

# GETTING STARTED WITH CYBER SECURITY AWARENESS



Your son or daughter is taking part in classroom lessons from the CyberSmart! Student Curriculum that will help your family begin a dialogue about cyber security. CyberSmart!'s approach is research-based, focusing on best practices from the cyber security industry.

CyberSmart! believes students need to safely use the Internet for learning, for socializing, and for preparing for college and 21<sup>st</sup> century work and citizenship.

Firewalls, antivirus software, and other technological solutions for safeguarding personal data and computer networks are essential but not sufficient to ensure security. Ultimately, cyber security depends on the care that people take and the decisions they make when they set up, maintain, and use computers and the Internet. That is why the CyberSmart! curriculum teaches critical thinking and decision-making skills.

## What is cyber security and why is it important?

Learning about cyber security issues can make your entire family feel more secure and safe when they go online. Cyber security is a set of practices that protect the information stored on computers and computing devices and transmitted over computer networks, including the Internet and cell phones.

### Here's what we teach, at appropriate grades, about cyber security:

- All computers connected to the Internet are vulnerable to attacks—at home, school, work, and the library. Regardless of the type of attack—virus, worm, Trojan, phishing, pharming, or others—there are ways for computer users to avoid them.
- Because many young people are more computer-savvy than their parents, they have a responsibility to help their families develop good cyber security practices.
- Children, teens, and adults are all targets for identity theft. Identity thieves collect, steal, and use private identity information—such as Social Security numbers—to pretend to be that person and then obtain driver's licenses or get credit cards in the stolen name.
- Private identity information includes a person's full name, postal address, e-mail address, phone numbers, credit and debit card numbers, and Social Security numbers.
- Passwords can get into the wrong hands when students willingly share them with their friends, when they can be guessed by someone who knows you, and when they are "cracked" by professional criminals.
- The most secure passwords are made up of combinations of eight or more letters, numbers, and symbols. They never use private information or information that can be easily guessed, and they do not contain words found in a dictionary.
- Don't open e-mails or accept instant messages from people you don't know. Don't reply to spam. Never click on links or download files unless you are sure they are safe.

### Here's what families can do:

- Start a conversation with your children about what they do online. Let them know that you understand how important using the Internet and other networked devices, such as cell phones, are to their lives.
- Let your children know that security challenges—such as protecting the identities of family members, protecting the information stored on computers, and preventing breakdowns of computers and networks—are a shared responsibility of the whole family.
- Review password security with your family. Make sure you know the passwords of your younger children and that all family members are following rules for creating secure passwords, protecting them, and changing them at least every six months.
- Talk about the security risks associated with tempting online offers such as free downloads, file-sharing, messages offering ways to make fast money, free giveaways, and chain letters. Discuss ways to handle them.
- Involve the entire family in creating and updating a twice-yearly family cyber security plan, including installing firewalls, updating security software, protecting wireless networks, and backing up data regularly.
- If you think your family has been the target of identity theft or other online fraud, contact the Federal Trade Commission ([www.ftc.gov](http://www.ftc.gov)) to learn what to do.