

YOUNG PEOPLE, MUSIC & THE INTERNET



a guide for parents about
P2P, file-sharing and downloading



What is P2P?

As a parent or carer, you've probably already heard your children talk about "file-sharing", "downloading" or "P2P" (peer-to-peer). It's a hot topic for young people. The simple reason: music.

People of all ages have always loved to share music, and – just as with digital photography – the Internet has made it extremely easy to share tunes with friends (and strangers) anywhere. Services like Kazaa, LimeWire and BitTorrent that offer file-sharing, or P2P for short, have millions of users around the world.

P2P has received a lot of media attention because of legal issues to do with sharing copyright music and film. But that is just one of the risks involved. In this guide we look at the wider issues of harmful content/contact and privacy and security, as well as the legal risks.

This will help you to understand how your family can enjoy digital music and stay safe and legal.

“How can my kids enjoy digital music over the Internet while staying safe and legal?”



How does P2P work?

Each file-sharing network is a little different, but basically a would-be file-sharer goes to a website and downloads its P2P software onto the computer. Usually the software creates a "shared media" folder on your computer which opens it up to fellow file-sharers. This enables you to exchange photos and videos, as well as music, software and games, directly between your computer and theirs.

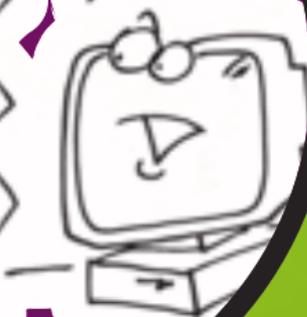
I'VE ONLY
E HANG OF
LONG COMES
THIS 'P2P'!



I'LL SHOW YOU
MY OWNER'S
FOLDERS IF YOU
SHOW ME
YOURS...



DON'T GET
PERSONAL WITH
ME!



What are the risks to my children?

There are benefits to file-sharing – for example, you could make your own created music available to millions of people. But the risks are real, too.

HARMFUL CONTENT/ CONTACT

The greatest risk to children on P2P is unwelcome content, such as pornographic or violent images. Indeed, studies have shown that porn is being widely shared on the P2P networks and that people purposely misname files to trick people into downloading them. A filter that can block website addresses and keywords on Web pages rarely blocks porn or violent images and videos on P2P networks. Even files named “Winnie the Pooh” or “Pokemon” have been found to contain pornography.

As a parent, you also need to be aware that file-sharing software can allow users to chat to other file-sharers, most of them strangers, so the same concerns and rules about chatting on the Internet should apply here too. See www.chatdanger.com.

**“Can
my children
access
pornography
on P2P?”**

PRIVACY AND SECURITY

File-sharing software opens “doors” in your computer which can compromise your privacy and security.

Spyware The biggest pest is spyware – little software programs that are downloaded with media files or “bundled” with file-sharing software.

Some spyware even logs your keystrokes and provides the person who controls it with passwords, credit card numbers and other confidential information on your computer.

Privacy You can inadvertently share more of your computer files with other file-sharers than you mean to. As studies have shown, this could include confidential information such as medical records and financial information.

Viruses File-sharers’ computers are vulnerable to the viruses infecting other machines on the P2P networks and to people trying to control computers remotely, or spammers who want to make money by using thousands of “zombie” PCs to send ads about low-cost mortgages and cheap drugs. One study found that nearly half of the software files on one P2P network contained viruses or other malicious code.¹

If your child downloads one of these malicious files, your PC could be used, among other things, as a porn distributor. If your family PC has been performing slowly, file-sharing might be the culprit.

“Could our private files be accessed by others?”

¹ See article in Wired News: www.wired.com/news/business/0,1367,61852,00.html

LEGAL RISKS

Thousands of file-sharers have been sued by the recording and film industries – and many have paid big fines. While there is no problem if you are sharing the content that you have originally created yourself, nearly all music and film files on file-sharing services are protected by copyright, and therefore people uploading (sending) them run legal risks.

Downloading music from p2p is illegal in most countries, but people who “share” or

“upload” music on

the Internet, particularly if they upload a lot, run a greater risk of being sued or

prosecuted. Parents can

be held responsible for what happens

on the family

computer,

even if they

are not

themselves

engaged

in illegal

activity. On

average,

people

who have

settled out

of court have

had to pay

thousands

of euros.

“Is it true my son could be sued for downloading music from p2p?”

MY KIDS ARE SAVING A FORTUNE BY DOWNLOADING MUSIC FOR FREE

YEAH- THAT'S WHAT I THOUGHT UNTIL I ENDED UP FOOTING THE LEGAL BILL.



So what can we do as parents?

