SURF SWELL ISLAND PARENTS' GUIDE

SURF SWELL ISLAND AND YOUR FAMILY:

Surf Swell Island is a place on the Internet where kids and parents can learn about Internet safety. We at The Walt Disney Company believe that children of all ages learn best when they are relaxed and having a good time. That's why we have chosen to address this very serious topic in a fun and engaging forum.

We hope parents will use this site to learn about some of the issues facing kids as they become familiar with computers and the World Wide Web. We also hope that parents will use this site to learn more about how their children think about and perceive the Web.

SOME THOUGHTS ON HOW KIDS GROW AND LEARN:

Not surprisingly, children of different ages will interact with this site differently. Although each child is unique in personality and learning, children of certain age groups tend to share some similar characteristics. Preschool-age children are working hard to learn to communicate and behave in a complicated world. They also tend to be very "magical" in their thinking, which affects how they reason and what they believe. During middle childhood, seven- eight-, and nine-year-old children often become very industrious, working hard to solve problems and create rules that guide them through the world and their social interactions. Children in this age group tend to be very invested in what is fair and not fair, as well as the difference between right and wrong. Time on the playground is often spent negotiating the rules of the game as much as playing that game. As children grow toward early adolescence they turn to their friends more often and may become more private than before.

What kids have mastered in these age groups can vary dramatically. Some may be great readers; others may love puzzles or painting. As a parent, you know your kids better than anyone and can help them learn in the way that works best for them. We recommend sitting by your child or being nearby while he or she plays on Surf Swell Island. Casually and nonjudgmentally observing your child's play on this site can open up opportunities for you to guide, share, and reinforce learning about Internet safety. Following are some ideas for using this site with your family.

CONTENT OVERVIEW:

The Surf Swell Island site is a quiz-driven adventure game. Here we present Internet safety material in a series of three games, each featuring a classic Disney character and focusing on an area of concern: privacy, viruses, or netiquette (guidelines for behavior on the Internet). A mini-quiz follows each of the three games, reinforcing what was presented. The exciting Challenge of Doom mega-quiz brings together the content from the first three games. Answering correctly gives children access to a collection of fun Surf Swell-themed activities located in the password-protected Treasure Palace.

Woven throughout the Surf Swell Island site are visual and written references to wireless devices, particularly handheld PCs. Although good behavior on the Internet is the same regardless of how you are connecting, we felt it was important to acknowledge the wireless movement, because this simple fact may not be apparent to children. In addition, many parents who are already aware of the wisdom of keeping the computer in a central location may not know that their children will soon be able to access the Internet through their handheld computer games and other wireless devices.

SOME HELPFUL TIPS:

Sitting nearby allows you to make a mental note of areas that seem to be more difficult for your child. Chat casually with your child about these areas later.
Some of the ideas presented on the Surf Swell Island site may be difficult for a child to understand. For example, it is sometimes challenging even for adults to understand what information is safe to share online and what information should be considered strictly private. Watch how your child plays the games and see where mistakes are made. Does she think it's OK to share her name on the Web? Does he understand the difference between his real name and his user name (sometimes referred to as log-in or member name) or nickname? Does it seem as if she has learned from the experience of getting the question wrong and trying again? Make note of these things and chat about them later to reinforce the lessons. Use the pauses between games as a time to discuss what was just learned.

Being nearby as your child explores the Surf Swell Island site means you're on hand to answer questions.
Although children are inundated with information about computers and the Internet, they might not know some of the basic online terminology or lingo. If it seems your child doesn't understand something, feel free to provide that information, or use our glossary to look it up together. Encourage questions, and don't worry if you don't know the answer. Learning is something we do at all ages, and finding the answers together can be fun and rewarding. This also sends the message that it's OK not to know everything and that there are tools your child can use to find out what he needs to know. Who knows, maybe you'll learn something too! :)

Sitting by your child lets you be there as questions about the Internet, wireless devices, or Internet safety and privacy arise.
Your child may look to you for guidance on how to answer a question. Don't be afraid to jump in and help. You can do this and still allow for fun playing the game by asking questions that help guide your child to the answers. This is an excellent way to problem-solve situations that may be encountered on the Web. A good guiding question is open-ended and leaves room for your child to think about the problem, rather than receiving a clear answer. Open-ended questions use words like "how," "tell me," and "what is" to open the door to conversation and give your child a chance to tell you what she is thinking and feeling. This knowledge in turn empowers you to teach what's necessary to be safe. On the other hand,

questions that begin with "is" or "do" -- such as "Is it okay to share your real name on the Internet?" or "Do you like the Surf Swell Island games?" -- tend to elicit single-word answers like "yes" or "no" and are not very effective for encouraging conversation. If you start with a question that gets you a "yes" or "no" answer, follow it up with another question that begins with "why?"

Don't worry if your child gets some questions wrong or has trouble with some of the material presented on the site.
This is not a test! Anything your child doesn't know or needs help understanding is an opportunity for the two of you to talk. That's what this is all about – making sure you can have an open dialogue about these issues. Join in the play on Surf Swell Island and see what you can do together. You may want to point out how great it is that together you can finish all the games when it may be hard for one of you to do it alone. Let your child know that you are there for him anytime he encounters something on the Web that may be too difficult, confusing, or even scary. Make a promise to your child and to yourself that you will never over-react if something goes wrong online. Open communication and trust between the two of you is essential to your child's safety and security online.