What Can Be Revealed in Minutes about your Child while Online

How hard is it to target someone online? Let's conduct an experiment.

In a chat room we pinpoint Teresa. Posing as a fellow chatter we ask her age, but she doesn't tell us.

Most online or Internet service providers provide user directories to assist their members in identifying other members with similar interests. Members can create and store profiles of themselves and store them in the user directory for other members to view. These can be useful but they can also be blind spots that can place you in danger.

We keep looking for information about Teresa by checking her member profile. We type in her chat room name and learn more. Good job Teresa! She didn't list her location, age, or gender. But what do we know by her name, male or female? Her brother's name is Billy Jr., what then is her father's name?

Using the locate command we can follow Teresa wherever she goes in cyberspace. We can also email or instant message her.

After two minutes we have determined that Teresa is most likely a female child, she likes seashells, Rollerblading, and English class, she has a little brother who most likely answers to Billy Jr. or J.R., and we have her email address.

We can check for more information about Teresa by searching newsgroup postings with her email address. I know now how many messages Teresa has posted to the newsgroup, when and where the messages were posted, and the text of each message. In this message that Teresa posted she included three personal identifiers in this message, can you find them? They are her phone number, where she lives, and either her mom or sister's name.

Within twelve minutes we know that Teresa is a young girl who likes Beanie Babies, Rollerblading, and English class, she has a baby brother named Billy Jr., a mom or sister named Sue, based on the time that she posted the message we know at least one of the times of day when Teresa is probably at home, and that she lives on the East coast. We also know her home phone number.

Let's see what else we can find out about Teresa using her telephone number to perform a reverse look up. I bet this is Teresa's last name.

There is good news if you find personal information about yourself by doing a reverse look up. Most of these services will allow you to change or eliminate your personal data form the directory but first you have to find the services that list your information in order to request that they remove it.

Want to see what we can find out using Teresa's last name? Now that we have her last name I bet we can find out where Teresa lives. With every additional piece of information we can perform more searches. I found her! I'm not familiar with Laurel. Let's see if I can get better location information. One click on the map icon and I'm there. Now I have a map of her area. I can map from my city to hers, directly to her house.

I wonder where Teresa goes to school. If the school posts student pictures on its webpage we can even find out what Teresa looks like.

Within forty-five minutes we are able to learn: that Teresa's full name is Teresa Doe, her email address is Teresa01@email.dot, and she collects or trades Beanie Babies. We know the full name of her mother, father and brother, and that she is probably home

by 5:30 on week days. We know Teresa's address, and have specific directions to her home, we even know what public schools are near by and so it wouldn't be hard to figure out where she goes to school.