

Keep Your Child Safe Online

A Guide for Parents, Carers and Guardians



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TALK

Talk to your child about their internet use and safety

Have meaningful conversations about how they use the internet

Praise your child for safe online behaviours

Welcome your child if they want to ask you a question or tell you about a problem, even if they've done something unwise themselves

EDUCATE

Learn as much as you can about games, platforms, parental controls and the benefits and risks of online activity

Teach your child about specific issues and concerns

Teach your child about safe and unsafe relationships and how to repair friendships following disagreements online

CO-VIEW

Co-view your child's online activity at least once a week

Interact with your child online

Model appropriate online behaviour

Co-operate with each other to promote the well-being of all



HOUSE RULES

Set clear routines, rules and boundaries ("house rules")

Keep to age ratings and guidance for apps, games and devices

Restrict online activity to daytime and communal areas

Use filters and parental controls

Spend regular screen-free time with your child



AGE 11+

for a basic phone or highly restricted smart phone without internet access or social media

AGE 14+

for a smart phone with parental controls

*Agree a contract with your child to encourage responsible phone use

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Rationale

The internet is a big part of children's lives in the UK, with children spending 2 to 5 hours online daily (OFCOM, 2024). It helps them make friends, learn, and be creative. However, the internet also has risks, such as exposure to harmful content and online abuse.

Enfield Council has created this parental online safety guidance to support the development of:

- **Awareness**

Understand online risks and help your child feel safe online.

- **Communication**

Build trust with your child so they can talk openly about their internet use and concerns they may have.

- **Balance**

Encourage your child to have a healthy mix of online and offline activities that are age appropriate. Support your child's wellbeing when using the internet.

- **Collaboration**

Co-view the internet with your child, respecting their digital skills and preferences whilst keeping them safe online.

- **Skills**

Use evidence-based and psychologically informed tools to keep your child safe online.

- **Responsibilities**

Develop safeguarding boundaries which respect your family's use of technology whilst promoting safe internet practices.

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and while it is never possible to remove risk entirely, parents and carers have a duty to ensure their children are kept safe and are able to manage risk effectively both in the real world and online. This guide is designed to help you support your child's safe and healthy internet use using the TECH approach:



TALK

Encourage two-way communication with your child



EDUCATE

Stay informed about the latest online risks



CO-VIEW

Spend time online together



HOUSE RULES

Set clear rules for internet use

This guidance is designed to help caregivers of children aged 5 to 14. However, we recognise that many of these strategies can also be useful for younger and older children, including those with additional need.

TALK

Talk to your child about their internet use and safety

Talking to your child, and making sure your child feels able to talk to you, is the number one way to protect your child.

Children want to be able to talk through online issues with a trusted adult and know that they will be welcomed and well received.

A recent study with a cyber-bullying focus (Mulhall, 2023) found that children preferred regular online safety guidance from their parents and wanted these discussions to occur at least once a week. As a parent/carer, you know your child best! Your child might need daily or weekly talks about their internet use and staying safe online.

Have meaningful conversations about how they use the internet

Be Curious! Ask your child how they use the internet and what they enjoy doing.



Your child is likely to use the internet differently from you. They might enjoy playing different games, listening to music, watching videos, creating content, or chatting to friends. UK Guidance from Barnardo's and Internet Matters recommends that parents/carers start to talk to their children about their internet use on a regular basis from an early age.

You can encourage your child to share what they do online by:

- a) Asking for their opinion** on a game, music, video, etc, based on a new story you've heard or something you've read/heard about. "I've heard about this TikTok video about [specific topic], what do you think of it?...Do you watch similar videos?"

TOP TIP

Try not to put your child on the spot by saying: "Before dinner, I wanted to chat to you about....". Instead find a natural time when an opportunity presents itself, such as when hearing a similar event in the news, reading an article or from conversations with other people. Remember to ask open-ended questions and ask further questions to understand their views.

- b) Asking for their advice** on how to do something online, such as "These videos keep popping up, how do I block or filter these videos?" Use similar content as a conversation starter with your child by asking how they manage difficult things online.

TOP TIP

In order to feel safe and comfortable, children need to know that they can confide in parents about both positive and negative online experiences, without fearing punishment or parents appearing highly upset/angry with them. Try not to rush in with your views and provide helpful advice too soon. Your aim to begin with is to help your child feel listened to and heard, validating their feelings. Children need coaching on how to manage difficult online experiences and every conversation with your child is a teachable moment.

- c) Asking your child how online activities make them feel.** "When you watch things like that online, how does it make you feel?". Remember to ask open-ended questions, remaining curious and non-judgmental. Try to avoid blaming or criticising children and let them know it's a safe space to talk to about their feelings. "I know some things on the internet might make you feel weird, confused, bad, embarrassed or guilty. You can always talk to me about anything – happy or unhappy feelings". Children want their parents to be calm and listen to them when something difficult happens online.

TOP TIP

Some children might not be able to label or identify how the internet makes them feel. You can use "I wonder..." statements to help them identify their emotions. For example, "I wonder if playing this game makes you feel angry and upset. I can see that your body feels really tense at this time and you seem to be worried about this game". You can also ask children to draw, paint, sing, dance, etc about how they are feeling. Creative activities can help children process and share difficult emotions that might be difficult to say in words.

- d) Talking about online safety issues that come up in national and local news.** Children rely on trusted adults to help them understand complex online issues that they encounter in the news or online. Without proper guidance, they might misinterpret information and try to fill in the gaps on their own, which can lead to confusion and search for meaning. This can lead to thinking errors and fears about specific online safety issues and internet use. It is therefore important that parents regularly talk about online safety issues in a child-appropriate way and follow up these conversations when they are older, sharing further details. For example you can talk about online grooming in the same way as stranger danger. This is also a helpful way to understand your child's perspective.



- e) **Reading a book/article together about specific online safety issues.** This provides an opportunity for children to talk about online safety issues in a safe place. Children may want to ask questions, share their views, or maybe share their experiences.

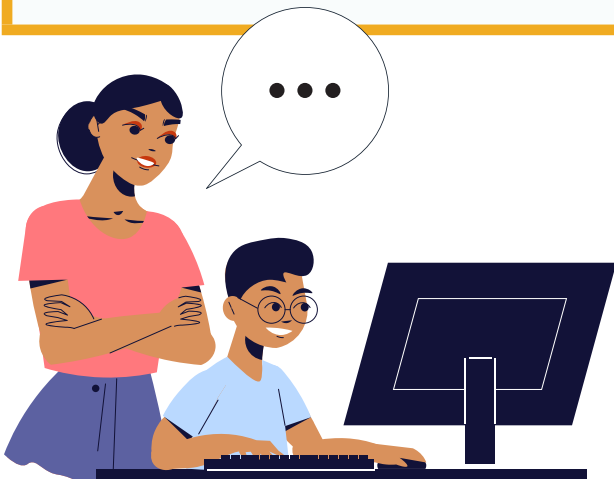
TOP TIP

Some children may feel uncomfortable talking about these subjects. It's important to remain open and curious. Give your child the time to talk about the subject and follow their pace. Make sure children know that they can come back to the subject later if they feel more comfortable.

- f) **Having regular 'digital check ins'.** Schedule regular time to check in with your child. Allow them to talk about their online activity and share their joys and concerns with you.

TOP TIP

Some children may need that extra reassurance that you won't be cross or upset with them e.g. "I'm not going to be cross with you, even if you think you've done something wrong. I'm worried about you and I want to help you". When children disclose something difficult to you, your first reaction will affect how they tell you or other trusted adults about their difficulties in the future. Try to stay calm and thank the child for sharing their difficulty. You do not need to have a plan straightaway or be an expert in online safety: you can seek further advice if needed. Simply say: "Thank you for telling me this. I need to call/talk/research about [this issue], so I know how I can help you."



Praise your child for safe online behaviours

Research demonstrates that parents can have a powerful impact on how children approach difficult situations and on their mindset. You can encourage safe online behaviours and cultivate critical thinking skills by:

- a) **Praising your child for their specific skills, effort and qualities**

Don't just say: "Well done! You are so smart thinking of these!"

Do say: I like how you thought of a strong and memorable password and you didn't share this with anyone.

Don't just say: "You did the right thing!"

Do say: It must have been quite scary reading this message. You did the right thing sharing this with me. I'm going to block this person and report this to CEOP (Child and Exploitation and Online Protection)

Don't just say: "You are a good friend!"

Do say: I like how you asked this person to stop saying mean things to your friend. You've been a good ally here. I'm sure your friend is grateful for this.

Don't just say: "Great job! You are so talented!"

Do say: Great job! I'm impressed! How did you report this video? Can you show me how?

Don't just say: "Thank you for waiting!"

Do say: Thank you for waiting to show me this image. You did the right thing by not responding straight away.

Don't just say: "I'm very proud of you!"

Do say: I'm proud of how you dealt with that negative comment. You handled it calmly and found a positive way to respond.

By stating the specific skills, efforts and qualities that your child is using to keep safe online, you are normalising these skills and helping your child to understand healthy online behaviours, which will encourage them to repeat these skills/qualities for similar future situations.

b) Asking questions about their process

Ask questions which encourage your child to talk about how and why they made specific decisions. This will help them to develop their own skills as well as informing you about their development. It is also likely to teach you some skills too!



c) Encouraging sharing mistakes! Mistakes are part of learning

As children are navigating the internet, they will naturally make mistakes with how they interact with others, access sites, misinterpret information or someone's intention, share factually incorrect information or develop unhelpful online behaviours. Children would like their parents to stay calm and help them when something difficult happens online. Therefore, it is important that parents help children to view mistakes as learning opportunities rather than failures. To avoid children feeling defensive, ashamed or resistant to talking about their mistakes, parents need to approach this calmly and curiously. Parents can foster a safe environment to make mistakes by providing reassurance and praise to children.

