



Screen time

Screen time is classed as any time spent in front of a screen, so it includes everything from watching tv to completing homework on a laptop. Whilst there is no recommended screen time (except for under two, which is zero), it is important that we find a balance.

Screen time can obviously be beneficial, both for educational and entertainment purposes, however it is important to be aware of the risks, such as:

- Eye strain.
- Disrupted sleep.
- Less time for other activities and being outdoors.
- Affects our attention span.

Further information

Childnet discuss what is screen time and how much screen time is enough in this useful article:

<https://www.childnet.com/help-and-advice/screen-time-boundaries-parents/>



Social Media Concerns



Most social media apps have a minimum age rating of 13+. Whilst there are benefits, this article discusses some of the potential risks of using social media.

Risks of Social Media

- **Inappropriate content** – social media may expose children to content that is not appropriate for their age, including sexually explicit content or content that promotes harmful behaviours such as self-harm.
- **Cyberbullying** – this can take many forms, including sending nasty or hurtful messages, leaving unkind comments, sharing photographs of somebody else without their permission or impersonating somebody with a fake account.
- **Excessive Screen time/Addiction** – too much time online can affect mental health and disrupt sleep patterns.
- **Contact from strangers** – there is a risk of stranger contact, which can lead to an increased risk of grooming.
- **Challenges** - children may not have developed the skills and ability to critically analyse what they see online. Whilst some challenges are fun and provide no risk, there will be challenges online that are risky/dangerous.
- **Sharing too much information** – children may share personal information e.g. their phone number, school name or inappropriate photos of themselves.
- **Algorithms** – algorithms influence what we see on social media platforms to keep us engaged on the platform. This can lead to ‘echo chambers’ where users are only seeing content that relates to their opinion rather than seeing a balanced viewpoint. It can also lead to a user being exposed to large amounts of content about one topic/theme, which may not be helpful if it is negative.

How can I help make it a safer environment?

- Check the age rating of each app and restrict access until they reach that age.
- Set up age-appropriate parental controls, for example set content restrictions and screen time limits.
- Chat to your child about what they are doing online, including who they are following and interacting with online.
- Restrict devices in their bedrooms.
- Show your child how to use any reporting and blocking tools.

Further information

You can find out more from the following:

- <https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/social-media-smarts.html>
- <https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/parents-a-z-mental-health-guide/social-media/#Talkingaboutcyberbullying>

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Group Chats

Is your child part of any group chats? This could be on social media, for example on WhatsApp or within games such as Fortnite. If so, it is important that you are aware of the potential risks, which include:

- **Inappropriate content** – there is often a lack of moderation within chat facilities so users could be exposed to content/language that is not suitable for their age.
- **Bullying** – there are many instances where inappropriate/hurtful comments are shared within groups, this could take the form of name calling or body shaming. Bullying can also be in the form of excluding others from the group. These issues often overspill into ‘real life’.
- **Strangers** – your child could be added to groups with people they do not know or even with someone that they have previously blocked.
- **Conversations can be shared/screen shot** – make sure your child is aware that anything they share within a group can be shared with others outside the group.
- **Sharing personal information** – remind your child to be aware of the information they share with others including images and location.



How can I help make group chats safer?

- Check the recommended age rating and adhere to them. If we all did this, peer pressure would be reduced.
- Set up age-appropriate parental controls and set screen time limits.
- Show your child how to use any reporting and blocking tools.

What else can I do?

- It is crucial to have regular conversations with your child about the risks outlined above and about what they are doing online.
- Talk about who they are chatting with, encourage them to think carefully about the messages they send and how they might be perceived by others. Talk about positivity and not saying anything hurtful. Ask them to think about whether they would say what they are messaging, face to face.
- Devices should be used in family rooms so you can monitor what they are doing and who they are interacting with.
- Finally, make sure to model good digital behaviour yourself, as children often learn by observing the adults around them.

Further information

Childnet have created a Group Chat Guide for parents following consultation with the Childnet Youth Advisory Board and Digital Champions: <https://www.childnet.com/resources/cheat-sheet-group-chats/>

Did you know some Emojis have a double meaning?

For those that have watched Adolescence, you will know children and young people may be using emojis to mean something completely different. For example, the kidney bean emoji may be used to identify as an incel. It is important that you are aware of how emojis can be used and keep up to date with the way in which they can be used as their meanings are changeable. You can find out further information here:

<https://www.bark.us/blog/emoji-slang-guide/>

Vodafone: The Rise of the Aggro-rithm

Vodafone released a short video last year, titled ‘The Rise of the Aggro-rithm’. It highlights the harmful algorithms targeting young boys. It’s certainly worth a watch as well as learning about the terrifying statistics accompanying it:

<https://www.vodafone.co.uk/newscenetre/press-release/ai-aggro-rithms/>

3 things to consider before giving your child a smartphone

Wayne Denner has published a blog discussing the three things that parents wished they had considered before giving their child a phone. You can read the article here:

<https://www.waynedenner.com/3-things-parents-wish-they-had-considered-before-giving-their-teen-a-smartphone/>



YouTube

Risks of using AI for mental health

AI chatbots and wellness apps are becoming increasingly popular, which may lead to your child accessing them to support their mental health.

