

Research Surprise

Written by Kelly Hashway

Madison sat down at her father's laptop computer, ready to start her school project. She had to research an animal and write a report about it. Madison loved honey badgers so she typed in her search and pressed enter. A list of websites popped up with information about honey badgers. Not knowing where to start, she clicked on the first link.



As the site opened, a box popped up on the screen. Bright, colorful, flashing letters read, "You Won!" Madison looked at the picture of a young woman holding an iPad.

"I won an iPad?" Madison couldn't believe it. She didn't remember entering any contests. She read the smaller print below the image. It said to enter her name, email address, and mailing address to claim her prize. That made sense to her. They'd need to know where to mail the iPad. But still, how had she won if she'd never entered?

The more Madison stared at the iPad in the picture, the more she wanted it, but something about this seemed fishy.

Things to Discuss:

1. What should Madison do?
2. Do you think she really won an iPad? Why or why not?
3. List a few reasons why the message on the computer is suspicious.
4. What might happen if Madison entered personal information?

Teacher's Discussion Guide

Internet Safety Story: Read and Discuss

Online Friend?

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Things to Discuss:

1. What should Madison do?

She should either close the window or hit the back button and ignore the message. She might also want to show an adult if she wasn't sure what to do.

2. Do you think she really won an iPad? Why or why not?

No. She didn't enter a contest. Even if she had entered a contest, she wouldn't be notified of her winnings with a computer pop-up.

3. List a few reasons why the message on the computer is suspicious.

- She didn't enter a contest.
- Winners of a contest wouldn't be notified with a pop-up message.
- There was no company name or other information to identify the contest.
- The pop-up asked for personal information, which should raise a red flag.

4. What might happen if Madison entered personal information?

She would probably get spam in her e-mail box.

It could also be an internet phishing scam, trying to extract personal information. This could lead to identity theft.