A New Generation

The Internet has become a standard means of communication in our time. It seems like virtually everyone is on the Web. One major group of Internet users is tweens, or preteens roughly between the ages of eight and thirteen. At this “in between” age, tweens are no longer children, but not quite teenagers either. The Internet has proved a valuable forum for tweens to connect, exchange views, and learn about the world.

Tweens use the Internet for much more than just sending e-mail messages and swapping smiley-face emoticons on chat sites. Tweens actively participate in e-commerce—shopping and making purchases online. Also popular are blogs and e-zines where kids can read or even contribute their own stories, poems, artwork, and games. Some Web sites, like It’s My Life from PBSkids.org, offer advice and resources on topics that are important to tweens, such as school, emotions, family, relationships, and even the human body.

A large number of tweens also use the Internet to do schoolwork. Online homework help, information for research projects, and uploading finished work to school portals are all common. Some tweens even take part in webinars, seminars on the Web, about possible careers, language learning, and other topics.

Tweens should always be aware of the risks of using the Internet, though. Some Web sites or e-mails can transmit malware, software designed to harm or even destroy computers. Tweens should also be on the lookout for misleading advertorials—clever marketing schemes that are disguised as genuine articles. When in doubt, the smartest policy is always to ask an adult if something seems out of the ordinary or possibly harmful.