What should I be concerned about?

- The information/advice given may not always be accurate.
- Privacy concerns of how data is collected and used.
- Children may use these apps rather than seeking help from an adult.

What can I do?

- Chat to your child regularly about what apps and websites they are using and why.
- Remind them AI is a tool and not a substitute for qualified professionals who provide tailored advice/support.
- Talk to them about how they should fact check information.
- Check age ratings.

Further information

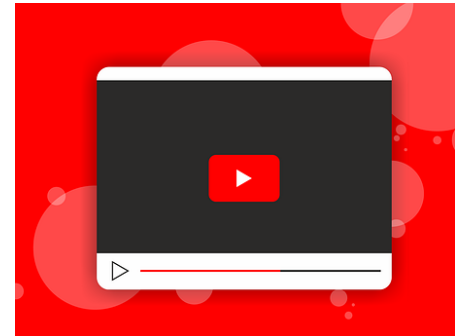
<https://stigmafreementalhealth.com/blog/supporting-youth-mental-health-with-ai-a-guide-for-parents-and-caregivers/>

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YouTube

YouTube is one of the most popular platforms, available across many different devices - phones, tablets and Smart TVs etc.

YouTube is intended for users over the age of 13, however, younger children can still access YouTube with consent from a parent/ guardian. There are different options available to access YouTube, depending on your child's age:



1. YouTube Kids – a separate app that includes a smaller selection of videos based on the age category you select: Preschool (ages 4 and under), Younger (ages 5–8) or Older (ages 9–12).

2. Supervised accounts – a parent-managed version of YouTube that allows you to control the content your child can access. You can select one of the following options:

- **Explore** - Generally for viewers aged 9+.
- **Explore more** - Generally for viewers aged 13+
- **Most of YouTube** - This setting includes almost everything except for videos marked as 18+.

Find out more: <https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/10315420>

What do I need to be aware of?

Whilst YouTube can be educational and fun, it is important to be aware of the potential risks, such as:

- **Inappropriate content**
- **Excessive Screen time** – particularly due to the autoplay feature.
- **Unwanted contact / cyberbullying** – particularly via comments if your child is sharing videos.
- **Algorithms** – algorithms influence what we see to keep us engaged. This can lead to a user being exposed to large amounts of content about one topic/theme, which may not be helpful if it is negative.
- **Adverts** that may not be aimed at or suitable for your child's age.

What can I do?

- Set up appropriate parental controls.
- Show your child the reporting and blocking tools available.
- Watch YouTube together or supervise use.

Further information

<https://www.internetmatters.org/parental-controls/entertainment-search-engines/youtube-app/>

WhatsApp

WhatsApp is incredibly popular with young people and is used for group chats, voice messages and video calls. **Users should be at least 13 years old to use WhatsApp.**

We frequently receive reports of children using WhatsApp inappropriately, such as sharing images to embarrass others, sending hurtful messages, spreading rumours, or excluding people from group chats to make them feel left out. Since WhatsApp lacks parental controls, it is important to think about whether it is really the right platform for your child. For example, you should consider if your child has the critical thinking skills to recognise bullying. Furthermore, do they understand how to manage peer pressure and refrain from joining in on hurtful behaviour?

What should I be aware of if my child is using WhatsApp?

- **Group chats:** Everyone within a group, even if they are not one of your child's contacts, will be able to see all messages within that group. If your child is added to a group with someone that they have previously blocked, that person can still see their messages and send them messages within the group chat.
- **Inappropriate content:** users can be exposed to content that is not suitable for their age.
- **Location sharing:** talk to your child about the potential danger of sharing their location.
- **Chat lock/secret code:** users can lock chats as well as apply a secret code setting so a chat does not appear in the main chat.
- **Screentime due to addictive nature**
- **AI:** WhatsApp includes Meta AI.

What can I do?

- Check privacy settings, for example check who can add them to groups.
- Ensure your child understands that they can leave a chat at any time, Find out more here: <https://faq.whatsapp.com/424124173736394>
- Show your child how to block and report other users. Find out how here: <https://faq.whatsapp.com/1142481766359885/>
- Use parental controls such as screentime controls or do not disturb to reduce alerts.
- Talk about who they are chatting with, encourage them to think carefully about the messages they send and how they might be received by others. Talk about positivity and not saying anything hurtful. Ask them to think about whether they would say what they are messaging, face to face.
- Chat to your child about the groups that they belong to.