Encourage open communication: "I'm glad you told me about this. It's okay to make mistakes; what's important is that we learn from them." "It takes a lot of courage to share what happened. I'm proud of you for coming to me so we can figure this out together".

Normalise making mistakes. "Everyone makes mistakes online at some point. What's important is that you're learning from this and becoming more careful. That's a big step forward."

Share your own mistakes: "I remember when I made a similar mistake online. We all have moments like this, and it's how we handle them that matters. I'm here to help you through it."

Discuss the mistake and the potential consequences: "We can learn a lot from this. Let's talk about what happened and how we can avoid it in the future."

Focus on problem solving: "You had a great idea to change your password after sharing it by mistake." "Now you know how to spot a phishing email. Practising this will help you to avoid similar mistakes in the future. This is part of learning".

Help children to move on and not dwell on mistakes for too long, especially if it's making them feel upset. Remind them that mistakes are part of learning and emphasise what they can learn from their experiences and how you can problem solve together.

Think about what you've learned from a mistake. Mistakes are crucial for brain development and learning, as they challenge us to confront gaps in our knowledge and abilities, fostering resilience and growth.
– Carol Dweck



You can report online abuse to your child's school DSL (Designated Safeguarding Lead), or directly to the police via CEOP (Child Exploitation and Online Protection) [CEOP Safety Centre](#)

Welcome your child if they want to ask you a question or tell you about a problem, even if they've done something unwise themselves

Children can feel particularly reluctant to share a concern with an adult if they have acted unwisely themselves, and can find themselves at greater risk as a result. Children need to feel able to approach a trusted adult for support in all circumstances.

You can support your child to feel able to approach you by:

- telling them that they are able to
- listening to them and paying attention when they speak with you
- resisting displaying any anger or imposing punishment
- remaining calm
- talking through issues and discussing possible actions as a team

Some children may feel more comfortable using a 'safe object' or codeword to demonstrate that they need to talk and that you need to remain calm and listen. A 'safe object' could be an agreed toy, a journal, a photo, a note or a particular codeword or emoji.



"A child needs our love and attention most when they deserve it the least"

– Gabor Mate

If you are concerned about your child's response to reading an article or recognise some signs of online abuse, please see Sources and Resources on page 32 or contact a senior school professional for support.

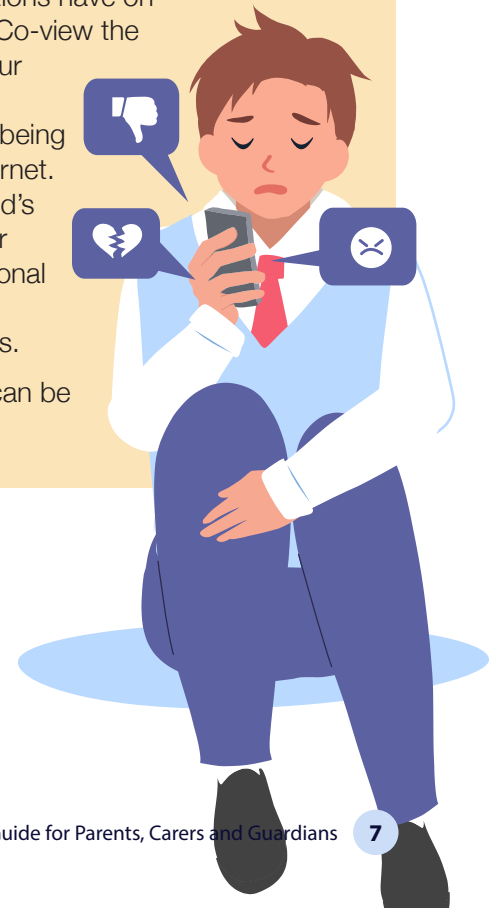
Signs to look out for include:

- There's been a sudden change in how children use the internet e.g. they spend more or less time online than usual.
- Your child may seem distant, upset or angry using the internet or texting. Or there has been a change in their mood or emotional wellbeing.
- Your child may seem secretive about who are talking to and what they are doing online.
- Your child may have a lot of new phone numbers, messages or emails.
- Your child engages less with family and usual friends.

What should you do if you think your child might be bullying others online?

- Your child might be the child who is targeting another in cyberbullying or other unwise online behaviour.
- We recommend that you talk openly with your child and remain curious about what they have done and why.
- Most children who have cyberbullied have themselves been bullied previously. Educate your child and help them to reflect on the impact their actions have on other children. Co-view the internet with your child and make house rules on being kind on the internet. Talk to your child's teacher or other school professional if you have any further concerns.

Further resources can be found [here](#).



EDUCATE

Learn as much as you can about games, platforms, parental controls and the benefits and risks of online activity

Step 1

Check them out! Understand the games, apps and platforms your child is most likely to use

The number one way you can understand how games and apps are structured is to download them and use them yourself before allowing your child access.

The following sites are good sources of information for parents:

- **INTERNET MATTERS APP GUIDE:** This site contains guides to apps and user-friendly tools to support parents and carers. [A parent's guide to apps for kids | Internet Matters](#)
- **NATIONAL COLLEGE FOR ONLINE SAFETY:** Online safety courses and visual guides to popular apps and games. [Online Safety Guides and Resources for Parents \(nationalcollege.com\)](#)
- **PEGI:** This site gives and explains the age ratings for games. | [Pegi Public Site](#)
- **GOV.UK.** This government site offers guidance and step-by-step advice for parents and carers. [Support for parents and carers to keep children safe online – GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- **UK SAFER INTERNET CENTRE.** The UK Safer Internet Centre explains how to set up filters in your home. [Parental controls offered by your home internet provider – UK Safer Internet Centre](#)
- **NSPCC:** The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children has a range of user-friendly tools and guidance for parents [Keeping children safe online | NSPCC](#)
- **FAMISAFE:** Guidance on all areas of internet safety, including discussions about the features and risks of popular games and apps. [FamiSafe – The Most Reliable Parental Control App \(wondershare.com\)](#)



Step 2

Understand the terminology

Vocabulary and acronyms change rapidly, and new words are added all the time. These lists are a starting point:

- **Internet Matters:** [Internet and slang terms glossary | Internet Matters](#)
- **The Lancashire Safeguarding Board:** [Internet-Safety-Glossary_rev-0520_Edition-3.pdf \(lancshiresafeguarding.org.uk\)](#)

Step 3

Understand how to set up parental controls and filters in your home and on your child's devices

There is a wide range of videos and tutorials online to help you to set up parental controls and filters on your family devices and on specific apps. As well as phones and tablets, you should consider what controls have been applied to all internet-capable devices in your home, including TVs, gaming consoles, smart watches and Amazon Alexa.

See **HOUSE RULES** for step by step guidance on how to set up parental controls and filters.



Step 4

Understand the key benefits

Communication with family and friends

Wealth of online activities and experiences

Creativity, e.g. with art and music

Workforce development and efficiency

Online learning and support

Support for work and education

Better access to health and social care

Decreased loneliness and isolation

Access to enormous fields of information

Searching for and applying for jobs

Communication with like-minded people and communities

...and much more!

Step 5

Understand the key risks and read the statistics

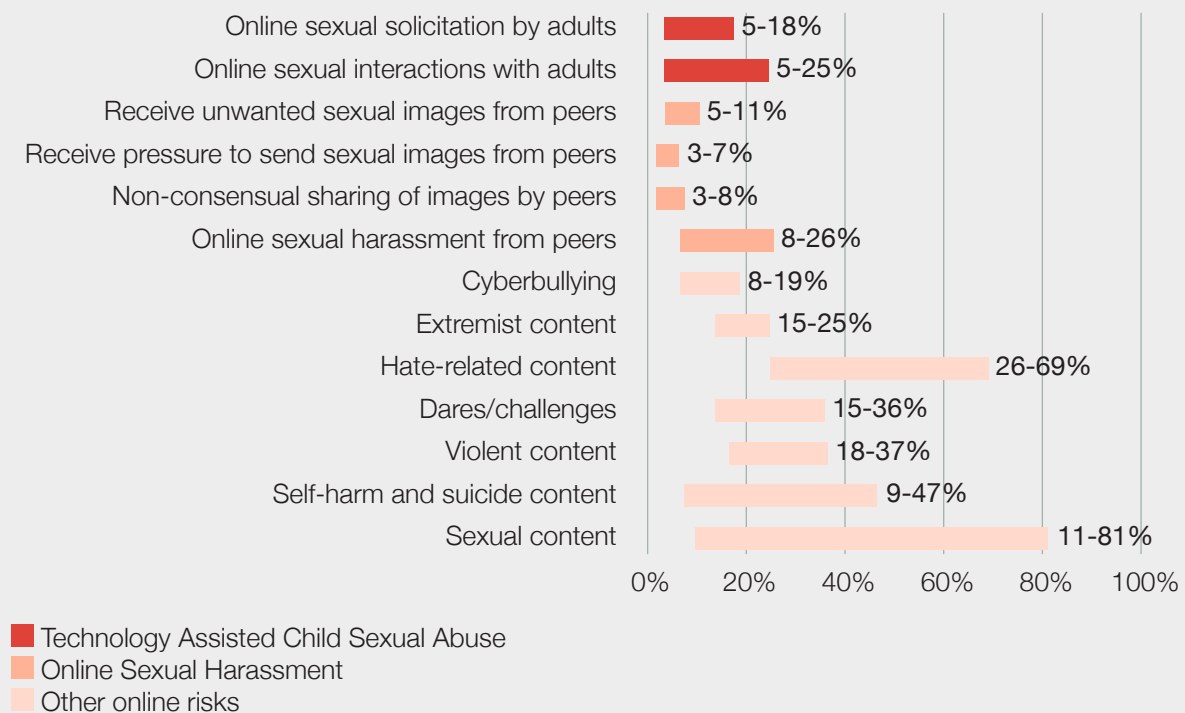
It is difficult to protect your child if you do not know what might hurt them.

