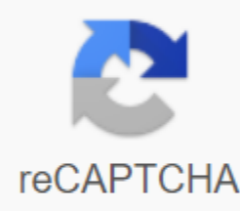




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Club penguin 3.0

The possibilities are seemingly endless for users of social networking websites. You can not only share information with online communities around the world; but sometimes you can even create a new identity and live vicar time through your own alter ego. Virtual destinations such as Second Life allow people to compose their own avatar - a digital representation of a person about themselves. For some, it's just harmless entertainment, an opportunity to express the other side behind the privacy of the computer screen. Others, however, use the open nature of the Internet to conceal or falsify certain parts of identity, sometimes for dubious purposes. And that's exactly what scares some concerned parents. With computers becoming almost ubiquitous both at home and in the classroom, children spend more and more time not only in front of the computer screen, but on the Internet. Worrying about potential scenarios such as online predators or even online bullying has parents unsure of how much they should monitor their children's online activities. Advertising So, many parents can throw their hands up in the air and ask: Is there anywhere safe where my kids can go online? Is it possible for children to spend time on the website playing games or communicating with friends without sacrificing personal information and security? Club Penguin, a virtual online community where members can choose, modify and control their own cuddly penguin avatar, offers itself as the answer to this complex problem. At Club Penguin, a lot of attention is paid to safety, which the company hopes will reassure parents. The site was acquired by Disney in 2008 for \$700 million, and their main target is children ages 6 to 14 - a group now known to advertisers and companies as teenagers. And since the site's origins in 2005, it has grown into a fairly large group. In fact, in 2007, the company reported more than 12 million members. So how does Club Penguin work? Is it free, or is there some kind of membership for which teens have to ask parental permission? There are two ways for kids to enjoy Club Penguin. Joining the site, collecting and changing your penguin avatar and moving around the virtual world of Club Penguin is completely free. Anyone can create a penguin with a free account, and the steps are relatively easy compared to most membership registration pages on the Internet. After choosing the color for the penguin, you are simply instructed to enter club Penguin username, password and parent's email address. The site does not ask for any personal information other than e-mail; no names, addresses, phone numbers or date of birth. So it's to membership in the Penguin Club? Well, not exactly. Free account is not a membership. The free account allows your penguin to walk (or wade if you like) around his virtual world, exploring places such as icebergs, ski slopes, boats and beaches, play play and communicate with other penguins. However, to make things really cool things like decorating a needle and dressing your penguin, parents should buy their kids a membership. Advertising there are three main membership prices: \$5.95 per month, \$29.95 for six months or \$57.95 for the full year. Sometimes, there are special promotional offers like \$14.95 for three months, but these offers are usually only available for a limited time. When a penguin decorates his or her needle, it actually has many options - especially since new features are added weekly or monthly. For example, ice houses can upgrade to two floors or turn into a snow globe design, and interiors can include drum kits, televisions, aquariums, and more. One thing parents should note is that if they decide to purchase a membership for their children, then most likely the company will collect the parent's full name, email address and of course credit card information and mailing address. Of course, none of this information will do so through a chat site feature that filters important personal information anyway. So once the kids are on Club Penguin, what can they do? While members of social websites such as Second Life mostly control human-like avatars, Club Penguin members move around their virtual world like penguins. Penguins and their surroundings are also drawn as two-dimensional cartoons instead of three-dimensional bodies. Reaching both sides of the computer screen can take you to another area, and there is even a map that penguins can use to find specific locations. Advertising According to Club Penguin, there are essentially four main things kids can do with their penguin avatars. They can: Play Penguin Dress games and decorate penguin iglooAttend or host gatherings Of Make Friends and talk to other penguin games are one of the main attractions of Club Penguin, mainly because winning these games rack coins for users. Mini-games, like most games that you can find online. Most games are usually associated with pointing and