Further information

Find out more here:

- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zc8vxg8>
- https://faq.whatsapp.com/773166357950949?helpref=faq_content

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Italian Brainrot

Have you heard of Italian Brainrot? It is a viral trend consisting of AI generated characters featuring in memes and videos. It originally started on TikTok but can now be seen on other platforms such as YouTube and Instagram. There are also lots of spinoff content including a game on Roblox.

Whilst the content is generally nonsensical and children will find some of it funny, some content can include inappropriate/offensive language and content that might not be suitable for your child's age.

iOS 26

Apple have released their new operating system – iOS 26. Protect Young Eyes have published an article detailing the changes relating to your child's safety, including content filtering in Safari. Find out more here:

<https://www.protectyouneyes.com/blog-articles/a-parents-guide-to-ios-26>

Managing Digital Spending

Parent Zone have created a guide to help teach your child how to manage their online spending. You can read it here:

<https://parentzone.org.uk/article/managing-digital-spending-guide-parents>

ADHD, Screen Time, and Healthy Boundaries

Bark have created this guide for parents of children with ADHD to support you in helping your child create a healthy relationship with technology. You can access it here:

<https://www.bark.us/blog/adhd-kid-and-tech/>



Online Gaming

Instagram Teen Accounts - update

You must be over 13 years of age to set up an account. Instagram is used to post photos and videos as well as send direct messages, make voice/video calls, and send disappearing messages.

Teen accounts are automatically set up for users aged 13 – 17. Instagram have announced that teens will now see content similar to content that they would see in a PG-13 movie.

Instagram have also updated their policies around content to include “hiding or not recommending posts with strong language, certain risky stunts, and additional content that could encourage potentially harmful behaviors”

Finally, for parents who would like to apply more stringent settings, Instagram are also introducing a new, stricter setting called ‘Limited Content.’ This setting will mean your child is not able to see, leave, or receive comments under posts as well.

You can read about the updates here: <https://about.instagram.com/blog/announcements/instagram-teen-content-safety-pg-13>



Playing games online

Does your child play games online? We have outlined some risks that you should consider:

Chatting to strangers / risk of inappropriate language

Some games will allow communication via text chat, direct messages or chatting. Some games do offer the ability to switch communication off and/or the option to restrict bad language, so make sure settings appropriate to your child are applied. If your child is playing online with strangers, then you need to be aware that there is a risk of grooming. Some games do allow you to restrict communication to ‘friends only,’ however you would need to monitor that their online friends are real life friends. It can be difficult to moderate online chat so ensure your child knows how to block and report other players.



Cyberbullying

It can be very easy online for children to behave in a way that they would not if they were face to face. Talk to your child about how they speak to others online and encourage them to talk to people online with respect. Other forms of cyberbullying whilst playing games could be excluding others, criticising the ability of other players and ganging up on others.

In app purchases

Many games include the option to purchase additional items/ subscriptions so ensure you do not have payment cards saved or set up restrictions/ a password to approve purchases.

What can I do?

- **Set up parental controls** - as well as setting up appropriate parental controls through the game’s settings, ensure you have set them up on the console/device your child is playing on.
- **Check age ratings** - before buying the game, check that your child is old enough to play it. All games will either have a PEGI rating or be rated by the App Store/Google Play.
- **Chat to your child regularly** about the risks above so that they are aware of what can happen online and remind them to always talk to you or a trusted adult if they have any concerns

Further information

CEOP provides further guidance and support regarding this topic: <https://www.ceopeducation.co.uk/parents/articles/gaming/>

Snapchat

Snapchat is a popular social media app used for messaging and sharing photos and videos. **You must be 13+ to sign up.** Users can send messages (snaps) to others that are only seen for a set time, and users can also upload snaps to stories, which disappear after 24 hours.

Key Concerns

There are potential risks such as:

- the risk of your child viewing content that is not appropriate for their age.
- location sharing (via Snap Map).
- cyberbullying.
- contact from strangers.
- excessive screen time – children may have a fear of missing out (FOMO) as well as pressure to maintain “streaks”.
- “disappearing” messages can lead to more risky behaviour and a “false sense of security.” These messages could be screenshot or another device used to take a photo, so they’re not actually deleted as the sender believes. The image could then be shared.
- in app purchases.



Parental Controls / Safety settings

Snapchat's Family Centre is a set of parental controls and includes tools such as allowing you to:

- see who your child is friends with.
- see who your child has sent messages (not the contents of conversations though), photos or videos to in the last week.
- view a list of group members for groups that your child has been active in.
- restrict content to limit access.
- report any accounts that you are concerned about.