It is important that parents and carers take time to read and understand the potential risks so that they are better able and better motivated to protect their children. The table below outlines some of the key risks and signposts data and research which highlights the prevalence of each risk.

Caution: Some of the details contained in the following tables are alarming and may cause distress. Please do seek support if needed. See the Sources and Resources on page 32 section for further guidance.



Prevalence of children's exposure to sexual online risks and a range of other online risks



Reference: [Online Risks to Children: Evidence Review Main Report \(nspcc.org.uk\)](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/reports-and-publications/online-risks-to-children-evidence-review-main-report/)

KEY RISK 1: Online sexual abuse

Online sexual interaction with an adult

Between 5% and 18% of children have experienced online sexual solicitation, where they have been offered money or gifts in return for a sexual act¹.

5-25% of children have had online sexual interactions with adults.

Online abuse typically originates on platforms preferred by children, including gaming platforms, Snapchat, Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp. Online sexual interactions between children and someone they believed to be an adult were most frequently reported on Snapchat (15%), Instagram (13%), WhatsApp (11%), Facebook (10%) and Facebook Messenger (10%)².

The average age of victims is 9.5, with offenders typically aged between 18-24.

Online sexual harassment

Up to 26% of children have experienced unwanted sexual harassment online³. These figures are from 2017 and annual increases suggests today's figure is higher.

Sharing of sexual images

It is illegal to make or share a sexual image of a child. This includes a child sharing a sexual image of themselves. Common risks include the taking of images without consent and the wider sharing of images originally shared only with an intimate partner.

35% of children aged 12-17 have received a request for a sexual image from a peer⁴.

5-11% of children aged 12-17 have received unwanted sexual images from peers.

3-8% of children aged 12-17 have had their own sexual images shared with others without their consent.

3-7% of children aged 12-17 have experienced pressure to send sexual images⁵.

The Child Abuse Identification Database (UK) recorded 8.3 million unique child sexual images in circulation between 2017-2019. At this time 7,900 children were identified through these images and safeguarded as a result.

These figures are from 2017 and 2019. Annual increases suggest today's figure is higher, with an estimated 500,000 images added to the database every two months⁶.

Access to inappropriate sexual content

94% of children have viewed pornography by the time they are 14 years old. 10% of children have viewed pornography by the time they are 10 years old. Evidence links the age a child first views pornography with the age they receive their first phone⁷.

Typically, children's first experience of pornography is unintentional, with many coming across videos through social media, particularly Twitter (X), Instagram and Snapchat. The majority of parents do not believe their children have viewed pornography online, yet the majority of children report having done so. Additionally, many pornographic images and videos accessed by children depict violent or degrading acts towards women. Evidence suggests that pornography has had a significant negative impact on children's language and behaviours. 47% of young people reported that they expected sex to involve acts of physical aggression⁸.

KEY RISK 2: Grooming and access to offensive, extremist and harmful content

Grooming

“Grooming” is the process of an offender building a relationship with a child in order to manipulate them or their families, often with the aim of sexual abuse in the future.

6,300 grooming cases were investigated by the police in 2023, with the true figure likely far higher. Grooming typically takes place over a wide range of platforms, with Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook and WhatsApp used in almost half of cases. 5% of children have met up with someone they had previously only known online. 65% of 9–17-year-olds reported having been asked by an online-only contact to move communications to an encrypted service, with 52% subsequently doing so⁹.

Access to offensive, extremist and harmful content

Up to 69% of young people have accessed hateful content, 37% have accessed violent content and 25% have accessed extremist content online¹⁰. The BBC has reported that social media algorithms offer violent and extremist content to teenage boys in particular¹¹.

KEY RISK 3: Online bullying

19% of children aged 10-15 have experienced online bullying in the past year¹². Boys and girls are equally vulnerable. Online bullying can include name calling, threats, deliberate exclusion from an activity, sharing edited images, discriminatory comments/insults, encouragement to self-harm, and the spreading of unkind rumours.

Recent research from ONS (Office of National Statistics, 2024¹³) revealed that over half of children told their parents about bullying. Since the pandemic in 2020, bullying which relates to children being targeted for their race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender or culture has increased¹⁴.

Many incidents of bullying start in private but then continue at school and/or in a public forum. Young people often find it challenging to understand when behaviours such as online jokes, banter or ‘roasting’ cross the line to bullying. The risk is not only that your child may be a victim of online bullying, but also that your child may have bullied others.

KEY RISK 4: Access to inappropriate (non-sexual) content

Access to inappropriate (non-sexual) content

Underage access to inappropriate games or apps can be harmful both in exposure to risks and in the potential effect on development¹⁵. Many apps do not have an identifiable age rating or have user-generated content and so can vary widely and unpredictably. Games and apps identified as 18+ have content which is deemed especially harmful to children and may include gambling sites, violent content, vulnerabilities in the structure of the app which heightens risk, or even content which is not legal in some countries. Parents can check the PEGI and age ratings of apps and games to ensure suitability.

Illegal online activity

The average age for a first criminal conviction is 37. The average age for a first criminal conviction for a digital crime is 16¹⁶.

Access to self-harm and suicide content

There are many legal sites, chatrooms and threads which can be dangerous for a vulnerable person to visit. In particular, sites which promote self-harm or suicide have been linked to worsening mental health and have been indicated in 25% of young suicides over the past ten years¹⁷.

KEY RISK 5: Hacking and identity theft

Research by OFCOM (2022) and Mulhall (2023) highlights that children's loss of personal information through hacking, posing or being impersonated was a significant concern for young children. Enfield schools have reported anecdotally that this is a key concern of young people who have shared login and identification information with close friends and later experienced problems, particularly when friendships break down. Issues include the wider sharing of information, stealing of online resources, identity theft, catfishing and assumption of online identity, e.g. to communicate with others.


Support is available. Please see Sources and Resources on page 32 for links to advice and reporting tools.



Report sexual abuse images/videos here: [Report online child sexual abuse imagery or 'child pornography' \(iwf.org.uk\)](#)

The CO:RE Classification of online risk to children: The 4Cs

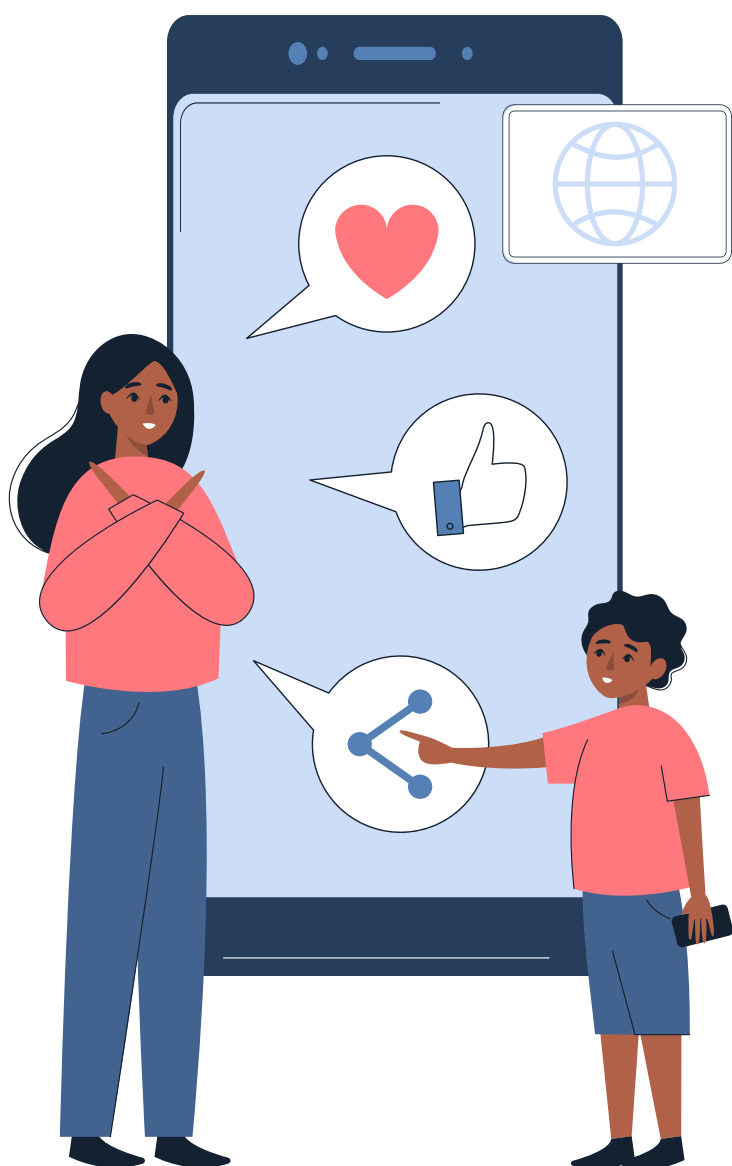
This classification of online risk is a useful tool to help parents/carers and practitioners to understand and address different types of online harm (Stoilova, Mariya and Livingstone, Sonia, 2021).

	Content	Contact	Conduct	Contract
	Child engages with or is exposed to potentially harmful content	Child experiences or is targeted by potentially harmful <i>adult</i> contact	Child witnesses, participates in or is a victim of potentially harmful <i>peer</i> conduct	Child is party to or exploited by potentially harmful contract
Aggressive	Violent, gory, graphic, racist, hateful or extremist information and communication	Harassment, stalking, hateful behaviour, unwanted or excessive surveillance	Bullying, hateful or hostile communication or peer activity e.g. trolling, exclusion, shaming	Identity theft, fraud, phishing, scams, hacking, blackmail, security risks
Sexual	Pornography (harmful or illegal), sexualization of culture, oppressive body image norms	Sexual harassment, sexual grooming, sextortion, the generation and sharing of child sexual abuse material	Sexual harassment, non-consensual sexual messaging, adverse sexual pressures	Trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation, streaming (paid-for) child sexual abuse
Values	Mis/disinformation, age-inappropriate marketing or user-generated content	Ideological persuasion or manipulation, radicalisation and extremist recruitment	Potentially harmful user communities e.g. self-harm, anti-vaccine, adverse peer pressures	Gambling, filter bubbles, micro-targeting, dark patterns shaping persuasion or purchase
Cross-cutting	Privacy violations (interpersonal, institutional, commercial) Physical and mental health risks (e.g., sedentary lifestyle, excessive screen use, isolation, anxiety) Inequalities and discrimination (in/exclusion, exploiting vulnerability, algorithmic bias/predictive analytics)			

Teach your child about specific issues and concerns

Your child will learn about online safety and some key risks at school. However, the school curriculum does not cover everything and is often not able to be responsive to new issues. Your input as a parent is vital.