clicking, and they can also include skiing, snorkeling, catching things and jumping or avoiding obstacles. Instructions are given at the beginning of each game, so it's easy even for young penguins, and players can play as often as they like. The coins that penguins win are the virtual currency in the world of Club Penguin, and they allow penguins to buy clothes, including hats, wigs and other vestments (the dumber the better), and upgrades to the igloo that start out quite simple unadorned. There are also countless parties and other activities that penguins can either create and then hold or receive an invitation and attend. Penguins can meet and talk to Penguins and users communicate in the style of instant messaging; little text bubbles, like in comics, appear over the heads of penguins when they say something. So what does Club Penguin offer for both children and their parents? In the middle of a playdate with one of his best buddies a few months ago, my then 8-year-old came over and asked me how to spell a penguin. Penguin? I asked, puzzled. As in Mr. Popper's penguins? No, Jake said. It's like the Penguin Club. We want to play, but we can not get to the website . And so, the age of my third-grader's digital innocence ended when we both dived headlong into the younger cyber-social world. And I mean both of us. Because after Jake went to bed that night (giddy with excitement about creating his penguin alter ego - or avatar), I decided that I needed to figure out what was going on in those millions of online igloos that have children so addicted. Aimed between the ages of 6 and 14, Disney-owned Club Penguin may be one of the most popular children's sites, but it is hardly the only one. These new virtual worlds, like Poptropica and Barbie Girls, are part social networks, part online games, part Saturday morning cartoon - and they're everywhere. Currently, there are more than 100 children's social networks that are either living or under development. By 2010, projects Nick Mitham, CEO of K zero, a virtual worlds consulting firm, 150 million children will be members of one of them. These sites tend to sell themselves to parents as safe, holiday places for kids to play, learn and make friends. But I wanted to know exactly what Jake would experience in this icy paradise. So I opened my own account at Club Penguin (I call it CP) and created my avatar, ChilyLily437, a bright-eyed, bright pink go-getter with its own digital needle and cyber dens - and even the potential to buy an online wardrobe. Through this symbol, I practically sunbathed, snow pipes, and even took my daily cup of Joe's response to CP at Starbucks. And by entering in cartoonish speech bubbles, I mingled with waddling herds of other penguins. During my two-week mission, I found four major surprises, both good and bad. Here's what you need to know before letting your kids into cyber snow. 1. Virtual Playground is still a playground Given the stats I expected CP would be jumping, but I was awed by how packed with penguins it was. After I logged on, I was asked to choose from over a hundred chats with names like Snow Angel and Polar Bear. Although many of them were full, I managed to catch a place in Blizzard, and was teleported to the noisy cyber community. Dozens of penguins surrounded me, and the mushroom cloud of cartoon bubbles hovered like everyone else, talked at once. Some penguins are recited to the masses; some huddled in private conversations; Some walked fluffy pet pet That's what followed when ChilyLily approached three hilarious-looking penguins. ME: Hi, I'm ChilyLily and I'm KEWL DANCING PENGUIN 1: Not Me: Hannah Montana Rules DANCING PENGUIN 2: weirdo DANCING PENGUIN 3: We're going to members only party ME: Can I come? DANCING PENGUIN 1: ewww No! ME: PLZ DANCING PENGUIN 2: (Angry Face) ME: (frowns) DANCING PENGUIN 3: get away or I'm reporting off Reporting means telling CP powers, what-be, that I was breaking rules that would be untrue, but nevertheless, I took a hint and slunk away. Next: Why all games aren't created equal to Good Because many children today spend so little time with neighbors and friends, virtual worlds can give them a comforting sense of communication - and not just in the digital realm. Children make virtual friends, of course, but they also use these sites to meet and strengthen their relationships with real friends, says Yasmin Kafai, Ed.D., a professor of educational sciences at the Graduate School of Education at the University of Pennsylvania who conducts research on teens in virtual worlds. So even on actual playdates, kids can end up playing together online, as this is how they are used to socializing. And experts say social media helps prepare young people for life online. Young web users are growing up to be teenagers of social networks, chat users and text phones, says Ann Collier, co-director of connectsafely.org. So the sooner they learn proper behavior, the better. Bad, but how proper are these avatars behaving? It is true that Club Penguin, like many other