GETTING STARTED WITH
ONLINE RESEARCH

Your son or daughter is taking part in classroom lessons from the CyberSmart! Student Curriculum. He or she is learning that the Internet is a powerful tool for research, communicating, and sharing ideas.

Learning to find information quickly and effectively is essential to successfully using the Internet. Specialized search Web sites allow users to search for content that meets the selection criteria they specify. Several search sites are designed especially for use by young people. However, no search engine can guarantee the appropriateness or quality of Web site content—which speaks pointedly to the value of empowering students to evaluate a site before relying on its content.

What makes a Web site suitable for student research?

Here are some questions to consider when helping your son or daughter choose a site for research:

- Can he or she read the text?
- Will your child be able to find his/her way around the site?
- Do all the links work?
- Is the author a reputable source of information?
- Is the information useful?
- Has the site been updated recently?

What's at the library?

CyberSmart! encourages students to use their school and public libraries for research. Librarians and media specialists are trained to help people with research projects, and many libraries offer free Internet access to their members and subscribe to research sites that students may not otherwise be able to access.

Here's what we teach, at age-appropriate levels, about effectively mining Internet resources:

- Different search Web sites offer different features and ways of searching.
- A variety of strategies should be used for locating information with search engine and directory sites.
- It is important to determine the usefulness and appropriateness of informational Web sites.
- There is a right way to use Web sites designed for homework help and to correctly cite online sources.
- Libraries are valuable sources of information in electronic and other forms.

Here's what families can do:

- Help your younger children evaluate Web sites by using the questions on this page.
- Have your older children practice their search skills by searching for Web sites about topics of interest to your family, such as places a family member would like to visit.
- Take your children to the library to find out whether they are able to use the Internet there and what special online resources can be accessed through your library system.