You can learn more about Family Centre here:

<https://parents.snapchat.com/parental-controls?lang=en-GB>

If your child is using Snapchat, then make sure the appropriate privacy settings are set up, including who can see their location and who can contact them. Also ensure your child knows how to block and report other users if necessary:

<https://help.snapchat.com/hc/en-gb/articles/7012343074580-How-do-I-change-my-privacy-settings-on-Snapchat>

More information

For more detailed advice and information:

- <https://parentzone.org.uk/article/snapchat>
- <https://parents.snapchat.com/safeguards-for-teens>

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Family Smart Start

Family Smart Start is a free toolkit designed to help you and your child navigate the milestone of getting their first phone. The toolkit provides support on how to set up their new phone, how to talk to your child about digital safety and a template family agreement. Find out more here:

<https://familysmartstart.com/>

Cyber security

Cyber security is the process of protecting your information and data whilst online against scams and cyber-attacks. Cyber-attacks are the process of maliciously targeting individuals or organisations to disable networks or steal data for example.

The National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) have an area on their website with guidance to help protect you and your family. The guidance includes how to manage your digital footprint online, information about anti-virus software as well as top tips for staying online such as:

- Using a strong password
- Setting up 2step verification

You can find the resources here:

<https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/section/advice-guidance/you-your-family>

The NCSC also provide advice on what you should do if you are the target of a scam or cyber-attack. Find out more here:

<https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/section/respond-recover/you>

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New Challenges

ZEPETO

ZEPETO has an age rating of over 13. Users create their own avatars and can design rooms. ZEPETO is a social networking app and therefore users can chat with others. Due to the communication option, there are the usual risks, such as your child seeing inappropriate content or online bullying. In-App purchases are also available on this platform.

Parental controls are not available, but a user can change some settings within privacy and content settings, for example to change who can direct message you.

ZEPETO have published a Guardian's guide here:

<https://support.zepeto.me/hc/en-us/articles/900005874946-ZEPETO-Guardian-s-Guide>

Sprunki

Is your child playing Sprunki? If they are, there are several versions of this game, so it is important to check which version they are playing and to then check its suitability for your child. For example, one version states:

“WARNING: This game contains disturbing images and scenes of explicit violence and gore”.

Find out more here:

<https://www.esafety.gov.au/key-topics/esafety-guide/sprunki>

Nintendo Switch 2

The Nintendo Switch 2 was released last month and has a new communication feature that you should be aware of.

GameChat – NEW

GameChat is included within a Nintendo Switch Online membership and allows up to 12 people to chat while playing games. Players can share their screen, even if they are playing different games, chat with the built-in microphone and as the Nintendo Switch 2 allows cameras to be connected (sold separately), even video chat. If your child is using this feature, then ensure they know how to report other users.

You can find out more here: <https://www.nintendo.com/en-gb/Hardware/Nintendo-Switch-2/GameChat/Nintendo-Switch-2-GameChat-2785625.html>

Parental Controls

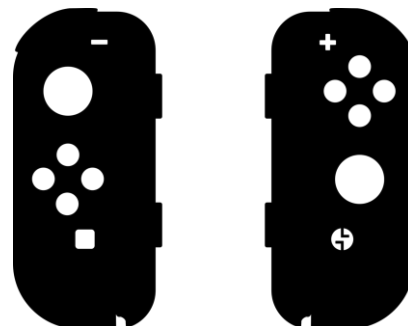
There is a free Nintendo Switch Parental Controls app that can be linked with your Nintendo Switch to monitor what your child is playing. The app creates a report so you can see which video games your child is playing and for how long. It also allows you to set which games your child can play, based on the PEGI age rating and restricts your child from sending or receiving messages from other users. GameChat settings can also be adjusted. Children under the age of 15 can only use GameChat if allowed by you through the app. They can then only use GameChat with people that you approve. Find out more here: <https://www.nintendo.com/en-gb/Support/Nintendo-Switch-2/How-to-Set-Up-Adjust-or-Remove-Parental-Controls-on-Nintendo-Switch-2-2843839.html>

Check age ratings

PEGI provides age classifications for video games. PEGI considers the age suitability of a game, not the level of difficulty. It is important to note that PEGI do not take into consideration user generated content within games (such as on Roblox) and chat facilities within games. <https://pegi.info/>

Further information

<https://www.ceopeducation.co.uk/parents/articles/gaming/>



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Online Challenges

According to Ofcom's latest Children's Media Use and Attitudes report "funny videos or those showing pranks or challenges continue to be the most popular type of VSP (video-sharing platforms) content for children, watched by 68% of 3-17-year-olds who watch videos." [source - <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/media-use-and-attitudes/media-habits-children/children-and-parents-media-use-and-attitudes-report-2025>]

If your child is watching this type of content, then you need to chat to them regularly, particularly about online challenges and the risks that they can pose. **There are challenges online that are risky/dangerous.** Sadly, there are reports that children have died as a consequence of attempting online challenges.

Children may not yet have developed the skills and ability to critically analyse that what they see online is not always safe for them to replicate. Make sure your child knows that they should talk to you (or another trusted adult) if they are thinking about trying something that they have seen online.

