

Information for parents

Computers in Learning

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Computers are a part of the lives of children today and the following suggestions have been made to help parents and teachers make the best use of available resources.

- Obtain advice from experts before purchasing a computer or any additional hardware or software for your computer or any accessories such as a printer or scanner.
- Look at catalogues of educational software before buying any software programs and make sure you have the appropriate hardware installed on the computer to enable the software programs to operate.
- Ask to be shown and use a software program before you purchase it. Become familiar with the content of the program and make sure the style of the activity suits the child who will use the program.
- Liaise with your child's school and ask the teaching staff about the software programs they use and how you can support the school's computer applications curriculum in the home environment.
- Ensure your child sits at a table or desk that allows his or her eyes to be in line with the computer screen and that the lighting is sufficient. Check on the suitability of the chair being used and make sure a young child's feet are touching the floor, with the upper legs as close as possible to horizontal (parallel to the floor). If not, cover a telephone book with contact and use it as a footstool. Correct posture and lighting aids the efficiency of computer use as well as being vital to avoiding aches and pains and eye strain from protracted use.
- Make sure you can observe a young child when he or she is working at the computer, so you can see what he or she is doing and what sites he or she may be accessing.
- If necessary, vet the sites your child may be accessing to ensure no objectionable or pornographic material is displayed. Yahoo!igans, Ask Jeeves for Kids, KidsClick, AltaVista Family Filter and Lycos SearchGuard are some of the safe search engines that are available. Additional information may be obtained from www.netalert.net.au and www.aba.gov.au
- Teach your child not to give personal information, such as the date of his or her birth, name or address, over the Internet.
- Use the computer to help develop a child's fine motor skills, especially how to type correctly, and eye-hand coordination. In addition, a computer can help teach cause and effect, and decision-making. These skills can be developed through the use of appropriate programs. Remember, that it is not necessary to teach typing skills before introducing a computer to a child. He or she can learn on the job.
- Avoid your child spending hours sitting alone in front of the computer at home, rather than being outdoors, playing and talking with friends and learning how to ride a bike and throw a ball. Try to strike an appropriate balance across a range of activities.
- Invite a special friend to come and play and allow the two children to play a computer game for a predetermined time. This activity can help to develop turn-taking and cooperation between friends if carefully planned.
- Provide information to a child about key computer terminology and search terms such as a Directory, Search Engine and Metacrawler.
- Ensure educational programs are sequenced and provide appropriate and immediate feedback on the child's performance.



- Teach your older children to evaluate the information provided on a particular site. Who is responsible for the site? Is the information presented valid and accurate? Who wrote the information? Is the writer expressing an opinion or an expert in the field? Has the information been updated recently? Can the site be easily navigated? Children should be taught that they cannot believe everything presented on a computer screen.
- Remember simply placing a child in front of a computer does not mean he or she will learn more effectively and efficiently.

Success using computers and information technology as tools to aid children's learning lies in the way they are used with the children rather than in the specific software that has been loaded onto the computer. Parents and teachers still need to listen, care, understand and develop a love of learning and an ability to interact and communicate with each other that is not dependent upon computer knowledge and use.

For more Information

If you require further information please contact:

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