



## Who is responsible for protecting teens from online predators?

### GETTING ORIENTED

The weekly passage covers issues related to Internet safety. Here is some information that might be helpful to students less familiar with the topic.

#### Legal Ages

In most of the United States an 18 year-old is considered a legal adult. This means they are old enough to legally work, vote, marry, join the military and give sexual consent. If a young person is under 18, they can get written consent or permission from their parents for some purposes. The idea is that at 18 most young people are old enough to make thoughtful, mature decisions. Their parents are no longer responsible for them. The age of 18, as the legal adult age, has changed over the years. For example, until 1971, with the passing of the 26<sup>th</sup>

Amendment, the legal age to vote in the United States was 21. The argument to pass the 26<sup>th</sup> Amendment was that young men and women went to war and often were killed at the age of 18, but they were still not allowed to vote.



#### Predators

The word *predator* comes from the word *prey*. In fact, the definition of the word predator is, “any organism that exists by *preying* on or harming others.” Most animals in the animal kingdom prey on other animals for their survival. A lion, for example, is a predator of other smaller animals that they kill for food. Among humans, this word has come to have a sexual connotation or meaning. An online predator is an adult who uses the Internet to find children or teens, usually for sexual or other abusive purposes.



#### National Center for Missing and Exploited Children

The main function of this organization is to help parents and law enforcement agencies find missing children. It also works to make the public more aware of how to prevent child kidnapping, child abuse, and child pornography. This organization has released a couple of books to help children and parents think about how to remain safe from online predators. The organization emphasizes the importance of parents talking to their children about safety so that they know what to do in a real life situation.



#### Social Networking

The first social networking sites began in 1994 and 1995. The idea was simply to have easier interaction, particularly for business people. Online networking was very good for people who did business internationally and had major time differences in their workdays. Chat rooms were created so that people could easily discuss their ideas. In the late 1990s more sophisticated or advanced features were developed to help users with similar interests to find each other. Online networking was such an easy way to communicate that it quickly became a mainstream Internet activity for anyone interested in communicating with others regarding any interest or activity around the world.





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### EVIDENCE AND PERSPECTIVES

|   | <i>Some may have this view:</i>   | <i>But others may think:</i>  |
|---|---|---|
| <b>Teens</b>                                    | Most teens want to have access to the Internet. They believe that they are grown up enough to make their own decisions when they are in their own homes. Some young people are much more curious about interaction on the Internet. They think it is exciting to get to know strangers online. They don't feel fearful since they believe they can stop chatting with anyone they aren't enjoying. They feel that it is their right as an American to be able to use the Internet and say what they want.   | Many teens have been brought up with great trust in their parents, and they are willing to do what their parents say. They believe their parents are more knowledgeable than they are and are perfectly willing to follow their parents' rules when it comes to the Internet or anything else. If their parents say that chatting with strangers on the Internet is not a good idea, they believe their parents are right. They may or may not feel that the school or the web site has any particular responsibility.  |
| <b>Parents</b>                                  | Many parents believe that the Internet web sites such as Facebook have a social responsibility to protect children. They believe that young people are not sophisticated enough to make intelligent decisions when dealing with strangers. They say that, by law, that the public must protect young people until they are 18 years old. Their biggest argument is that no one knows whether people in chat rooms are telling the truth. Many parents believe teens want to think that strangers are telling the truth rather than being distrustful. They may also believe that schools should not allow students to access web sites like Facebook. Many of their fears are a result of reading about horrible things that have happened to young people when they have met these online predators. | Although most parents would probably be in favor of monitoring some web sites in schools, they believe it is their responsibility to protect their own children. They believe they have the ability to talk to their teens about the dangers of online predators. They have spent a lot of time talking to their children and parenting in such a way that they feel their children trust them and will be aware of the dangers of getting involved with someone they don't know. They believe that allowing their children to chat with people around the world about their interests is generally a good thing. |
| <b>Producers of Social Networking Web Sites</b> | Social networking producers do not want the responsibility of trying to protect teens from online predators. They set up their networks for other purposes that they believe are useful and enjoyable for many different kinds of people. They have lots of money at stake when they set up their businesses and don't want to have to spend more money on restrictions that will limit their businesses. They want everything to be left the way it is.  | Although some producers of social networks may feel an obligation to protect minors, they don't see how it is possible to protect everyone in this kind of world. They know that teens can get around any restrictions that they make, but they do feel obligated or responsible to make some restrictions.   |

- ✓ The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children shows that approximately 35 percent of attempted abductions of children occurred when the child was going to and from school.
- ✓ One in five U.S. teenagers who regularly log on to the Internet say they have received an unwanted sexual solicitation via the Web (Crimes Against Children Research Center).
- ✓ 24% of Americans say that they are not at all confident in their ability to use privacy settings on social networking sites.
- ✓ 77% of the targets for online predators are age 14 or older. Another 22% are ages 10-13.

- ✓ A teen is not an adult until 18 years old and parents can file a police report if their son/daughter runs away. According to Chapter 63 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, law enforcement agents are required to bring a teenager back to his/her parent if found.