Your child does not need to know the full details of online risks. Instead, encourage open two-way communication with your child, outlining your key concerns and what the possible outcomes of certain actions might be. For example, ensuring your child understands that the sharing of login details or intimate pictures with a trusted person may later lead to the image or details being more widely shared. This will help your child to recognise potential risks as well as understanding the reasoning behind any restrictions you put into place.



Step 1 Foster open communication with your child and always keep an open door.

Allow your child to share their concerns and worries with you. You know your child best. Some children are less confident than others and may need additional support to talk about a difficult experience. You could introduce a 'safe' object to help them feel comfortable. This safe object should be something familiar to the child that they can easily give to an adult when they want to talk about something difficult. Some safe objects could be:

- a soft toy e.g. teddy bear, cuddly toy animal, or a hard object i.e. tennis ball, talking stick
- sensory toy e.g. squeezable ball, fidget toy, etc, or comfort object e.g. jewellery, family photo, etc.
- letter written by the parent that is reassuring
- an agreed safe word or emoji

TOP TIP

Before introducing the safe object, agree with the child which object you will use to discuss difficult topics. For example, younger children might prefer a cuddly toy which they can use as a special friend to help talk about their feelings. Older children might use a sensory toy or letter of reassurance to help them feel calmer when talking about something difficult.

When introducing the safe object, explain how and when the child could use it. You could model the use of the object and share something that you found difficult. When a child shares things in the future, remind them to use their object.

Step 2 Explain your concerns in simple terms as issues arise

Always tell your child that they can talk to a trusted adult (like a family member or teacher) about anything that worries them. Here are a few examples of what you could say about different topics:

Instead of saying: *“No YouTube / TikTok”*

EXPLAIN: YouTube / TikTok has content that is generated by users. There are lots of videos there which are not suitable for children, or which might scare you, and they're not taken down before they're seen. Sometimes YouTube / TikTok will autoplay videos which you'd prefer not to see.

PROTECT: I will put controls onto this app so that you can only see what is suitable for your age group.

WELCOME: If anything comes up which worries you, please come and show me and we can talk about it.

Instead of saying: *“No talking to strangers online”*

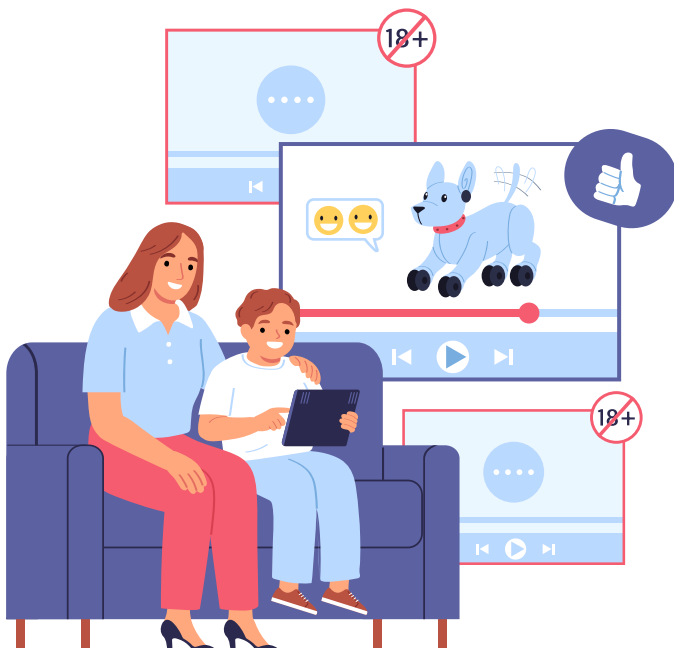
EXPLAIN: Some people you can meet online are nice, and some might seem nice at first but it is difficult to know whether they are nice or not. Many people pretend to be someone else online – for example, an adult may pretend to be a child. Some apps are encrypted and so although they might seem safe, they are more likely to be used by people who might not be nice to you.

PROTECT: I have put controls onto this app so that it restricts who is able to contact you.

WELCOME: Please show me anything which worries you and we can talk about it.

Instead of saying: *“Be careful of bullies”*

EXPLAIN: Sometimes people act online in a way which they wouldn't in person. It is easier to be unpleasant online. Sometimes you might act online in a way you wouldn't in person.



PROTECT: I have put restrictions on your device so that you are better protected from this.

WELCOME: Come and talk to me about anything which worries you, even if you've done something unwise yourself. We can find a way forward together.

Instead of saying: *“Don't share your login details”*

EXPLAIN: You might be tempted to share login details with your friends. But sometimes friends accidentally share those details, or you might fall out with your friends in the future and your details are shared on purpose. Your login details could be used to post things in your name, to steal your online resources or to wreck your online activity.

PROTECT: Keep your login details safe and change them often.

WELCOME: Come and talk to me about anything which worries you.

Instead of saying: *“Don't share pictures of yourself”*

EXPLAIN: Sometimes you might want to share pictures of yourself, or others might pressure you to do so. Any pictures you share could be circulated widely, even if you only shared them with one trusted person.

PROTECT: Think carefully about any pictures you take or share and whether you would be happy for everyone in the school to see them in the future. You can show me anything you are unsure about sending, or anything you receive and we can talk about it together.

WELCOME: Come and talk to me about anything which worries you.

Instead of saying: *“No devices at bedtime”*

EXPLAIN AND PROTECT: We don't use devices at bedtime in this house. We want to make sure you are safe online, so your online activity is restricted to communal areas. We want to make sure you have healthy sleep. Devices can stop you sleeping properly.

WELCOME: Let's talk about screen free activities you'd like to do at bedtime

Instead of saying: “Don’t search for things you’re not supposed to see”

EXPLAIN: There are lots of videos, pictures and websites online which are not suitable for children, or even for adults.

PROTECT: I have put restrictions on your device to help prevent anything being shown to you accidentally. Sometimes you might be forwarded an image or have a video or website suggested to you online. Think carefully before viewing anything which might not be appropriate. Never share anything inappropriate with anyone else. In some cases this is illegal and could get you into trouble.

WELCOME: If you are curious about any topic, let me know and I will do my best to explain it to you

.....

If your child has SEND, you may prefer to communicate using familiar pictures and symbols.

The NSPCC offers guidance for parents on how to start conversations about internet safety. [Teaching Your Child about Internet and Online Safety | NSPCC](#)

Teach your child about safe and unsafe relationships and how to repair friendships following disagreements online

Encourage your child to regularly discuss who they talk to online and what activities they do with other people online. You can support children with their peer relationships by:

1) Talking to your child about what makes a good friend. Discuss the value of true friendships, e.g. being kind, caring, loyal, trusting, and having fun together.

Try not to judge some of their current friendships and help them to recognise bullying or harmful behaviours.

2) Encouraging your child to be critical of what others have said online before reacting, using the THINK acronym:

T is it true? Think before you agree with something. Could it be misleading or fake information?

H is it helpful?

I is it inspiring?

N is it necessary? Do you need to like or comment on this? How important is it that you do this?

K is it kind? How would the other person feel if they read your comment? Could they easily misinterpret your comment? What else could you say instead?

3) Talking to your child about unsafe online relationships. For example, talking to strangers, the risks of sharing images or videos of themselves, meeting up with online friends, people pretending to be a friend online, the sharing passwords and personal data.

4) Supporting your child to repair a friendship that has broken down by listening, acting and building better relationships. See here for more guidance: www.childrenssociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/2020-10/Good-Childhood-Friendship-Guide-Adults.pdf



CO-VIEW

Co-view your child's online activity at least once a week

Viewing or playing on the internet with your child is a great way to spend quality time together. It lets your child share their interests, games, and music with you, and it encourages conversations about what they're seeing online. As a parent or carer, this is a unique chance to help your child think critically about the content they view and how they behave online. One study (Mulhall, 2023) found that most children wanted their parents to supervise their internet use at least once a week to help them to stay safe online.

Interact with your child as they are communicating or playing online

Play your child's favourite game with them

Ask your child to show you what they enjoy doing online

Watch your child play online

Ask your child to show you something funny or interesting



Interact with your child online

Be involved. Be interested. Make sure your child knows that their online world is important to you too. Have your own profiles, join in games, send messages and ask your child to teach platform features to you.

Model appropriate online behaviour

Your child looks up to you as an example. Children learn how to use the internet from their parents, family members and friends, even if they use it for different things. They learn how to use the internet (e.g., searching for information, entertainment, socialising etc), learn when to use the internet (i.e., what time of day), how much time to spend online (from a few minutes to hours), how to interact with others, and how to be safe online. This also includes turning off content that is not appropriate and explaining why it's not appropriate.

Reflect on some of these questions. Use the spaces below to jot down your answers.

How much time do I spend on digital devices daily? At what times do I use my phone?

What type of content do I usually consume online?

How do I use social media apps? How do I engage in positive, respectful conversations online? How do I handle conflicts or disagreements in online spaces?

How do I filter and block content on my own device? How do I keep my online activities secure (e.g. strong passwords, sharing personal information)? Am I careful about the websites I visit and the links that I click? How do I critically evaluate fake news or misinformation?

How do I show a balance of offline and online activities to my children? How do I follow my own online advice for my children?

What would you like to change about your current online habits?