sites, is working overtime to keep the chat civil. CP filters out coarse language and personal information, allows children to act as secret agents and report rulebreakers, and provides monitors to discourage bad behavior. According to Lane Merrifield, co-founder of Club Penguin and executive vice president and general manager of Disney Online Studios, the filters have changed almost e time from his hour to keep up with the changing slang of children. We strive every day to improve and be the best, safest site out there, he says. However, I've seen cyber-savvy kids come up with all kinds of smart ways to avoid these precautions, like putting consistent words into individual cartoon bubbles (I DO NOT LIKE YOU). CP guarantees are updated so often that some of the conversations and tactics I've observed are no longer possible - and probably more will be by the time this story is printed. But the kids find a way. While many penguins were friendly, I was called weirdo twice and nerd three times, said to walk away six times, and beaten with snowballs and vile emojis. (Merrifield explained that the site allows some words that can be negative -- nerd, - if some children identify themselves in this way.) It goes without saying that bullying occurs in the virtual worlds of children, says Collier, because it happens in And on the playground, too. But in the virtual world, inherent anonymity exacerbates the problem. Children may be much more likely to say things through an online avatar that they don't say in person, says Debbie Glasser, Ph.D., a clinical psychologist in Richmond, Va., and founder of newsforparents.org. While children also misbehave on the real playground, in cyberspace, they assume that they are anonymous, even invisible, and because the virtual world is just a game, they don't feel responsible - or guilty - they will be in real life where they have to confront their victims. 2. All play is not created equal During my time at Club Penguin, I became a regular at the local pizzeria. I liked the Italian piano music, the cozy candlelight tables and the brick oven; but mostly I was fascinated by friendly waiters who never, ever delivered my pizza. I was initially stumped over how I could give my order to 16 different penguins and not even a slice. But then I realized that these kids were just pretending to be waiters and waitresses. And they thought I was pretending to be a client. We played an old-fashioned game, let's pretend to be in a new-fashioned setting. A good make-believe game is part of the magic of being a kid, and club penguin quirky lokales, exotic costumes, and colorful avatars seem to invite him. From a parent's perspective, the site is an innocent, welcome oasis in online wasteland XXX websites and potentially risky teen social networking forums. From a child's perspective, this looks like a new, and very accessory, way to play. Bad, but unlike traditional creative play, CP and other sites tend not to allow children to dream up to places like the Italian restaurant scene - graphic designers do it for them. Merrifield says his team's goal is to be creative stewards, and pointed to playing in a pizzeria as a positive example. But I'm not sure. The ability of children to pretend creatively on these biased sites seems to be unfortunately limited, as they did in this cafe (which seems to have meant more as a hangout than a place to play on a food server: Witness the lack of pizza!). And games sites are fueled not so much by children's imagination, as by programmed, limited choice. Creative play allows young children to digest life and make it their own. This is an outlet for their creativity and an absolutely critical part of childhood, - says Joan Almon, director of the American branch of the Alliance for Childhood. But when kids spend hours in front of screens - TV, video games or computers - they just absorb other people's stories and fantasies rather than create their own. This has led to a steady decline in children's play, says Almon, and will have negative effects on children's cognitive, emotional and physical development. Next: How children can become Materialists 3. Kids can become virtual materialists club Penguin, like many similar sites, can impersonate everything about gathering friends, but believe me, it's about collecting a lot more than that. Like shiny pink evening dresses (600 coins), widescreen TVs (5,000 coins), and an Ice Castle igloo upgrade created from the finest ice at Club Penguin (5,100 coins) that I've seen during my 14 days of penguin life. That's why ChilyLily437 decided to go to work. On CP, this means playing video games. Forty-five (excruciating) minutes of digital ice fishing later, I amassed enough coins to get a purchase. But when I tried to shop, the post informed me that I couldn't buy any of these items because I wasn't a member! However, I could become a member if I wanted to... for \$58 a year (and I don't think they talked penguin money). Good as CP's Parent's Guide points out, the virtual world economy give kids a taste of financial realities and responsibilities, and learning what earning comes up costs helps promote a good work ethic. Avalanche attractive, if imaginary, merchandise teaches children about making financial choices and even basic math. As a teacher and mom, I agree that CP can help children learn these important life skills. And CP doesn't work