If your child has not heard about an online challenge, then do not draw attention to it as this may lead to them searching for it out of curiosity, so just talk about challenges in a general sense. Furthermore, reassure your child that challenges that suggest that terrible things will happen if they do not complete the tasks are not real.

The following link will provide you with further information as well as content to help you talk to your child:

<https://www.internetmatters.org/resources/online-challenges-guide/>



Is your child moving to Secondary school?

Is your child moving to Secondary school this September? Internet Matters have outlined a number of tools and resources, including a Transition Parent Guide to help support you:

<https://www.internetmatters.org/resources/moving-to-secondary-school-online-safety-guide/>

Conversation Starter

Are you struggling to start a conversation with your child about online safety? Why not try discussing this scenario with them. What would they do and how would you help them?

Amira and her classmates have a WhatsApp group. One evening, Amira notices that some group members are sharing unkind jokes and memes about another student, Leo, who isn't part of the group. The messages start as playful but quickly turn mean-spirited. Amira feels uncomfortable but isn't sure what to do. So, what should Amira do?

First, Amira should **not join in** with the mean messages. Then, although difficult, she could **speak up** in the group by saying something kind like: "Let's not be mean. This isn't fair to Leo." Finally, she should **tell a trusted adult**.

Discuss how group chats should be fun for *everyone*, not a place to hurt others. Emphasise that being part of a group chat means we all have a responsibility to keep it respectful. If you see something that doesn't feel right, like Amira did, it's okay to speak up or talk to a trusted adult. Remind your child that they won't be punished if they tell you something like this.

Remember, even if Leo doesn't see the messages, **it's still wrong to be unkind**. Real legends lift each other up — they don't tear others down.

Omegle (and similar platforms)

Whilst the original Omegle no longer exists, there is now Ome.tv, other Omegle copycat sites as well as other sites with a similar concept. **We cannot stress enough that these sites should not be accessed by children due to the potential content and language used, which can be explicit.** As an example, Ome.tv connects you randomly to **other people via video chat** from across the world. Ome.tv does state that **it should only be used by adults**.

You can find out more information about Chat apps, including 'randomised chat forums' here:

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/social-media/chat-apps/>



Importance of Privacy

Virtual Reality (VR)

VR is a 3D computer generated environment that users can explore wearing a VR Headset.

Meta Quest Parental Controls

Meta Quest are one of the more popular VR Headsets. Users aged 13+ can use Meta Quest (children between 10 and 12 years old can use it through a parent managed account). *Meta Quest state that VR Headsets are not recommended for use by younger or smaller-sized children for a variety of reasons including eye strain.* Optional supervision tools are available for those aged 13–17. Find out more here: <https://familycenter.meta.com/uk/our-products/horizon-and-quest/>

Meta Quest has a Safety Centre; it includes health and safety warnings and how to set privacy settings. <https://www.meta.com/gb/quest/safety-center/>

Gorilla Tag

This is a popular game and whilst rated as PEGI 3 (even though young children should not be using VR), it is important to note that it does include in app purchases and players can interact so there is a risk of offensive/inappropriate language. <https://www.esrb.org/blog/a-parents-guide-to-gorilla-tag/>

What can I do?

- Check what games your child is accessing and make sure they are appropriate.
- Play together.
- Set time limits and ensure plenty of breaks.

Further information:

- <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/virtual-reality-headsets/>

Online Privacy

It is important to develop an understanding of how you can protect your child's privacy online. Any personal information shared online creates a digital footprint and it is vital that we control who sees what.

What are Privacy settings?

Privacy settings are tools available on most social media apps, websites, and games. They allow users to control who can view what they share online.

What can we do to support our children with their online privacy?

Talk to your child regularly: Talk to your child about what is personal information and to think about what they share online. Personal information includes their name, address, current location and the school they attend. This also includes information within photos or videos that they may share, for example does it show their current location?

Apply appropriate privacy settings: For any app, game or device that your child uses, check the privacy settings and apply them as appropriate. For example:

- Check if their location is being shared.
- Check who can tag them in posts (as what others tag them in can also affect their digital footprint).
- Check who can share their content.

Check these settings regularly as new options may become available or sometimes updates can change previous settings.

Children learn from us: Think about what you are sharing online – do you share photos of your child in their school uniform or their current location?

Set strong/complex passwords: Teach your child to create strong/complex passwords and to never share them with others.

Search their name – search their name in a search engine to see what information can be seen about your child. Remind your child that they can delete any information that they no longer want others to see.

Further Information

- <https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/online-mobile-safety/taking-care-your-digital-footprint/>
- <https://www.unicef.org/parenting/child-care/online-privacy>
- https://www.ceopeducation.co.uk/11_18/lets-talk-about/online-safety/privacy-settings/

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Instagram

You must be over 13 years of age to set up an account. Instagram is used to post photos and videos as well as send direct messages, make voice/video calls, and send disappearing messages. Users can also upload to 'Stories' (which disappear after 24 hours), broadcast live and upload reels (short videos).

