

The secret online code that keeps parents in the dark **Video**

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LORI MATSUKAWA / KING 5 News

Sixteen-year-old Niles Jeran uses "leet speak," an online lingo system that's popular with kids. His friends use it too.



"I can see why parents would be worried just because it could, it can lead to danger," he said.

"LOL" for "laughing out loud" and "TTYL" for "talk to ya later" sound innocent enough, but if you look behind some other acronyms, there could be something sinister.

"I can see why parents would be worried just because it could, it can lead to danger," said Jeran.

Here's why they're worried:

- "KPC" means "keeping parents clueless."
- "POS" means "parent over the shoulder."
- "GYPO" means "get your pants off."
- "TDTM" means "talk dirty to me."

"If you see that on your child's screen they're talking to somebody they shouldn't be," said Al Kush of Seattle-based WiredSafety.org, an Internet safety Web site for parents and teens.

He says some leet speak is harmless, but some like TDTM is a red flag.

"That could be the first step towards blackmailing to get a kid to perform sex acts," he said.

"NIFOC is one of the terms they will sometimes use and it means 'naked in front of computer,'" said Kush. And leet speak gets even sneakier. Some words replace letters with numbers and symbols.

"There are too many predators out there that could endanger their kids' lives or could sexualize them too early by sending unwanted messages and pictures and things like that and Leet speak is just a gateway to all of that," said family therapist Barbara Melton.

Some counselors even specialize in internet issues like this.

Susan Shankle counseled one family whose young daughter started a steamy online affair right in front of them.

"While the mom was cooking dinner and the dad was watching television, the daughter, who was 11 at the time, was carrying on this conversation with this older man," she said.

And her parents constantly checked the messages, too.

There is a way to learn the lingo, and that's by going online yourself. There are Web sites with online dictionaries and translators to help, like Teenangels.org or Netlingo.com.

Wiredsafety.org operates the Teenangels.org site. There, they offer a chat translator to help parents learn the lingo.

Wiredsafety says some parental control software may also help.

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