



TAKING BABY'S
e-space TOO FAR?

In addition to web domains, some parents are so keen to secure their bundle of joy's digital identity, they're also snatching up Gmail, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts.

Cat Coode, founder of the digital media company Binary Tattoo, cautions against setting up these accounts for children. "I've seen 10-year-olds who are receiving match.com emails through their Gmail accounts that their parents set up for them years ago," she says.

The Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) says users need to be 13 years old in order to set up social media profiles, meaning parents who snag Twitter handles for their infants have to lie about their age. By the time accounts get handed over to the 13-year-old, the system now thinks they're 26 and doesn't provide them with the same privacy protections they do to users under the age of 18.

Besides, setting up your child's social media accounts assumes these sites will still be popular when he or she is old enough to use them. Cat points out teens are already abandoning Facebook at rapid speed. Who knows what new form of social media will be popular by the time your baby is 16?



Laying claim to your child's domain name

Ashton and Mila did it – should you, too?

BY LISA EVANS

Even before Wyatt Isabelle Kutcher was a month old, she had her own Twitter and Instagram accounts, an email address and website domains. The reason? "I don't want a porn site with my daughter's name," new dad Ashton Kutcher told talk show host Conan O'Brien. While this may sound like the extreme actions of celebrity parents, more and more parents are purchasing domain names for their kids to safeguard their digital identity.

For around \$10 a year, you can purchase a domain name for your child, claiming their corner of the Internet years before they even send their first email.

Some extreme parents are so intent on securing their children's digital future, they have factored in available domain names into the criteria for baby name selection. A new online tool, awesomebabyname.com (which has had over 400,000 hits since its launch in August 2014) asks parents to input their last name and the baby's gender, then generates a list of first name options from firstnamelastname.com, based on

available domains.

The site was the brainchild of Karen Cheng and Finbarr Taylor who were inspired to create a way for parents to find a unique name for their child after Karen complained that her common name meant she would never get to own karencheng.com and had to battle with thousands of other Karen Cheng's in Google's search rankings. Ensuring a domain name was available for her child before naming him or her meant they would avoid these digital hassles.

Finbarr says parents who are using the service to claim their child's e-space recognize the scarcity of domain names and want to give their kids a fighting chance of having a good SEO (search engine optimization).

"In the age of search engines, a unique name goes a really long way in helping you get found online," says Finbarr. A firstnamelastname domain means your child can be more easily found online when potential employers Google their names – assuming Google will still be around when little Quentin (one name awesomebabyname.com

suggested for my son) is 18.

"The importance of the Internet is only going to increase with time," says Finbarr. "If you can get in early and get your child's domain name, you'll be getting them off to a head start."

For other parents, including mom Johanna Webster, purchasing kids' domain names is simply for fun. Johanna bought domains for her kids when they were born and used the sites as blogs after the family moved to Halifax.

"All of our family and friends were in Ontario so I started blogging about their exploits on a blog that I set up under their domain name," says Johanna. Although she expects her kids will eventually take over the space, she isn't sold on the impact it will have on their professional lives. "I think things will look quite different by the time my kids have professional lives, so that kind of thinking isn't really on my radar," she says. ○

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