



Tom Green County Library Internet Safety Policy

PURPOSE

The Tom Green County Library System provides filtered access to the Internet as one means of fulfilling its mission to "provide the tools and resources that will afford each resident of the County the opportunity to succeed in a quest for knowledge, information, and personal enrichment." All Internet resources accessible through the Library are provided equally to all users, with the understanding that it is the individual user's responsibility to demonstrate judgment, respect for others, and appropriate conduct while using Public Library resources and facilities.

Internet computers will not be used by anyone, including minors, for illegal activity, to access illegal materials, or to access materials that by local community standards would be objectionable. Library employees are authorized to take prompt and appropriate actions to enforce the Rules of Conduct, and/or to prohibit use by individuals who fail to comply with the Internet Safety Policy as stated or implied herein. Parents are responsible for their minor children's use of the Library's resources and facilities. Parents who believe that their minor children cannot responsibly use the Library's Internet access are requested to monitor their children's Internet use.

DISCLAIMER

The Tom Green County Library cannot control the content of resources available on the Internet and cannot be held responsible for its content. The Internet offers open access to information, ideas and commentary from around the world in an unregulated medium. As such, it offers access to a wealth of material that is personally, professionally, and culturally enriching to individuals of all ages, but also enables access to material that some may find offensive, disturbing and/or illegal, inaccurate or incomplete. The availability of information does not constitute endorsement of the content by the Tom Green County Library. The Internet, as an information resource, enables the Library to provide information beyond the confines of its own collection. Library users use it at their own risk. Use of Internet resources carries with it a responsibility to evaluate the quality of the information accessed. **Access, use, or dissemination of information via the Internet in the Library is the responsibility of the user. In the case of minors, it is a joint responsibility of the user and the parent or guardian.** The public library, unlike schools, does not serve in place of a parent. Librarians cannot act in the place of parents in providing constant care and supervision of children as they explore the Internet. The responsibility for what minors read or

view on the Internet rests solely with the parents or guardians. (See Guidance for Supervising Children's Use section in this document.)

PRIVACY

The Tom Green County Library seeks to protect the First Amendment rights of its customers and their individual right to privacy. However, Internet users must be sensitive to the fact that workstations are in public areas and, therefore, images on the screen are subject to view by a wide audience. Privacy of the user can not be protected in the public environment of the library. Users are urged to respect the sensibilities of others when accessing information that may reasonably be offensive to someone else. However, absolute privacy for individuals using electronic resources in the Library cannot be guaranteed. There exists a possibility of inadvertent viewing by others, either by watching the user's screen, or because a user may leave the screen unattended. The "Rules of Conduct" applies to the behavior of individuals using electronic equipment and resources. Failure to follow this policy could result in the loss of computer privileges. Users are cautioned that the Internet is not a secure environment. Personal information included in all transactions, files and communications may be subject to unauthorized access by third parties. The Tom Green County Library respects the confidentiality of those using its electronic resources and will only release library records as required by law or for the Library's operations.

ACCEPTABLE USE

1) Public Internet computers may be used to access a variety of electronic communication resources including email and chat rooms. Although the Library does not provide email accounts to users, computers may be used to access free email accounts available from a variety of sources. Users, including minors, are warned that other individuals may obtain unauthorized access to personal information and/or may misrepresent themselves. Users, including minors, are advised not to share personal identification information to unknown or otherwise unverified sources via electronic communication.

2) Public Internet computers may be used to access games.

3) Public Internet computers may not be used by ANY user to access inappropriate or illegal materials, including, but not limited to, material of an obscene nature or child pornography. Minors are prohibited from accessing materials considered to be "harmful to minors."

4) Public Internet computers may be used to access information, except as otherwise specified as unacceptable, from a variety of sources such as

educational or commercial web sites. The user is the selector of the material accessed and is therefore the responsible party. The user is responsible for complying with all restrictions governing access to specific sites. Any fees are the responsibility of the user, not the Library. In the case of minors, fees are the fiscal responsibility of the parent or guardian. In no event shall the Tom Green County Library have any liability for lost profits or for any direct or indirect special, punitive or consequential damages, or any liability to any third party.

RULES OF CONDUCT

1) Internet computers will not be used for illegal activity, to access illegal materials, or to access materials that by local community standards would be objectionable. (Illegal materials include, but are not limited to, obscenity and child pornography as defined in U.S. Code Title 18 and State Penal Code Chapters 42 and 43.) Access by minors to materials deemed "harmful to minors" is prohibited. Library Administration reserves the right to determine, based on community standards, materials considered to be "harmful to minors."

2) Installation, downloading, or modification of software is prohibited.

3) Users will respect copyright laws and licensing agreements. Materials obtained or copied on the Internet may be subject to laws that govern making reproductions of copyrighted works. A work protected by copyright may not be copied without permission of the copyright owner unless the proposed use falls within the definition of "Fair Use." Customers are responsible for compliance with all international, national and state laws governing copyrighted materials.