If you want to make changes, start making regular small changes!

Co-operate with each other to promote the well-being of all

Look after yourself

Parental wellbeing is more important than anything else when it comes to supporting children's safety both online and offline. There are a lot of demands on you as a parent and keeping up with all the new technology updates and new online risks can feel overwhelming and scary at times. Prolonged stress can also have an impact on parents' mental and physical health. It's important to look after your own wellbeing before you support your child's wellbeing.

Imagine your self-care is a cup and your cup is filled by things that make you feel good, like exercising, praying/meditating, journalling, cooking, socialising, etc.

Spend some time to think about what fills your cup.

On certain days, you may feel that your cup is not as full as you'd like it to be. Remember you cannot pour from an empty cup: self-care is key! What could you fill your cup with to support your wellbeing?



Draw or write your favourite activities in the cup above

The NHS recommend 5 areas to support your wellbeing:



CONNECT – meet up with friends and family both offline and online.

BE ACTIVE – keep moving! Take part in sports and exercises that make you feel good and are highly enjoyable for you.

TAKE NOTICE – remember the good times! Take the time to reflect on things that make you happy, savour positive moments and practise mindfulness.

LEARN SOMETHING NEW – learn a new skill like a new recipe, a language, or something creative.

GIVE – do something nice for a friend/family member or help your local community.

Support children to develop healthy online habits

To support children's wellbeing online we can help them to develop healthy online habits and think about their values and what is important to them.

Supporting children's wellbeing online first starts with making them aware of how much time they are spending on different online activities and teaching them about healthy habits. We can do this by explaining the brain's autopilot mode and using child-friendly metaphors to understand the need for balance.

Teach children about the brain's 'autopilot mode' and persuasive designs

Our brains work incredibly hard every single day, making big decisions, remembering information, critically thinking, planning, learning new skills, etc. When our brains work this hard, we might experience a low power brain mode, and our brain begins to delegate tasks to what we call 'autopilot mode'. This mode relies on habits, which are activities that we have repeated many times before, often without conscious thought. For example, you might have a habit of regularly checking your phone, scrolling social media or have a routine to unwind from work/school.

Many internet sites and apps are deliberately designed to take advantage of the brain's autopilot mode and keep users engaged for longer periods. Persuasive designs that involve endless scrolling, notifications, likes and comments, stories/live videos and the personalised (algorithm-based) feeds are psychological strategies that hook users attention and promote rewarding feelings (known as dopamine hits).

After a long day of work or school, our mental energy can be very low and we are more likely to make use of autopilot mode. For some people, there might be a pre-set routine to go online or scroll through their phones. While this behaviour is automatic and comforting, it can lead us to neglect other activities

we might prefer, such as hobbies, physical exercise, spending time with family, etc. Therefore, it is essential to help children develop a balance of healthy online and offline habits after school and on the weekends.

Explain balancing offline and online activities using child-friendly metaphors

The water cup analogy

Step 1

Ask your child to write their main activities under these cups e.g. playing games, texting friends, learning/homework, reading, chores, rest/sleep, watching videos, playing sports, playing with friends, hobbies, and so on.



Step 2

Fill up the cups based on how much time your child spends on these activities. A full cup equals just enough time or the agreed time spent on the activity.

Step 3

Explain how an overflowing cup means they are not getting a balance of other activities that are important to health, wellbeing and socialising.

Step 4

Ask your child how they could/would like to have a better balance. For example:

- If you woke up tomorrow and one thing changed about how you spent your time online and offline, what would it be?
- What would the change look like? What would you like to do?
- How can we (your parents/carers) help you with this change?
- Who would notice the change?



Your garden

Your time and attention are like water and sunlight in a beautiful garden. If you focus all your attention on one area, like gaming/watching videos, certain plants will flourish for a while. However, other parts of your life, like sleep, spending time with family, and so on (the other plants), will start to wither. To grow a healthy, vibrant garden you need to spread your time evenly, tending to all the plants, like sports, hobbies, socialising, sleep etc. This way your entire garden thrives, with each part being beautiful and balanced, which can make you feel happier.



A balanced diet for the mind

Just like a balanced diet which includes a variety of foods to keep your body healthy, a balanced 'diet' of activities nourishes your mind. Spending too much time online is like eating only one type of food – it might be enjoyable, but it won't give you all the nutrients you need. However, if you try to incorporate a range of online and offline activities, like socialising, sports, crafts, etc, it's like adding fruits, vegetables and proteins to your mind's diet, helping you to be a well-rounded person.



What if my child is addicted to online activities?

There is no clinical or medical diagnoses of internet or smartphone addiction and the quality of research for internet/smartphone addiction is still developing. Addiction itself is defined as "not having control over doing, taking or using something to the point where it could be harmful to you" (NHS 2024). Unhealthy online habits can become a more serious issue when a person's daily functioning or mood is affected.

If you are highly concerned about your children's unhealthy online habits, first try teaching and encouraging them to use the strategies mentioned above. If you remain concerned, speak to your child's school or your GP and request a referral.

What if something goes wrong online for my child – how can I support them?

When something goes wrong online it's important to help children feel heard and safe. Parents need to remain calm and remember the 4Rs:

Regulate:

Help your child to feel calm, such as saying reassuring words, providing physical contact like hugs, going for a walk, etc. Use what works for your child! It can be difficult for children to think clearly when they are upset and they need an opportunity to feel calm. It is also important that you regulate yourself and ensure you are calm before supporting your child.

Relate:

Label your child's emotions and connect with your child. You can share a similar experience that may have happened to you. Validate the child's emotion, saying, "I recognise this is really upsetting for you. I would feel the same if this happened to me".

Reason:

Support your child to reflect, learn, remember, articulate and become self-assured about the difficult incident. Collect as much information as you can about the incident. It is often useful to record information too.

Repair:

Provide an opportunity to help problem solve ways that the child can repair a relationship that has broken down or undo an action online.



HOUSE RULES

Set clear routines, rules and boundaries (“house rules”)

Children need to know that you (the parent/carer) are in charge and that you will keep them safe. It is natural for children to push against boundaries, but having them there makes them feel protected and valued.

Ensure you have an explicit daily routine and rules about device use, and that you are consistent in maintaining these.

Your routines and rules need to work for you and your family.

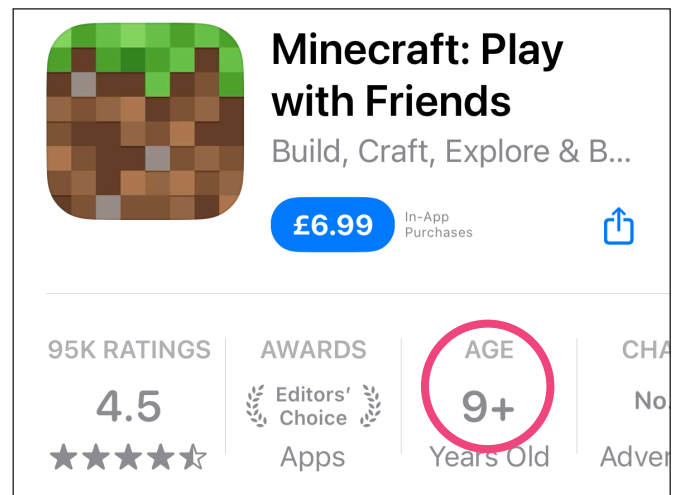
Keep to age ratings and guidance for apps, games and devices

Age ratings and guidance have been determined by professionals who understand the (often hidden) risks and how certain activities affect the developing brain. They work in a similar way to film certificates at the cinema.

As a parent you may not always understand why a game or app has been given its age rating or have an in-depth knowledge of some automatic features, such as chatrooms. You can check the age ratings of apps and games directly in the app store or by checking their PEGI rating (<https://pegi.info>). We would also recommend that you explore any game or app yourself before allowing your child to use it, and that you co-view with your child.

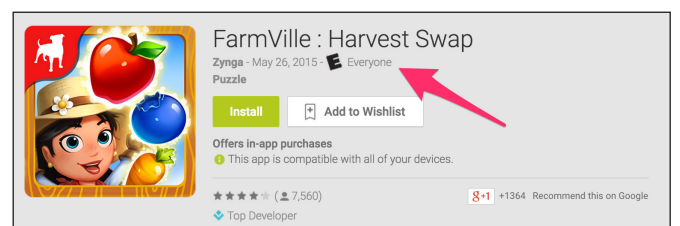
Below are images of age rating symbols used by:

App Store (Apple)



The screenshot shows the App Store listing for 'Minecraft: Play with Friends'. The app icon is a pixelated dirt block. The title is 'Minecraft: Play with Friends' and the subtitle is 'Build, Craft, Explore & B...'. The price is £6.99, with a note for 'In-App Purchases'. Below the price, there are four categories: '95K RATINGS' with a 4.5 star rating, 'AWARDS' with 'Editors' Choice' for Apps, 'AGE' with a '9+' rating circled in red, and 'CHA' with 'No' and 'Adver'.

Google Play (Android)



The screenshot shows the Google Play listing for 'FarmVille : Harvest Swap'. The app icon features a farm scene with a cow, a red apple, and a blueberry. The title is 'FarmVille : Harvest Swap' and the subtitle is 'Zynga - May 26, 2015 - Everyone Puzzle'. There is an 'Install' button and an 'Add to Wishlist' button. A red arrow points to the 'Everyone' age rating. Below the buttons, it says 'Offers in-app purchases' and 'This app is compatible with all of your devices.' There are 7,560 reviews and a 'Top Developer' badge.