#### Additional Information for Teachers

Learn statistical information about online predators  
[www.sentrypc.com/statistics.htm](http://www.sentrypc.com/statistics.htm)

Read about the age of consent.  
[chnm.gmu.edu/cyh/teaching-modules/230-](http://chnm.gmu.edu/cyh/teaching-modules/230-)

Enough is Enough: Making the Internet Safer for Children and Families  
<http://www.internetsafety101.org/Socialnetworkingstats.htm>



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### ANNOTATIONS FOR TEACHERS

#### Features of Academic Text: *Dense and concise*

Word Generation's Weekly Passages are not overly academic. In fact, they can be used to illustrate the differences between academic and more accessible texts. For example, the four sentences in the second paragraph can be combined for an example of more academic writing:

"Sometimes forty and fifty-year-olds pose as teenagers on MySpace and say sexual things to real teenagers, while at the same time hoping to get personal information such as a phone number or an address."

Ask students to look at the third paragraph. Try to rewrite the paragraph in a single sentence.

"While most teenagers want to have as many online friends as possible, they need to learn how to deal with strangers and not accept just any "friend request."

Sixteen-year-old Matt describes himself as a 24-year-old intellectual on his MySpace profile. He says it is "easier to be taken seriously if people don't know they're talking to a 16 year-old" (Lenhart & Madden, 2007). Matt's story is an example of how easy it is to lie on social networking websites.

Matt's lie may seem harmless, but some lies can put people in danger.

Sometimes forty- and fifty-year-olds pose as teenagers on MySpace. Sometimes they contact teenagers through the website to try to become their friends. Sometimes they say sexual things. Sometimes they will ask for personal information, such as a telephone number or an address. The adults are looking for someone to harm or exploit, and they think lonely or insecure teens are prime targets. These adults are called online predators. It is sometimes difficult for a teenager to know how to deal with strangers online. Many teenagers try to have as many MySpace friends as possible. They often accept any "friend request."

Some people think MySpace should be responsible for protecting teens from online predators. They say that MySpace needs to do more to ensure that people are not posing as someone else. For example, they believe that MySpace should find a method to

check users' real identities. Others believe that MySpace should raise the minimum age to 18 instead of the current limit, 14. Raising the **minimum** age will not stop impostors, but might make teenagers and parents more aware of the dangers. Moreover, eighteen-year-olds are legal adults and should be able to use MySpace safely.

Others say MySpace cannot do any more than it is already doing. There is no method to check a user's real identity. If MySpace raises the minimum age, teens might go to **unmonitored** websites. These websites may be even more dangerous. Some think middle and high school students should have their own social networking site that has the safeguard of a school-affiliated email address.

Some think that the schools have enough to do and it would be too difficult and costly for them to protect teens from online predators. They think parents are responsible for keeping their children safe by monitoring their teen's internet use. For example, putting the family computer in a common space, such as the living room or family den, is one way that parents can monitor their internet activities.

What do you think? Who should protect teens from online predators?



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### GENERATING WORDS

#### Clarifying Meaning – roots and multiple parts of speech

#### prime

The word **prime** has a variety of meanings and should be examined carefully in order to be used correctly.

The root of **prime** comes from the Latin *prima* meaning first. The **prime** is the first stage of something.

Look **prime** up in the dictionary and you will see that it can be a noun, an adjective or a verb.

**prime** (noun) - most important part of something

The athlete was in the **prime** of his life when he was arrested for having drugs.

**prime** (adjective) - the best or most important

Teens are a **prime** target for Internet predators.

to **prime** (verb) - to prepare or make something ready

My teacher **primed** us for the field trip by explaining everything we would see at the museum.

Here are some other ways that you may see or hear the word *prime* or variations of the word.

- **prime minister** -- the leader of a government (the first minister)
- **prime numbers** -- a number greater than 1 and exactly divisible only by 1 and itself.
- **primer** -- a children's book for the time when a child learns to read
- **primary** -- first stage of development, or beginning school grades
- A person in his/her **prime**, is in the most important, strongest time of life.
- A **primitive** tool is something that people used thousands of years ago or something that is very old and does not make use of modern technology.



In a group or with a partner, think of other words that contain this root. Try to use the words in a sentence.





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### DEVELOPING DISCUSSIONS

What's **wrong** with this conversation?



#### Paired Academic Conversation: Elaboration

We often have conversations because we want to understand something better or learn more. In order to make this understanding happen, people must have a few skills. One skill that people need is to **challenge**, or **question** more. In order for you and your conversation partner to have a new and better understanding of the topic, you need to challenge each other.

Adults should just not talk to kids on the internet

Really?

Yeah. They should only talk to other adults

Are you sure?

Yes. That's why I said it.

Well...

Is there something you're not saying to me?

Words and phrases that people say when they need to challenge someone:

- I am not sure that... will work because... But I do agree that...
- I wonder if that is even possible to...
- Perhaps, but it might be more feasible to...
- Maybe a middle ground might be...
- While I understand why you say... have you considered...
- Why do you think that?
- What do you mean by...

Words and phrases that people say when they are responding to a challenge:

- Let me explain my reason...
- I think we can meet in the middle if you will agree that...
- I hadn't thought of that, but...
- I originally thought... but now...

**Directions:** Have an academic conversation with your partner about who is responsible for protecting teens from online predators. Partner A should read any of the statements below. Partner B should ask for elaboration by using some of the words and phrases above. Partner A responds. Switch roles.

#### Statement Card

- "Online predators pose a huge threat to young people using the internet."
- "The minimum age for using social network sites should be 18."
- "The government should monitor and prosecute all people who lie online."
- "Parents should be required to monitor and have access to their children's accounts."

#### Points I want to remember:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_