

Check Privacy Policy on "Dear Santa" Websites

More than 60 domain names have been registered in the name of Santa Claus, offering children a wide range of opportunities to email St. Nick. Sadly, some of the websites aren't always so trustworthy and can potentially be a dangerous way to share personal information. Better Business Bureau is advising parents to do their homework before letting their child write to Santa this holiday season.

Writing to Santa has been a long lasting tradition, and while it seems innocent and fun, it is very important for adults to carefully review the site to determine who is seeking the information, how it will be used and whether it will be shared with third parties.

According to the Children's Advertising Review Unit (CARU), all websites directed to children – or websites designed with a special children's section – should have a privacy policy that explains the site's information collection practices. The privacy policy should include the name of the company and the company's complete contact information.

It should also state whether the company shares information with third parties, including advertisers, and whether the company publically discloses the information or retains the information for any future purpose.

CARU offers the following 'Dear Santa' site review tips:

Check to see what they want you to hand over. Websites directed to children should not ask a child to disclose more information than is reasonably necessary to participate in the activity – a first name and email address, for instance.

Limit the personal information children share with Santa and omit physical addresses. In many cases, there really shouldn't be a need to share this information. Especially since Santa already knows where all the children live.

Check websites for unwelcome content. Some sites are geared toward adults and may contain language or advertising adults may not want children to see.

Check the links. Since hyperlinks can allow children to move seamlessly from one site to another, investigate the hyperlinks to assure children don't access inappropriate content.

For more information on website safety and children, please visit CARU at www.CARU.org and for more information you can trust, visit www.bbb.org.