Teen accounts

Teen accounts are automatically set up for users aged 13 – 17. Teens under the age of 16 will need your permission to update their safety settings. With a Teen Account, additional safety settings are applied, for example, who your child can contact is limited and the content they access will be set to the most restrictive setting to reduce exposure to sensitive content. Find out more here: <https://help.instagram.com/995996839195964>

Supervision settings

Instagram also offers a supervision facility, which is a set of tools that you can use to help support your child. It is important to note that both you and your child must agree to these settings, and they can be removed at any time by either person. Once set up you can:

- Set a time limit.
- See which accounts your child is following and who is following them.
- View who your child has messaged in the past week (you will not be able to see the contents of these messages)
- The option to block your child from accessing Instagram at certain times e.g. during school or at night.

Find out more here:

https://help.instagram.com/658522825492278/?helpref=related_articles

How to Reset Your Instagram Recommendations

You can reset recommendations, which will clear recommended content across Explore, Reels and Feed. You can find out more here:

<https://about.fb.com/news/2024/11/introducing-recommendations-reset-instagram/>

What are the risks of using Instagram?

- Cyberbullying.
- Risk of contact from strangers.
- Viewing inappropriate content.
- Echo chambers - algorithms can create an echo chamber. Once we show an interest in a subject, the app/ site will promote that content, which may mean we are overly exposed to it.

Safety Features

If your child is using Instagram, then ensure they know how to report posts and people, how to unfollow/block people as well as delete and turn off comments. Find out how: <https://help.instagram.com/269765046710559>

More information

Visit the family centre to learn more about the features available: <https://familycenter.meta.com/uk/>

Talking to your child about online mistakes

The online world is difficult to navigate, and mistakes will happen. When they do, it is important that as a parent you are ready.

Stay Calm

If your child tells you about something that they have done wrong online, then try to stay calm and listen.

Be Honest

You may not know how to solve the issue but tell them you will help them work it out.

Solve It Together

Try and resolve the problem together to help your child learn and understand what went wrong. This will also develop their digital literacy skills.

You should also take the opportunity to review/set up any available parental controls.

Help and Support

If you feel like you need support from an external organisation, then Parent Zone have listed some of the different organisations available:

<https://parentzone.org.uk/article/help-and-support>

Further information:

<https://www.brightcanary.io/what-to-do-when-your-child-sends-inappropriate-things/>

Texting dictionary from Internet Matters

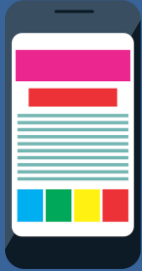
Internet Matters have created a list of text language terms to help you understand some of the text slang that your child might be using. Find out more here:

<https://www.internetmatters.org/resources/text-dictionary/>



The New World of AI

The impact of smartphones



There is a growing concern on how excessive use of smartphones can affect our children.

In addition to the effects of seeing inappropriate content online, the risk of cyberbullying and grooming, it is important that we also highlight the effects of smartphone use on our children's mental health.

If your child is using a smartphone then please try to ensure they maintain a healthy screentime limit.

According to King's College London, "two new studies of smartphone habits in teenagers have identified links between problematic smartphone use and depression, anxiety and insomnia." You can read more about these studies here: <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/news/teens-with-problematic-smartphone-use-are-twice-as-likely-to-have-anxiety-and-many-are-eager-to-cut-down>

Compass have published an article as well on what effects mobile phones have on children here: <https://www.compass-uk.org/services/compass-changing-lives/what-effects-do-mobile-phones-have-on-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health/>

Artificial Intelligence (AI)



What is AI?

AI is when a computer/machine can learn and perform tasks like a human. Its popularity continues to increase, and examples include:

- **Virtual assistants** like Alexa and Siri.
- **Chatbots** such as ChatGPT and My AI from Snapchat

Potential Risks of AI?

- **Chat apps** - A simple search of "AI Chat" within the App store highlights the number of apps already available and just scrolling through, you can see that they are not suitable for children with many rated as 17+.
- **Image manipulation** – there are AI tools that can be used to digitally remove clothes from photos, which clearly raises serious safeguarding and privacy concerns.
- **Deepfakes** – there are also AI tools that create realistic, fake videos which can be used to spread misinformation or cause harm.

Child Rescue Coalition discuss the dangers in more detail here: <https://childrescuecoalition.org/educations/the-dark-side-of-ai-risks-to-children/>

How can I protect my child?

As always, to keep your child safe online, it is important to:

- Develop your child's digital literacy by highlighting the risks of AI and showing them how important it is to verify what they see online.
- Set up appropriate parental controls on their devices/ broadband.
- Chat to your child regularly and ensure your child knows that they should talk to you or another trusted adult if anything concerns them.

