

# Online Network Safety Tips

An Online Network is a site which allows people to search for and view personal information about others.

Features of these online networks include: picture posting, posting of identifiable demographic information, physical location disclosure, blogging, file-sharing, social calendar ability, and the ability to write and receive comments from others.

These online networks are a great way to advertise for programs, receive homework help, personally express oneself, and catch up on campus events. However, there are risks associated with online communities. Below are some safety tips which pertain to online networks.

## Information Disclosure

- *Everything a user posts online is optional.* Information such as home address, school address, cell phone number, class schedule, email address, AIM screen name, birthday, and more can be used to positively identify a user.
- *A positive identification may lead to personal harm.* Identity theft, stalking, or harassment can occur.
- *The information posted may affect other individuals.* A roommate or family member may unintentionally become affected by a user's posted information.

## Personal Control

- *Once the user posts information, all control over personal information is then diminished or lost completely.* As soon as a user enters information into the system, anyone can view that information.
- *The user should understand and edit the privacy settings associated with his or her personal profile.* Online communities constantly change safety features, therefore users should check regularly and frequently to see if anything has changed.
- *Users should be aware of who can view his or her profile.* Prospective employers, family members, staff members, and professors may one day view the profile.

## Communication with Others

- *Users should exercise caution when communicating with others via online communities.* Chatting, messaging, and commenting on other user profiles can offer a falsified sense of closeness with other online users. The user should take precaution by continually evaluating their physical and emotional safety with online and personal relationships.

## User Intent

- *Not all online community members log on with the same intentions.* While many users log on to take advantage of the positive aspects of online networks, some users aim to use the posted information in a negative manner. Some of these intents might include identity theft, stalking, or harassment.

## Authenticity

- *Authenticity of users is not confirmed.* Online, users do not have to disclose any truthful information. Users may not use their true identity when communicating and posting information.

## For More Information

The following websites contain valuable information regarding online safety.

<http://www.isafe.org>

<http://www.wiredsafety.org>

<http://viewmorepics.myspace.com/misc/safetytips.html>

Oregon State University Contacts

Dean of Student Life: 737-8748; [www.oregonstate.edu/deanofstudents](http://www.oregonstate.edu/deanofstudents)

Department of Public Safety: 737-3010; [www.oregonstate.edu/dept/security](http://www.oregonstate.edu/dept/security)