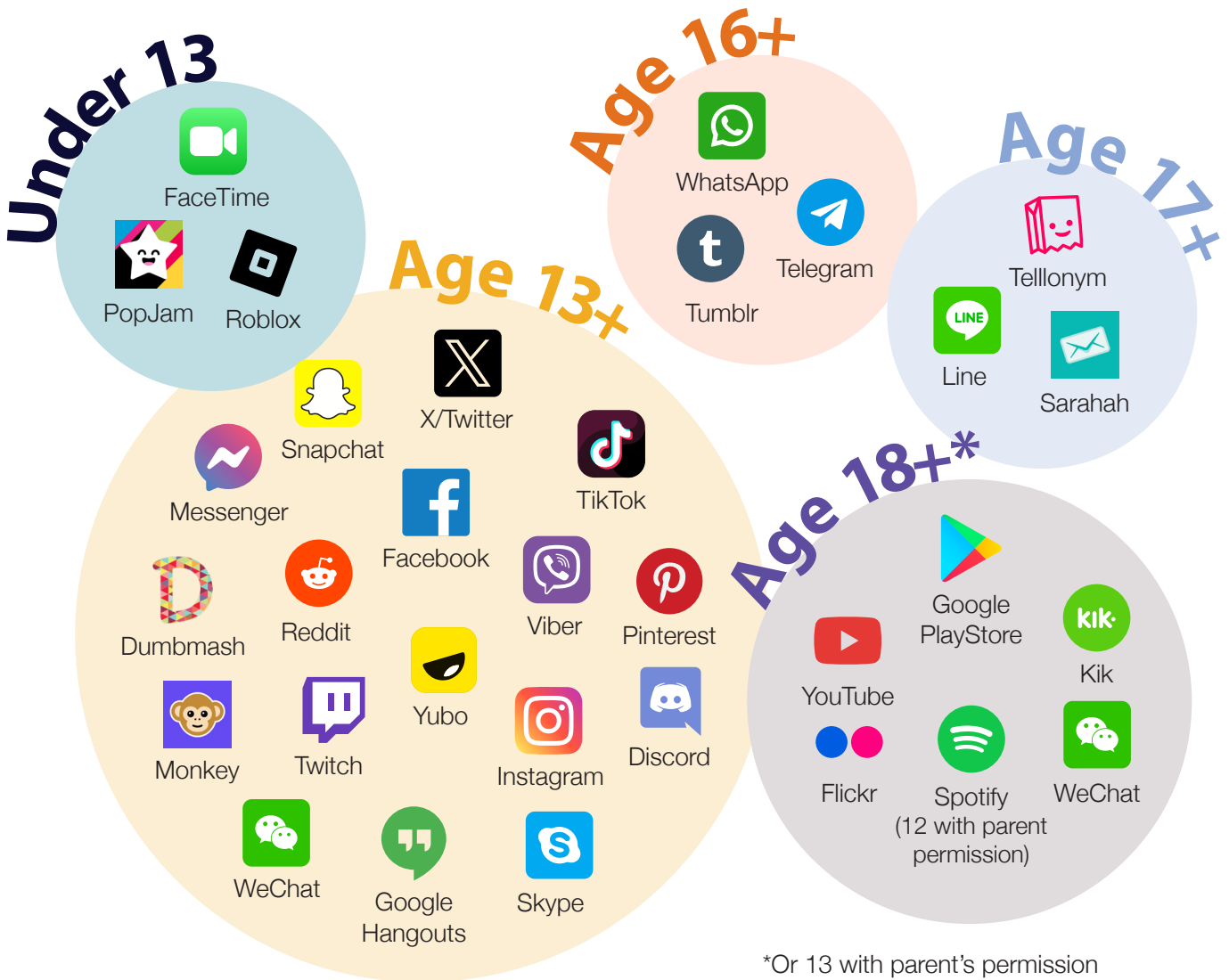
PEGI



The PEGI symbols are shown for ages 3, 7, 12, 16, and 18. Below the symbols are icons for content descriptors: VIOLENCE, BAD LANGUAGE, FEAR, GAMBLING, SEX, DRUGS, DISCRIMINATION, and IN-GAME PURCHASES.

A guide to the minimum age restrictions in place for popular social media platforms

What is the minimum age for account holders on these social media sites and apps?



A guide to the minimum age restrictions in place for some popular games

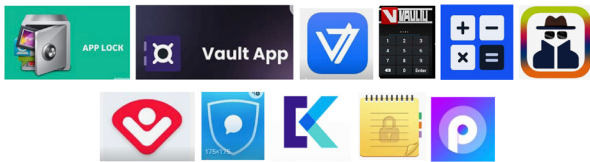
Age Restrictions for Video Games		Age Restrictions for Video Games		Age Restrictions for Video Games
3 PEGI 3	7 PEGI 7	12 PEGI 12	16 PEGI 16	18 PEGI 18
Games with a PEGI 3 rating are suitable for all ages.	Games with a PEGI 7 rating are suitable for ages 7 and above.	Games with a PEGI 12 rating are suitable for ages 12 and above.	Games with a PEGI 16 rating are suitable for ages 16 and above.	Games with a PEGI 18 rating are suitable for ages 18 and above.
They may have:	They may have:	They may have:	They may have:	They may have:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> child-like settings comical violence language more suitable for young children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> some scenes or sounds that could be frightening mild forms of violence (non-realistic or with no detail) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> violence of a slightly graphic nature involving fantasy characters suggestive activities or language gambling mild bad language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> violence and adult content that looks like real life bad language scenes demonstrating the use of tobacco, alcohol or illegal substances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> extreme violence explicit adult content the glamorised use of illegal substances
For example:	For example:	For example:	For example:	For example:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Just Dance FIFA DiRT Rally Animal Crossing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minecraft Roblox Among Us Lego Series 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sims Fortnite Dragon Ball FighterZ Super Smash Bros. Ultimate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marvel's Avengers Battlefield 2042 Halo Infinite Marvel's Spider-Man 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Call of Duty: Warzone Grand Theft Auto V Far Cry 3 Blood Dragon
<small>For further information regarding the video game age restrictions mentioned in this resource, please see the official PEGI website.</small>		<small>For further information regarding the video game age restrictions mentioned in this resource, please see the official PEGI website.</small>		<small>For further information regarding the video game age restrictions mentioned in this resource, please see the official PEGI website.</small>

A guide to apps which hide or password protect content

It's natural for children to want independence online but when they are accessing inappropriate content and hiding it from parents/caregivers, this could have a significant impact on their development, wellbeing and daily functioning.

Some children may use certain apps to hide activities or content from their parents. These are sometimes known as vault apps, decoy apps or hidden apps. To find these, check for repeat apps such as multiple calculators or notes, or look for apps with unusual names or icons. Reviewing app settings, permissions and storage can also help to uncover hidden applications. It is also important to maintain open communication with your child so that you can discuss risks and issues as they arise.

These types of app are often on the market for a short time, and then re-released with different names and logos. Currently, the most popular decoy and vault apps include AppLock, Vault, Vaulty, SpyCalc, Secret Calculator, Cover Me, HideltPro, Secret Photo Vault, Private Album, Keep Safe and Calculator Photo Vault. You can find up to date guidance here: [What are decoy apps? A parents' guide | Internet Matters](#)



Restrict online activity to daytime and communal areas

You wouldn't allow your child to wander unaccompanied around a city late at night, not knowing who they were interacting with or what they were doing. Apply the same supervision and care to your child's online activity.

Ensuring online activity occurs primarily in communal spaces provides an extra level of supervision and means your child will feel more able to approach you for support if something concerns them online. Additionally, restricting device use to daytime and communal areas allows your child space to unwind, to interact with their household, and to sleep soundly at night.

Your house rules should include boundaries about where and when devices are used. Most devices and Wi-Fi hubs have settings which switch off online activity for specific devices between specific times.

Use filters and parental controls

It is your responsibility to understand how to set parental controls on your child's devices and to ensure these are in place. There are many instructional videos available online. The following links may be useful to you:

- **How to set up parental controls on a range of devices, apps and providers:** [Use Parental Controls to Keep Your Child Safe | NSPCC](#)
- **How to set up parental controls on an iPhone or iPad:** [Use parental controls on your child's iPhone and iPad – Apple Support](#)
- **How to set up parental controls on an Android phone:** [How to Put Parental Controls on Android: Step-By-Step Guide \(bestparentalcontrolapps.com\)](#)
- **How to set up parental controls on an Amazon Fire tablet:** [How to Set Parental Controls on Your Amazon Fire Tablet | Digital Trends](#)
- **How to set up parental controls on an Amazon Alexa/Echo:** [Set Controls for Amazon Kids on Alexa with the Parent Dashboard – Amazon Customer Service](#)
- **How to set up parental controls on Xbox:** [Xbox family settings: peace of mind for parents | Xbox](#)
- **How to set parental controls on PlayStation:** [Parental controls \(UK\) \(playstation.com\)](#)
- **How to apply filters and parental controls on your home internet provider (UK Safer Internet Centre):** [Parental controls offered by your home internet provider – UK Safer Internet Centre](#)



Spend regular screen-free time with your child

Your child desires your attention above all else. Spending regular screen-free time together will strengthen your relationship, will support your child's development and will have a direct impact on your child's mental health. Here are some top tips for spending screen-free time with your child:



Monitor your own screen use

Be honest about your own screen use. Lead by example as much as you can.



Turn devices off at family mealtimes

Including adults! Build this into your family's routine and spend the mealtime talking, eating and playing family games.



Turn devices off at bedtime

Devices interfere with sleep hormone production. Spend time instead talking with your child, reading stories, listening to music, and encouraging calm independent entertainment.



Build unstructured playtime into your child's routine

Let your child take the lead!



Consider your child's 'play diet' and balance digital play with social play, creative play and active play

Children of all ages need social play, creative play and active play as part of their 'play diet'.

Social play: Social play is anything which involves interacting with others face to face. Examples include board games, group projects, or simply hanging out and talking.

Creative play: Creative play for younger children involves their imagination and pretend play. Creative play for older children more often involves innovation and exploration. Examples include pretend play, setting up a 'shop', putting on a show, music, art, Lego, science experiments and projects of all kinds. Creative play can be structured or unstructured.