Further information

For further information, the NSPCC and Internet Matters provide useful guides on their websites:

- <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/about-us/news-opinion/2025/artificial-intelligence-safety-tips-for-parents>
- <https://www.internetmatters.org/resources/parent-guide-to-artificial-intelligence-ai-tools/>

TikTok

You must be over 13 years of age to use TikTok. TikTok is a social media platform for sharing and watching short video clips. Some of the videos may not be appropriate for your child to view and there is also the risk of strangers contacting your child. If your child is using TikTok then make sure appropriate security/privacy settings are applied.



Account set up

It is important that when setting up an account, your child enters their real date of birth as accounts are tailored by age e.g., Direct Messaging is disabled for accounts aged 13-15. In addition, advertisements are tailored by age. By default, accounts for people under 16 are set to private and we would recommend keeping it as this. This means your child must approve follower requests. You can read more about the other settings available, such as switching off comments and restricted mode here: <https://support.tiktok.com/en/account-and-privacy/account-privacy-settings/privacy-and-safety-settings-for-users-under-age-18>

Family Pairing

This allows you to link your own account to your child's account. You can then set controls such as restricted mode. You can find out more here: <https://support.tiktok.com/en/safety-hc/account-and-user-safety/family-pairing>

Inappropriate content, themes and challenges on TikTok

Whilst against TikTok's guidelines, explicit and inappropriate content can be found on this platform, for example nudity/sexual content and hate speech. Some of the songs available to lip sync to may contain inappropriate lyrics or adult themes. We often see viral challenges on social media, some of which can be dangerous. If your child is using TikTok, chat to them regularly about what they are viewing.

Stranger contact

Talk to your child about who is following them online and ensure that they understand that people may not be who they say they are when online. It is important that children understand not to share personal information.

Refresh your feed

You can refresh your "For You" feed to update the content recommended: <https://support.tiktok.com/en/account-and-privacy/account-privacy-settings/refresh-your-for-you-feed>

Blocking and Reporting

Ensure your child knows how to use the safety features available to them, including how to report comments, direct messages and another user.

Further information

- <https://parentzone.org.uk/article/tiktok>
- <https://safeguarding.thekeysupport.com/factsheets-and-briefings/child-safety-tiktok-parent-factsheet/>

Talk PANTS with the NSPCC

Talk PANTS was developed to help you have conversations with your child to help them understand that their body belongs to them.

You can find out more here as well as a further link to helpful questions:

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/support-for-parents/pants-underwear-rule/>

LEGO Arcade

Are you looking for games for your child to play online? LEGO have a selection of fun games including Lego Ninjago and Lego Friends:

<https://kids.lego.com/en-gb/arcade>

Stars Messenger App

The Stars Messenger App is rated as 4+ on the App store. It is a free messaging and video app designed for children to use. Users need their friend's username as well as their unique private Friend Code to add each other. There is also an optional Parent View available for a monthly charge.

South West Grid for Learning provide a full guide to staying safe on this app as well as safety considerations:

<https://swgfl.org.uk/magazine/a-guide-to-staying-safe-with-the-stars-messaging-app/>



Cyberbullying Issues

Wonderlab+

Are you looking for something fun to do online with your child? The Science Museum group have a wide array of activities, games and quizzes on their website:

<https://wonderlabplus.sciencemuseumgroup.org.uk/home>

Minecraft

Minecraft is rated as PEGI 7, meaning it is suitable for those over 7 years of age.

Minecraft is a game where players can create worlds using blocks. There are two different modes – creative and survival. In creative mode, users can build what they wish and have unlimited resources whereas in survival mode, players must gather resources, find food and defend themselves against mobs. Survival mode may include mild violence and scary characters.

You should be aware that there is a multiplayer option available where players can chat to each other. In-app purchases are also available to buy items such as skins, so ensure purchases are disabled or that a password or PIN is required to make them. Ensure appropriate parental controls are applied, on both Minecraft and the console itself. Find out more here:

<https://www.minecraft.net/en-us/article/parental-controls>

Further information

<https://parentzone.org.uk/article/minecraft>

Cyberbullying

What is cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying is a form of bullying that takes place online and can take many forms, such as sending malicious messages. Cyberbullying can happen at any time of the day, so often feels unrelenting. It can take place across many different platforms, such as on messaging apps like WhatsApp and Snapchat, on social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok and via online games. Here are some examples of what cyberbullying can look like online:

- Sending nasty or hurtful messages
- Leaving unkind comments
- Sharing photographs of somebody else without their permission
- Excluding somebody on purpose
- Impersonating somebody with a fake account
- Telling/sharing lies
- Blackmailing

What should I do if my child is being bullied online?

If your child is being bullied, then try to stay calm and let them know that it is not their fault. It is always useful to keep evidence of any online bullying and inform their school so

that they are aware. Show your child how to block and/or report any users/content and review their privacy settings to limit what others can see. You may also wish to review/set up any available parental controls.



