

The following is a sample policy your church can use to develop guidelines for internet usage on church computers. Replace [Church Name] with your church name and make other adjustments to the policy language as needed.

[Church Name] – Internet Usage Policy

A. Policy Guidelines

[Church Name] provides certain employees access to the vast information resources of the internet with the intention of increasing productivity and enhancing church-related communication. While this access has the potential for employees to do their jobs faster or smarter, there is justifiable concern that it can also be misused. Such misuse can waste time, potentially violate laws, ordinances or other [Church Name] policies, garner negative publicity for the church and potentially expose it to significant legal liabilities. This Internet Usage Policy, which applies to all employees, is designed to facilitate understanding of the expectations for the use of these resources.

The underlying philosophy of this policy is that internet access from [Church Name] is primarily for church-related purposes including communicating with congregation members and colleagues, researching relevant topics and obtaining useful business information. In addition, all existing laws and [Church Name] policies apply to an employee's conduct on the internet, especially those that deal with intellectual property protection, privacy, misuse of [Church Name] resources, sexual harassment, information and data security, and confidentiality.

The best way to determine if use of the internet is appropriate is to ask, "If I were doing this same activity in some other way (e.g., telephone, library, in person, by hand) would this activity be appropriate?" The two key tenants to this usage policy are:

1. Do not do anything with [Church Name] internet access resources that would otherwise be considered illegal, grossly inappropriate, or offensive to the established value system expressed by [Church Name] as a Christian, nonprofit organization. Viewing or downloading erotica, playing games, sending non-[Church Name] related mass mailings, and running a private business are obvious examples.
2. Do not waste [Church Name] time. There are plenty of fascinating sites to explore, but [Church Name] time should be spent conducting [Church Name] business. Church employees may use their internet facilities for nonbusiness research or browsing during lunch and outside of work hours, provided that all other usage policies are adhered to.

B. Detailed Internet Policy Provisions

1. [Church Name] domain name will appear with every internet post made by a church computer user. Any user may thus be viewed as a representative of [Church Name] while conducting business on the internet. During any internet use, users are required to refrain from any activity or communication that would have a negative impact on [Church Name] or the reputation of [Church Name].

2. User IDs and passwords help maintain individual accountability for internet resource usage. Any user who obtains a password or ID for an internet resource must keep that password confidential. [Church Name] policy prohibits the sharing of user IDs or passwords obtained for access to internet sites.

3. Each user using [Church Name] internet facility shall identify himself or herself honestly, accurately and completely when corresponding or participating in interactive activities, and shall not send unsolicited mass electronic mail.

4. Only those persons who are duly authorized to speak to the media or public gatherings on behalf of [Church Name] on a particular subject may speak/write in the name of [Church Name] to any blog, newsgroup or chat room. Other users may participate in blogs, newsgroups or chats in the course of business when relevant to their duties, but they do so as individuals speaking only for themselves and should make that clear in their communication. Only those persons who are authorized to speak to the media or public gatherings on behalf of [Church Name] on a particular subject may grant such authority to blog, newsgroup or chat participants.

5. Employees are reminded that the internet is not a secure method of communication. Neither proprietary information nor any information received in confidence by [Church Name], or the user, may be sent on the internet unless prior approval is received from the Senior Pastor or the Administrator.

6. The display of any kind of obscene image or document of any [Church Name] computing resource may be a violation of existing [Church Name] policy on sexual harassment and is prohibited. In addition, obscene material may not be archived, stored, distributed, edited, or recorded using [Church Name] network, printing or computing resources. A user, who finds him or herself connected accidentally to a site that contains sexually explicit or offensive material, must disconnect from that site immediately and report the accidental connection to the church computer system administrator or committee.

7. Freeware, shareware and commercial software from the internet may be subject to computer viruses, may not work properly, or may be subject to copyright infringement laws. Users may download only software with direct business use with permission of the church computer system administrator or committee, and must arrange to have such software properly licensed and registered. Users may not use [Church Name] internet facilities to download entertainment software or games, or to play games against opponents over the internet. No user may use [Church Name] facilities knowingly to download or distribute pirated software or data. Any software or files downloaded via the internet may be used only in ways that are consistent with their licenses or copyrights.

8. No user may use [Church Name] facilities to deliberately propagate any virus, worm, Trojan horse, trapdoor, or backdoor program code or knowingly disable or overload any computer system, network, or to circumvent any system intended to protect the privacy or security of another user.

9. [Church Name] internet facilities and computing resources must not be used to knowingly violate the laws and regulations of the United States or any other nation, or the laws and regulations of any state, city, province or local jurisdiction in any material way.

10. Users should not have any expectation of privacy as to his or her internet usage. It is possible to monitor internet usage patterns and [Church Name] will regularly inspect any and all files stored on [Church Name] resources to the extent necessary to ensure compliance with this Internet Usage Policy.

11. Infractions of these policies constitute a misuse of [Church Name] assets and therefore is considered a violation of [Church Name] Personnel Policy. Any such infraction may result in termination or other disciplinary actions.

I hereby certify that I have read, and that I agree to, this Internet Use Policy.
(For youth, must be signed by a legal parent or guardian.)

Signature _____ Dated: _____

Printed name _____ Parent/Guardian Signature _____
(if youth under age 18) Name _____