Active play: Active play has physical activity at its core. Examples include structured sports and activities, playing tag, playing outdoors, riding a bike, skateboard or scooter, going for a walk, playing at a playground or having a kickabout at the park.

Source: [Play Diet – LearningWorks for Kids](#)



Recommendations for phone ownership

There is no perfect age for a young person to receive their first phone and research in this area is still developing.

Studies have shown that the age a child first owns a mobile phone is linked to the age they first view pornography and is also linked to heightened risk in many other areas (Children’s Commissioner for England, 2023).

It is our recommendation that children under the age of 11 do not have their own phone and that the devices they do use are closely monitored and restricted.

It is our recommendation that smartphone use is delayed until at least age 14, and ideally until age 16. We also recommend that any device a child uses is always monitored and restricted and that family boundaries are agreed.

We recommend that caregivers agree a written contract with their child when first presented with any device, and revisit this regularly. This includes a restricted device. An example is given below for a restricted smartphone. It can be adapted for any device and family circumstance. A further example can be found here: www.internetmatters.org/resources/digital-family-agreement-template.

A useful ‘First Phone Checklist’ can be found here: www.childnet.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/First-phone-checklist.pdf

**AGE
11+**

for a basic phone or highly restricted smart phone without internet access or social media

**AGE
14+**

for a smart phone with parental controls



Agree a contract with your child to encourage responsible phone use.

EXAMPLE RESTRICTED SMARTPHONE CONTRACT

This phone is a restricted smartphone. There is no internet access, no social media and most apps are restricted. There is access to standard messages, email, a safe messaging app (Starz), maps, tools, Google Classroom and some games.

[Child’s name] agrees to:

1. Use this phone responsibly and with kindness
2. Talk through anything which causes concern, however small and whatever your part in it has been
3. Keep school rules regarding phone use
4. Not alter any settings, restrictions, or hide content
5. App additions will be agreed by a parent
6. Notifications and locations will be shared with a parent
7. The phone has “downtime” enabled between 7pm and 7am each day. It cannot be used between these times
8. The phone is not allowed in bedrooms and will be kept in [a communal space] overnight
9. Parents may check the phone from time to time
10. Parents may make alterations to settings from time to time

[Parent/carer] agrees to:

1. Respect [child’s name] privacy, aside from occasional checks
2. Discuss and fully consider any requests to change this contract or any settings on the phone

Signed [child]:.....

Signed [parent/carer]:.....

Common Issues and Possible Solutions

My child needs a smartphone to talk to extended family members.

Keeping in touch with family is important, however, we do not recommend that children have their own unrestricted smartphone, nor that they have unsupervised use of social media or communication apps which are not suitable for their age. In particular, WhatsApp can seem harmless but because of both its encryption ability and its use in large groups where bullying/abuse can often occur, it is a common source of harm. We suggest children use alternative ways to communicate with family members.

My child needs their smartphone for an alarm in the morning, so they have to have it in their bedroom.

We suggest you find an alternative alarm, such as investing in an alarm clock.

My child has Type 1 Diabetes (or other medical need) and needs a smartphone to connect to their monitor.

This is clearly an exceptional circumstance and the child does need a smartphone to enable their medical device. However, the smartphone does not need social media or internet access and should be restricted to the medical functions only.

I don't know how to enable parental controls on my child's device.

It is your responsibility to learn how to do this, or to seek support. We do not recommend that your child has an unrestricted device.

My child spends half the week with his other parent, who doesn't restrict internet access. There's no point in me restricting device use if it doesn't happen everywhere.

We recommend you set the house rules for your own home and keep your child as safe as possible when they are in your care. You could also encourage the other parent to attend the online safety course and to read the TECH guidelines.

Children will override any restrictions we place on their device.

Research shows that children want to be safe online. Ensure you have enabled controls correctly, that you have agreed a contract with your child which includes not altering settings on the device, and that your communication with your child is frequent, friendly and open.

Children won't talk to adults about their online issues.

Research shows that children want to be able to approach their trusted adults when they are worried about an online issue. A child may feel reluctant to discuss issues, if they are worried about consequences like parents confiscating their device or children may find it difficult to talk about these subjects. We recommend that parents talk regularly and openly with their children. Children in fact do want to discuss their issues and be able to seek advice on how to manage specific situations.



How do I protect my child from content they might see on someone else's device?

You can and should take precautions to ensure your child is safe at home, at school and through friendships and other relationships, but you cannot manage every avenue of exposure and risk. We would recommend that you talk with your child about the possibility they may view something unpleasant or risky on someone else's device and discuss the ways they could both avoid this and how they could manage certain issues should they arise. Encourage your child to come to you if they've seen anything which worries them and welcome open discussion about tricky situations. Talk to your child about the person they would like to be and how they could enact this in practice now. This will help your child to problem solve and to manage issues responsibly, and will give you greater peace of mind as a parent.

All my child's friends have WhatsApp, Snapchat and TikTok. My child will be bullied or feel left out if they don't have access.

It can be difficult to balance safety with your child's emerging independence and desire to communicate with their peer group. This is true of allowing your child to go out of the house independently or engage in certain risky behaviours as well as using online communication tools. As a parent/carer, you have to weigh up the risks and opportunities offered by accessing social media. Although social media offers the opportunity to connect with others, it is your responsibility to keep your child safe whatever the pressures may be. Additionally, we would recommend that you encourage your child to meet up regularly with peers in person and also have time away from friends at home. These are both important for rest, reflection and general well-being.

My child has Special Educational Needs (SEN) and needs to watch YouTube while falling asleep.

Children with SEN are especially vulnerable to online risks, such as online bullying, and YouTube is also associated with many risks such as exposure to inappropriate content. We recommend that our guidance is followed for all.

My child needs a smartphone because they walk to and from school on their own.

Having a smartphone on your person increases the risk of mugging and distraction while walking. There are countless alternative ways that you can track your child or your child can contact you if needed, for example an Airtag, a screenless or basic brick phone, or a REACHFAR device. A fully restricted smartphone without apps, internet access or social media is also an option once your child is over the age of 11.

My child has had unrestricted internet access for years. How can I impose restrictions now?

Talk to your child. Discuss the concerns you have and agree some rules together. Your child will likely have some ideas themselves, and may tell you about their own worries and how you could help.

We would recommend you start with:

T **TALK**
Make sure you have open communication with your child and that they feel able to come to you with any worries.

E **EDUCATE**
Explain some of the key risks and what is worrying you. Be ready to listen too.

C **CO-VIEW**
Spend time getting to know what your child likes to do on the internet. Allow them to show you their favourite things.

H **HOUSE RULES**
Agree some simple boundaries to begin with, such as keeping devices in communal areas overnight and introducing restrictions for some sites and apps.

T **TALK**
Back to talking! Keep your communication friendly and clear. Encourage your child to monitor their own internet use and praise them when they come to you with a concern. Agree a way forward together.

Expectations for Schools

Schools already do a great deal to support children's awareness of online safety and to safeguard them from harm at school and at home. Safeguarding children is everyone's responsibility, and it is expected that schools will support parents and carers to understand the risks and to put measures in place to safeguard children at home.

Schools should consider ensuring strong and ongoing implementation of the following:

1 ONLINE SAFETY CURRICULUM

Schools must ensure their curriculum is robust and relevant for each age group, follows national guidance, and addresses key aspects of online safety.

2 RESPONSIVENESS TO EMERGING ONLINE ISSUES

Schools must be responsive to emerging online issues. For example, an increase in online bullying at the school or in nationwide statistics should be addressed with a special workshop and communication with parents.

3 FILTERING AND MONITORING

Schools are expected to have a filtering and monitoring system in place for all school devices and all devices which connect to the school network. Schools should have a named person leading on filtering and monitoring.

4 AVAILABILITY OF TRUSTED SCHOOL ADULTS

Can students ask a trusted adult at school for advice? Does your school foster positive two-way communication about online activity? Schools should ensure that students know they can approach members of staff for support and guidance as concerns arise. Vulnerable individuals may need more regular check ins and support, and may also need a tailored curriculum.

5 STAFF TRAINING

Schools should ensure that key leaders attend thorough online safety training. Schools should ensure that staff training is well planned and regularly refreshed. This should include filtering and monitoring training as well as the materials presented in this leaflet.

6 PARENT EDUCATION

Schools should run opt-out parent workshops in Reception, Year 5, Year 7 and Year 9, with the expectation that all parents and carers attend. These workshops should include the materials presented in this leaflet and should have an emphasis on **TALK, EDUCATE, CO-VIEW** and **HOUSE RULES**. Workshops should include key risks and an emphasis on common issues in the school community. Schools should additionally consider how information can be best imparted to parents who do not speak English.

7 PRACTICAL PARENT WORKSHOPS

Parents often need support understanding the devices in their homes. We recommend that schools provide guides to parental controls as part of educating parents, including practical walk-throughs.