There are 3 practical steps you can take right now:

1 Talk with the file-sharer(s) in your home!

File-sharing and other forms of technology in the home are opportunities to increase parent-child communication. Get your children to show you how they are using the computer and what they are sharing. Talk about copyright, and who loses out when songs get distributed on the Internet – performing artists? Songwriters? Are they deprived of the chance to earn a living from their work? But also - who pays the bill if someone in your house gets sued?





2 Check your computer

You can make sure you are aware of what is on your family computer – whether you or another member of the household put it there. There is free information available that will take you through how to identify or disable P2P software step by step; see, for example, www.ifpi.org.

It is also important to make sure that your computer is protected against viruses and spyware and has firewall software installed. You can generally get free anti-virus software from your Internet service provider (ISP). Up to date anti-virus software can help capture anything downloaded from P2P. See www.getnetwise.org for details of tools to help protect your computer.

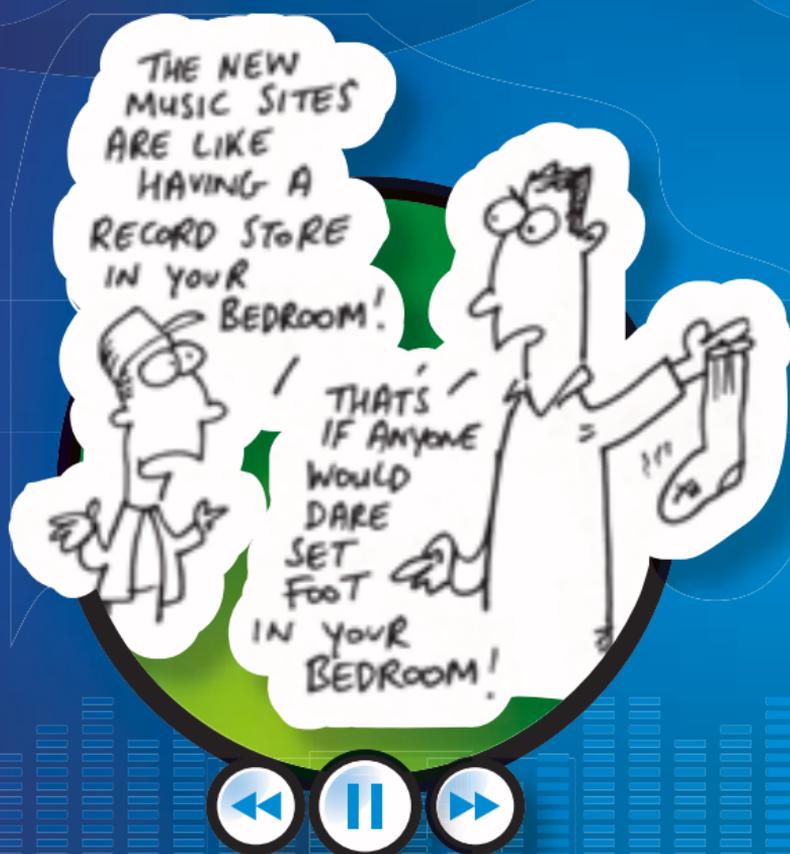
“How do I know if I have files that are being shared on my computer?”



3 Explore the Web's legal music

There's loads of it – more than a million tracks of all genres and periods – both for purchase and for free. For less than the price of an adult bus fare, you can download a track from a legal music retailer and keep it for life. There are scores of legal music retailers on the Web and these sites are safe and guarantee sound quality. For links to over 200 legal music retailers worldwide, go to www.pro-music.org/musiconline.htm.

There's also plenty of legal music available free of charge on the Web – sites where musicians want fans to sample their work and learn about concerts and albums they're promoting. To find them, search a favourite musician, group or label's own site. Sound quality may vary, but there's a great deal to explore.



Resources and further advice



For everything you want to know about music online see www.pro-music.org.



For safety guidance on Instant Messenger, chat, games, mobiles and e-mail, see Childnet's www.chatdanger.com website.



For further information for parents and carers see Childnet's guide www.childnet-int.org/music.



For daily kid-tech news for parents, including the latest on P2P, see www.netfamilynews.org.



To report illegal content on the Internet see www.inhope.org. These national hotlines do not handle copyright issues.

About this guide

This guide for parents has been written by children's charity Childnet International and Net Family News, Inc., with support from Pro-Music. Cartoons by John Byrne.

The views in this document are solely those of Childnet. Childnet is a non-profit organisation working to help make the Internet a great and safe place for children. Registered as a charity in the UK (number 1080173). See www.childnet-int.org,

Pro-Music is an international music sector education campaign about digital music. This guide is supported by pro-music member organisations representing musicians, performers, artists, major and independent record companies, publishers and retailers across the music industry. To order copies of this leaflet e-mail parents@pro-music.org.



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'everything you need to know about music online'