
- **Protect your computer:** Make sure you have a good firewall and an automatically updated anti-virus program installed on your computer. While you're at it, get a good spyware or adware blocker too. And be careful about downloading or opening files sent to you, even from people you know. Many viruses masquerade as someone you know. And hacking tools and programs (such as Trojan horses) can give someone a backdoor to your computer, all your passwords and banking information.
- **Protect Your Password!** Keep your password to yourself and don't pick one that's easy to guess. (Keeping it on a post-it note glued to your monitor may not be the best way of storing your password securely.) To protect yourself from strangers pretending to be someone else come up with a secret code word for friends. If you are chatting with someone and suspect that it may be a stranger ask them for the code word. If they don't know it, log-off. (It could be a crook, their friend, roommate, or parent!) And know that the people who abuse your password the most are your close friends. So make sure you don't share it with them either.
- **Get a Life!** YP4L want you to spend lots of time enjoying the site. But do make sure that you don't spend all of your time online. Don't give up on your offline friends or social life!
- **Don't be an easy mark.** I am always amazed at how many otherwise intelligent people are conned online by offers that are obviously too good to be true. If something seems too good to be true, it's not true. No exceptions. Does it make sense to you that the brother-in-law of the former Nigerian president found you out of the 700 million other users online to entrust with their 500 million dollars? Read the tip immediately above. You need a life!
- **ThinkB4UClick:** Before posting something online, check and make sure it says what you wanted it to say, can't be misconstrued and is being posted at the right place or sent to the right person. Think about the person on the other side. Many cyberwars start with a careless message.
- **Don't bite at a "phishing" scheme.** Phishing is when an ID thief sends millions of e-mails or IMs pretending to be your bank, or online service, like Paypal. They look real and try to scare you into reacting without thinking. They claim that someone has broken into your account, or that changes were made to your account. They ask you to log in using the link in the e-mail. The link takes you to their site, but you think you're at your bank's site. You type in your login and password. A page pops up telling you that your account is secure and thanking you. Your real account is accessed and emptied within minutes. If you aren't sure if the e-mail is real or not, check with the site directly by typing it into your browser. If you were already caught by a "phish" report it to your bank or the website right away.
- **Let us know if there is a problem.** YP4L doesn't permit anything that hurts their members.
- **Tell a Trusted Adult and Report Cybercrime:** If you are a minor (under 18 years of age), make sure that you tell your parents or another trusted adult if something goes wrong. Don't try and handle it yourself. If it involves dangerous or criminal activity, or someone you

suspect is a predator or criminal, report it to the police. Bring them a printout, but also make sure it isn't deleted. The police need the original communication to check out the headers and other information necessary to trace the communication. If you have been sexually exploited and need some help in reporting it, visit katiesplace.org.

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Leicester, 2007.