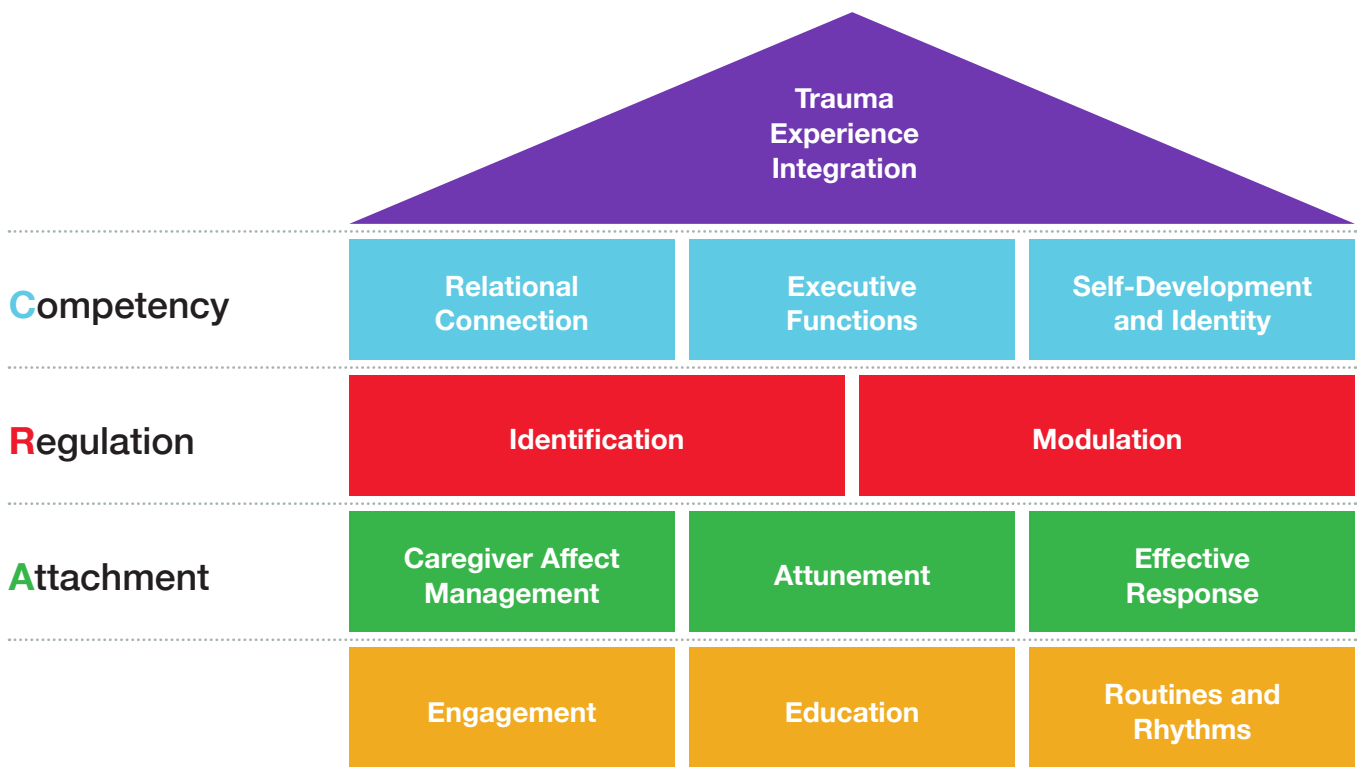
8 MONITORING AND ANALYSIS OF ONLINE SAFEGUARDING INCIDENTS

It is recommended that schools regularly collect and analyse their own online safety data to ensure their actions are having an impact.

The ARC Framework

The Attachment, Regulation and Competency framework (Blaustein & Kinnibugh, 2019) is an attachment and trauma informed approach which can help guide parents/carers in planning their online safety at home.

The model is bottom-up, with the lower levels (“Integrative Strategies”) acting as foundation blocks for more complex units above. It reads left to right and is a map for developing children’s independent online safety skills.



ARC – Blaustein & Kinnibugh 2010; Kinnibugh & Blaustein 2005

Here's how the recommendations within this guidance align with the ARC Framework:



Sources and Resources

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With many thanks to the Online Safety Working Party and to our colleagues in Enfield for shaping, supporting and improving this guidance.

Helpful guides for specific online risks

- **Report sexual abuse images/videos here:** [Report online child sexual abuse imagery or 'child pornography' \(wtf.org.uk\)](#)
- **Parental guidance of sexual image-sharing:** [Parent guide to sexual image-sharing among kids | Internet Matters](#)
- **Resources to tackle online grooming:** [Online grooming resources | Internet Matters](#)
- **Resources to protect children for radicalisation and grooming:** [Radicalisation of young children online | Internet Matters](#)
- **Resources to support your child if they are being bullied:** [How can I help my child if they are being bullied? | NSPCC](#)
- **Resources to tackle cyberbullying:** [Resources to deal with cyberbullying | Internet Matters](#)
- **Guidance for online abuse:** [How to talk about harassment and abuse online | Internet Matters](#)
- **Resources on racism and racial bullying:** [Racism and racial bullying | Childline](#)
- **Supporting LGBTQ+ children online:** [Supporting LGBTQ children and young people online | Internet Matters](#)
- **Resources to tackle harm from inappropriate content:** [Learn about inappropriate content online | Internet Matters](#)
- **Resources to protect children's privacy and identity online:** [Online identity theft facts and advice for parents | Internet Matters](#)
- **Resources to manage in-game spending:** [How to manage in-game spending: Guide for parents | Internet Matters](#)

- **ANTI-BULLYING ALLIANCE:** https://anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/attachments/Online_Relationship_Guide_For_Parents_0.pdf

- **ATTACHMENT REGULATION COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK** Blaustein, M. & Kinnibugh, K. (2019)

- **BARNARDO'S:** <https://www.barnardos.org.uk/get-support/support-for-parents-and-carers/child-abuse-and-harm/keeping-children-safe-online/how-to-talk-children-safe-online>

- **BIG LIFE JOURNAL:** Water Cup Analogy (from X by @BigLifeJournal). <https://biglifejournal.com>

- **BEACONHOUSE:** [The Three R's \(beaconhouse.org.uk\)](https://www.beaconhouse.org.uk)

- **CHILDREN'S SOCIETY:** <https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/2020-10/Good-Childhood-Friendship-Guide-Adults.pdf>
- **CHILDREN'S COMMISSIONER FOR ENGLAND:** [Resources Archive | Children's Commissioner for England \(childrenscommissioner.gov.uk\)](https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/resources)

- **EDUCATION ENDOWMENT FOUNDATION (EEF):** <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/feedback>

- **FAMISAFE:** [FamiSafe – The Most Reliable Parental Control App \(wondershare.com\)](https://www.wondershare.com/famisafe)

- **GOV.UK.** [Support for parents and carers to keep children safe online – GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/support-for-parents-and-carers-to-keep-children-safe-online)

- **HELPING YOUR CHILD WITH LOSS AND TRAUMA:** A self-help guide for parents. Dr David Trickey and Vicky Lawson (2023) <https://davidtrickey.com/resources>

- **HOUSE OF COMMONS REPORT:** Impact of social media and screen use on young people's health. <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmsctech/822/822.pdf>

- **HOW PARENTS CAN MEDIATE THE RISK OF CYBERBULLYING: EXPLORING CHILDREN'S VIEWS.** Mulhall, R. (2023) Educational and Child Psychology Doctoral Thesis. University College London: <https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/10174820/>

- **INTERNET MATTERS APP GUIDE:** [A parent's guide to apps for kids | Internet Matters](https://www.internetmatters.org/guides/a-parents-guide-to-apps-for-kids/)

- **INTERNET MATTERS:** [Internet and slang terms glossary | Internet Matters](https://www.internetmatters.org/glossary/)

- **INTERNET MATTERS:** <https://www.internetmatters.org/learn-about-fake-news-to-support-children/#:~:text=Fake%20news%20is%20not%20the%20preferred%20term&text=However%2C%20it's%20more%20appropriate%20to,people%20who%20know%20it's%20false>

- **LANCASHIRE SAFEGUARDING BOARD:** [Internet-Safety-Glossary_rev-0520_Edition-3.pdf \(lancshiresafeguarding.org.uk\)](https://www.lancshiresafeguarding.org.uk/resources)

- **LEARNING WORKS:** [Play Diet – LearningWorks for Kids](https://www.learningworks.org.uk/play-diet)

- **NATIONAL COLLEGE FOR ONLINE SAFETY:** [Online Safety Guides and Resources for Parents \(nationalcollege.com\)](https://www.nationalcollege.com/resources)

- **NSPCC:** [Positively online: top tips for online wellbeing | NSPCC](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/positively-online-top-tips-for-online-wellbeing/)

- **NSPCC:** <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/safeguarding-child-protection/how-to-have-difficult-conversations-with-children>

- **NSPCC:** [Online Risks to Children: Evidence Review Main Report \(nspcc.org.uk\)](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/online-risks-to-children/evidence-review-main-report/)

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- **OFCOM:** <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/media-use-and-attitudes/media-habits-children/childrens/#:~:text=2022&text=attitudes%20report%202022-,This%20report%20looks%20at%20media%20use%2C%20attitudes%20and%20understanding%20among,and%20manage%20their%20children's%20use>

- **OFFICE FOR NATIONAL STATISTICS:** [Bullying and online experiences among children in England and Wales – Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/people-and-population/children-and-young-people/bullying-and-online-experiences-among-children-in-england-and-wales)

- **PEGI:** [Pegi Public Site](https://www.pegi.com/)

- **PERSUASIVE DESIGNS RESEARCH BY 5RIGHTS FOUNDATION:** [Updated Disrupted Childhood: The cost of persuasive design – 5rights \(5rightsfoundation.com\)](https://www.5rights.org.uk/updated-disrupted-childhood-the-cost-of-persuasive-design/)

- **SMARTPHONE FREE CHILDHOOD** <https://smartphonefreechildhood.co.uk>

- **THE 4CS: CLASSIFYING ONLINE RISK TO CHILDREN.** Stoilova, M., & Livingstone, S. (2021). The 4Cs: Classifying online risk to children ([researchgate.net](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/351111111))

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- **THE PHONE FIX BOOK:** The brain-focused guide to building healthy digital habits and breaking bad ones. Dr Faye Begeti (2024): [The Phone Fix – Dr Faye Begeti MB PhD](https://www.phonefixbook.com/)

- **TWINKL's THINK acronym:** [Internet Safety Quotes for Kids – Twinkl Blogs – Twinkl](https://www.twinkl.com/blog/internet-safety-quotes-for-kids/)

- **UK SAFER INTERNET CENTRE:** [Parental controls offered by your home internet provider – UK Safer Internet Centre](https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/parental-controls-offered-by-your-home-internet-provider)

- **UNICEF:** [How to keep your child safe online | UNICEF Parenting](https://www.unicef.org/parenting/how-to-keep-your-child-safe-online)

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