4) Users, including minors, will not make any attempt to misuse the computer. Misuse includes, but is not limited to, using the computer for illegal activities; hacking into the library computer system or any other computer system; damaging or attempting to damage computer equipment or software; interfering with systems operations, integrity or security; gaining unauthorized access to another person's files; sending harassing messages to other computer users; altering or attempting to alter the library computer's settings; and violating copyright laws and software licensing agreements. Misuse of the computer may result in the loss of computer privileges, potential loss of library privileges and possible prosecution. Damages resulting from the misuse are the responsibility of the user, or in the case of minors, the parent or guardian.

5) Prompt payment is required by users who incur charges for printing or other authorized fees.

- 6) Users must sign up to use the Internet on a next-available-computer basis. Computers will be "reserved" for persons who utilize the library computer reservation system.
- 7) Access will be limited to two, one-hour sessions per day.
- 8) A valid library card, free of fines and fees, or Internet access card is required to access the Internet.
- 9) Internet access is available during the library's normal open hours. **The computers will be shut down at 10 minutes before closing time.**
- 10) Users will end their session and leave the computer when asked to do so by authorized Library staff, even if they have not completed their access session.
- 11) Users will respect the privacy of other library users and will refrain from attempting to view or read material being used by others. Users are prohibited from the unauthorized disclosure, use, or dissemination of personal information of others. Users are prohibited from misrepresenting oneself to others. Users, including minors, are warned that other individuals may obtain unauthorized access to personal information and/or may misrepresent themselves.
- 12) Use of access stations is limited to one person at a time. Library staff will determine exceptions.

USE OF A TECHNOLOGY PROTECTION MEASURE (Compliance with Children's Internet Protection Act)

The Tom Green County Library has installed a filtering software product on all Internet access computers. The installation of such a product is the Library's means to comply with specific federal legislation. The Tom Green County Library uses federal funds in a manner identified in Title XVII: The Children's Internet Protection Act requiring compliance with regulations specified in that legislation. Compliance includes the installation and enforcement of a technology protection measure to prohibit access by ANY user to graphic depictions of illegal materials as defined by U.S. Code Title 18. The legislation also includes specific language prohibiting access by minors to materials considered to be "harmful to minors." The filtering software product (which is not under the control of the Library) may restrict access to sites that could be deemed objectionable, but may also limit access to sites that have legitimate research value. No filtering system is completely effective or efficient. Users are warned that objectionable and/or illegal materials may still be accessible through the filtering software.

Users are reminded that they are responsible for acting in accordance with "The Rules of Conduct."

TERMINATION OR PROHIBITION OF USER ACCESS

When Library employees believe that the user has failed to comply with the Internet Safety Policy and/or the Rules of Conduct, they are authorized to terminate any user's access session or to prohibit a user from subsequent access sessions. The following chart will be used as a guide to library staff in determining the action to take.

First Warning	User notified of offense and penalties.
Second Warning	Loss of access privileges for the day.
Third Warning	Loss of access privileges for one month.
Fourth warning	Loss of access privileges for one year.

After a hearing before the Library's administrative authority, a Library user may be permanently barred from Internet access from the Library. Users are advised that due process will be used to handle violations of an illegal nature, including criminal prosecution, if necessary. Internet users whose access session has been terminated or prohibited will be given information concerning the process to protest the action and/or request that Internet access privileges be reinstated. Temporary or permanent denial of Internet privileges at any Tom Green County Library facility will be effective at all Tom Green County Library facilities.

DEFINITIONS:

- Library cardholder - eligible resident of the State of Texas with an active Tom Green County Library card.
- Adult - any individual that has reached the age of 18.
- Minor - any individual that has not yet reached the age of 18.
- Staff - any library employee designated by Library Administration to perform the daily functions involved in the operation of the library.

GUIDANCE FOR SUPERVISING CHILDREN'S USE:

The public library, unlike schools, does not serve in place of a parent. Librarians cannot act in the place of parents in providing constant care and supervision of children as they explore the Internet. The responsibility for what minors read or view on the Internet rests with parents or guardians.

The following are recommended guidelines for parents and guardians to ensure that children have positive online experiences, whether at home or in the library.

- Use the Internet as a family. Join your children in Internet exploration.
- Explore the wide range of available information, and tell your children about sites you consider inappropriate for them.
- Encourage children to use sites recommended on the Library's homepage, and counsel them to avoid sites you consider unsuitable.
- Provide guidelines for your children on the amount of time they spend online, just as for television viewing. Instruct children NEVER to give out personal information (name, address, password, telephone number, credit card number) online.
- Teach children to be good online consumers. As with print information, consider the source, date, and accuracy of online information.