

{plugged in}

Safer Summer Downtime

By Sharon Miller Cindrich

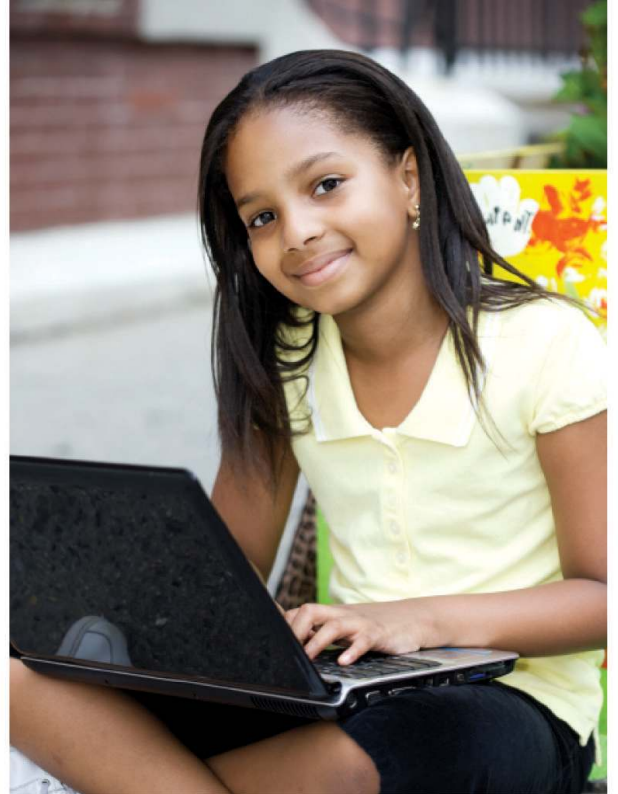
Q: Our computer is in a main area of our home, but with school out for the summer, my kids will be home with a sitter some days—and might be on their own occasionally. How can I boost our Internet security?

While kids enjoy their summer break, less structured days could mean trouble if your Internet security isn't up to snuff. To prepare for summer downtime, follow these simple tips:

MAKE NEW RULES FOR SUMMER. In our home, the computer stays off from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., just like during the school year. Whether you limit computer time to an hour a day, or just weekend use, create new rules for summer that accommodate your ability to supervise computer use.

TALK TO CAREGIVERS. If your child is in the care of someone else this summer—and especially if they are not in your home—explain your concerns about Internet use and security. Even children who know their limitations at home can be tempted to push boundaries when they are in front of a caregiver's computer.

CHECK THE HISTORY. Hold down the "Ctrl" key and hit the "H" key to check your computer's Internet history. A regular check can let you know that your parental security settings are working and that your kids are following the house rules.



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CONSIDER MONITORING SOFTWARE. Some software programs allow you to make records of your child's computer activities or monitor activity remotely from work. Check into programs like Spector Pro (www.spector.com) and PC Pandora (www.pcpandora.com) to find parental monitoring software that fits your needs. *ap*

Sharon Miller Cindrich is a mother of two and the author of E-Parenting: Keeping Up with your Tech-Savvy Kids. www.SharonMillerCindrich.com

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