

## Acceptable (or Appropriate) Use Policies

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Once your school has accomplished the task of getting the hardware in place and Internet access is now possible, the fun has only just begun. Now you have the task of keeping that link going and controlling access to it. In order to make this a manageable task, many schools have developed an Acceptable User Policy (AUP) that outlines the rules of Internet (and often general computer) use for your institution.

Like the rest of society, the online world is not always a friendly place. The best and worst of human activity and imagination is amply represented and available by the click of a button. There are technological means to monitor and block some of this, but before you even consider some of them, you need to define what is and isn't acceptable for your institution. By clearly defining your parameters before situations arise, you will be much better equipped to deal with them in the most agreeable manner. By publishing your AUP and ensuring that all users read it before access is allowed, you will wipe out the ignorance defense for infractions.

So, what should be included in your AUP? While each school will want to develop a set of policies that are unique to their institution, following is a list of areas that are often included in many school's AUP's.

**State the purpose:** A common approach to introducing your AUP is to provide a statement of your purpose for providing access to the Internet. This statement should clearly identify the main purpose as an academic one. If you want to allow access to services such as e-mail and chat rooms (and are prepared to deal with issues that their use may encourage), then state that as a secondary purpose. You probably want to restrict any game playing and entertainment only activities, as they use up your precious resources. This section could also include a list and description of the actual services that you are providing. A statement disallowing the use of school equipment for any commercial activity is often included. Here or later in your AUP you might want to deny responsibility for the accuracy or quality of information obtained through the services you provide. Encourage all users that they need to consider the source of any information they obtain, and consider how valid that information may be.

**Statement on privacy:** In this section you should ensure that the user understands that the Internet is a very insecure environment and that nothing should be thought of as being private. You should also make it clear that any material stored on or transmitted through the schools computer systems is considered the property of the school. Reserve your right to the monitoring of all computer activities.

**Security:** Typical policies in this section state that use of another person's account (even if you have permission), attempts to discover another user's password, or any attempt to breach local security will result in a withdrawal of system use privileges. It is also a good idea to include a statement referencing federal, provincial and local laws (such as vandalism, harassment, pornography etc.). This section could also be used to list your system personnel, showing clergy where to go for help.

**Netiquette:** This term refers to the generally accepted rules concerning the privacy, property and respect of other Internet users. If you feel it is appropriate, outline your policy on the use of language, hogging of resources, and other common sense guidelines. These should include cautions about revealing your name, location or any personal details through any Internet communications.

**Copyright issues:** It is contrary to most computer policies to use school equipment in any copyright infringement. Some example may be listed to make sure users are educated on copyright issues. If you need a bit of educating yourself, then check out this link: [Canadian Intellectual Property Office – FAQ](#)

**Physical considerations:** If you value your equipment, put some guidelines in place to protect it. You will probably want to prohibit food and drink around your computers. You might want to have sign-in sheets, or employ personnel to monitor the lab. Just make sure that you state your expectations clearly. Providing a reason for the rule will help in your mission to educate users, and make your rules more understandable.

As you begin to prepare your AUP, take a look at actual ones that other institutions have developed. Doing an Internet search for "AUP" or "Use Policy" will provide a number of them for you, or just click on the links below to view some actual policies, and access some other AUP resource sites.

[Mindspring's Appropriate Use Policy](#)