Staying safe online
A guide for families

This is a Thriving in Education guide for families about digital safety.

Children are now growing up in a digital world. They play, learn, and socialise online and it is important to acknowledge this. Many children will receive new devices and tech for Christmas, and it is important that families can support them to use this technology safely. This guide will help you to:

- Have conversations with children about their use of social media.
- Put restrictions on devices so that they can be used as safely as possible.
- Support your children's safe use of key platforms.
- Protect children's wellbeing when they are using digital media.

Risk and resilience:

Children's use of social media continues to rise and whilst children are aware that there are risks connected to being online, the majority of 8-17 year olds who use social media say that using these platforms helps them to build friendships. Friendship and connection with others are important parts of life which help to protect our wellbeing. Online platforms are now a key part of how people connect, therefore it is essential that parents and carers speak to their children about safe and positive social media use.

Golden Rules for conversations about social media use

The British Council has created this infographic which highlights the golden rules of supporting children's use of social media.

1. **Show me:** Ask children to show you how their social media platforms work and how they use them.
2. **Low profile:** Show children how to keep their profiles private.
3. **Just ask:** Ask children about who they are talking to online.
4. **Photo check:** Talk to children about only sharing photos that they would be happy to show to everyone they know.
5. **Don't worry:** Create an atmosphere where children are able to tell you when they are worried about what they see online.

Digital devices and social media are designed to be addictive. This addictive nature affects everyone, but more so children whose brains are still developing. It is important that children are taught to balance screen time. The following suggestions can be used as a guide, more advice can be found at Internet Matters: Screen time tips for 11-14 yrs - KS3 | Resources - Internet Matters

Signs of dependence on digital devices

- Preferring screen time over face-to-face interaction with friends and family
- Difficulties focussing on activities that are not screen-based
- Feeling anxious about not having access to their phone / tablet/ console
- Mood swings
- Sleep difficulties

What helps?

- ✓ Ensure that regular complete breaks are taken from screens throughout the day
- ✓ Get outside during daylight hours
- ✓ Talk to children about the addictive nature of screens
- ✓ Provide opportunities to connect face-to-face with peers
- ✓ Encourage family-wide non-screen times during the day
- ✓ Encourage adults to model healthy screen use
- ✓ Ensure child is eating healthily and drinking enough water
- ✓ Encourage a good bedtime routine and set time to come off phones and devices
- ✓ Follow the Five Ways to Wellbeing to ensure a balance of activities
- ✓ Ensure children know how to report harmful content and that they can identify a safe adult to talk to
- ✓ Ensure the adults around the child know how to identify and report harmful content
- ✓ Putting in limits around screen use, that can be controlled by adults

Control settings at device level

Screens, and especially smartphones are addictive. It is helpful to put screentime limits onto devices, perhaps this is something that you could do to your own device as well as your child's!
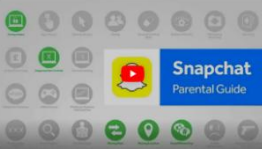
Device	Guide to setting screentime limits
Apple iPhones	Use Screen Time on your iPhone or iPad – Apple Support (UK)
Android phones	Manage your child's screen time - Google For Families Help

Internet Matters provide advice on how to ensure control settings are enabled on devices.

Device	Video guide to control settings	PDF guide to control settings
Android phones		Android Smartphone Guide Controls & settings guide
Apple iPhones and iPads		Apple Iphone And Ipad Parental Control Guide Controls & settings guide
Android tablets		Android Tablet Safety Controls & settings guide
All other devices: Guides for Apple and Android devices parental controls | Internet Matters		

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Control settings for apps and platforms

All of these platforms have age restrictions. Each app also comes with different settings to protect users. Internet Matters have created videos and guides to explain how to put safety restrictions in place.

Platform or app	Age	PDF guide to setting controls	Video guide to setting controls	Additional guides
WhatsApp (Messaging service)	13+	Whatsapp Privacy Guide — Controls & settings guide	WhatsApp	
Snapchat (Photo sharing service)	13+	Snapchat Privacy Settings Guide — Controls & settings guide	Snapchat Parental Guide	
Discord (Messaging platform, popular with gamers)	13+	Discord App Safety Settings Guide — Controls & settings guide	Discord Parental Guide	Set up Discord Parental Controls
Other apps: Parental controls and privacy settings guides | Internet Matters				

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Reporting harmful content

If a child or young person has seen harmful content online and or experiencing online abuse or bullying this should be reported to the police. Internet Matters have created a clear guide to dealing with and reporting harmful content: Dealing with inappropriate content| Internet Matters