outside of advertising. Bad parents should never forget that most of these sites are money businesses, warns Liz Pearl, editor-in-chief of Common Sense Media. The behavior they encourage - playing games to create 'money' kids can't spend without paying real cash - is driven by commercial impulses. So maybe I was naïve, but I'm still not sure which part is most disturbing: (a) that the Penguin Club perpetuates such materialistic torment; (b) that it's bribing kids cyber-robbed to play mindless video games all day; or (c) that's to get off the side of this bait-and-switch routine (free club penguin account, my flipper!). Or maybe the worst part is that despite the strict CP policy against it, so many kids have found behind the site ways to cheat so they don't have to earn coins or rewards at all. Even so, the result is to stimulate the materialism of children, both online (like penguins) and off (as potential pay members). 4. In cyberspace, Kids Grow Even Faster, I'm not exaggerating when I say that at any given moment anywhere on Club Penguin, does someone say: Cute Girlz or I like Boyz or Will I have my girlfriend? - This is exactly what the penguin I will call Kingpizmo asked me one moonlit night in his igloo. We used to meet at the pizzeria when I was answering his open call for available girls. By the time we got to the Kingpizmo crib igloo, we have already swapped emojis of the heart and mwah mwahs (kisses). We played a few rounds of spinning fish (a popular CP kiss game) before he popped the question, question, I I (trying not to think about how shocked Kingpizmo would have been if he knew he had just asked a married mother of four to go steady) accepted. Good try as I could, I'm having trouble seeing up here. Bad Of all my virtual world surprises, I found CP sexual underwater by far the most shocking. Kafay was less surprised. Flirting and dating are major parts of the virtual world of children's activities, she says. Anonymity and lack of parental supervision make them favorite places for even teenagers to spread out the sexual themes they see in the media and in the playground, even before they are ready in real life. But such cyber dating can actually hinder their ability to develop into an online relationship, Marshall says. Duke, Ph.D., clinical psychologist at Emory University. In the real world, people communicate in many ways - body language, mist names, gestures and tone of voice. Not so in virtual worlds. But kids may think they understand relationships based on online experiences and this can be devastating. Next: Intelligent Rules for Virtual Game Smart Rules for Virtual Games is real, we can't raise internet kids - and we shouldn't. But here's what I learned about helping your child find a balance between virtual worlds and real worlds. Be his pilot. Understanding your child's virtual world is a must, even if it means going under the guise of yourself. Then go online with him as he explores the site. You wouldn't put your child in the car, hand him the keys, and say, See you, Pearl says. Don't do it with the Internet. Teach her how to act. Give your child clear behavioral guidelines for the virtual world, just like you do for real. Before you allow your child to access the site, discuss how to be a good friend online, says Patricia Agatston, Ph.D., co-author of Cyber Bullying: Bullying in the Digital Age. And make sure she knows how to recognize inappropriate behavior from others (such as flirting, questions about age, bullying) and will tell you if this happens, so you can report the offender to the website of the authorities. Use parental control and monitoring software. Protect your child by giving him an appropriate level of independence with a parental control website (Club Penguin offers some excellent ones that allow parents to control when and how long children can use the site) and monitoring software (such as listed in the search database on getnetwise.org). Stay away from the kids from the beginning about keeping an eye on them. Tell me when (and it means it). Common Sense Media recommends waiting until your eighth birthday child before allowing her to join the social network. Once you do, the American Academy of Pediatrics advises limiting kids to no more than two hours a day of any kind of screen time. And balance it with the real face of time with friends: These sites were never designed to be a substitute to go out and play. This content and is supported by a third party and imported to this page to help users provide their email addresses. You may be able to find more information about this and similar content on piano.io piano.io

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