Further information

There is a vast amount of information available online about cyberbullying. The following links provide further information on types of online bullying, and who you can contact if you need any further advice or support.

- <https://www.childnet.com/help-and-advice/online-bullying/>
- <https://anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/tools-information/advice-and-support/advice-parents-and-carers/sources-information-advice-and>

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What is Roblox?

Roblox is a platform consisting of a collection of games. Players can either create games or play games that other users have created. It is free to download (however subscription options and in game/app purchases are available) and can be played across numerous devices.

A lot of the content is user generated, which may mean not all games will be suitable for your child to view/play. If your child is playing Roblox, it is important to monitor what your child is accessing and set up appropriate parental controls.

PEGI rate Roblox with a Parental Guidance label, this is because it is difficult to rate due to the huge level of user generated content.

New Parental Features

Roblox have released three new parental controls for your child's Roblox account. These are:

1. **Friend blocking** - you can now block anyone on your child's friends list that you do not want them direct messaging.
2. **Experience blocking** – you can now block any specific experiences (games) that you do not want your child to access.
3. **Top game insights** - you can now see the 20 experiences (games) your child has spent the most time on in the last week.

You can find out more here:

<https://corp.roblox.com/newsroom/2025/04/new-parental-controls-on-roblox>

Further information

You can find out more about Roblox here:

<https://en.help.roblox.com/hc/en-us/articles/30428248050068-Parental-Controls-FAQ>

Ask Silver Scam Checker

Ask Silver is a tool that anyone with a smartphone can use to protect themselves from scams. To use the service, you will first need to sign up and then you can simply upload a screenshot of anything that you are unsure of, and think could be a scam. Ask Silver will let you know whether they think it is safe or not. Find out more here:

<https://www.getsafeonline.org/asksilver/>



How to best use location tracking apps within your family

Location tracking gives us the ability to see where somebody is via their smart device and is often one of the reasons children receive their first device.

Internet Matters have published an article discussing location tracking, including the benefits and risks and provide links to other supporting resources. You can read the article here:

<https://www.internetmatters.org/hub/expert-opinion/how-to-use-location-tracking-apps-in-your-family/>

JusTalk

Users can use this app to video chat, call, and text. There are two versions – JusTalk and JusTalk Kids with both versions having the option to unlock further functions via a premium subscription. **JusTalk is rated as 12+ and JusTalk Kids is rated as 4+ on the App store.**

Even though the apps may be rated as age appropriate for your child, there are still risks in using either version.

The Ineqe Safeguarding Group provide an overview of JusTalk, including the risks you need to be aware of:

<https://ineqe.com/2023/02/08/what-is-the-justalk-app/>

Keeping up with technology

It can be difficult to keep up with what our children are doing online as it can change so quickly. UK Safer Internet Centre have published an article with suggestions on what we can do:

<https://saferinternet.org.uk/safer-internet-day/safer-internet-day-2024/parents-and-carers/things-change-so-fast-online-its-hard-to-keep-up-with-what-my-child-is-doing>



New Issues around WhatsApp

CapCut

CapCut is a video editing app. Their services are intended for those over the age of 13 (those under the age of 18 must have consent from their parent/legal guardian). It is rated as 13+ on the App store.

What can I do on CapCut?

CapCut is used as a video and image editing tool allowing users to edit their videos/ images as well as add music, sound effects, text and stickers.

What should I be aware of?

- The templates are user generated, therefore they may not always be appropriate for your child to view, for example may contain adult themes.
- CapCut includes access to a library of music that can be used within videos that may include explicit lyrics.
- Premium content – CapCut does include in-app purchases/monthly subscriptions to allow users access to premium content.

Further information

Internet Matters have created this useful guide:

<https://www.internetmatters.org/advice/apps-and-platforms/skills-building/capcut/>

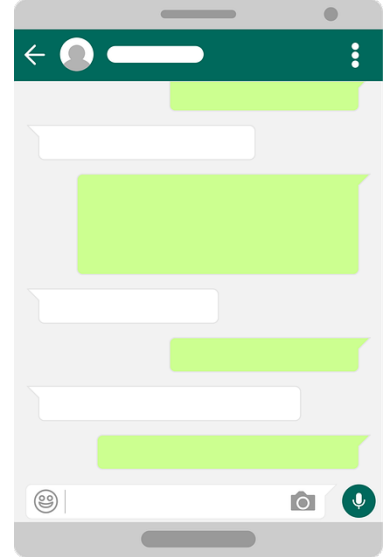
Would you like to read this newsletter in a different language? You can use the translate tool on our web version: <https://www.knowsleycls.org.uk/november-2025-primary>

WhatsApp Update

School WhatsApp groups

Are you part of a parent WhatsApp group at your child's school? These groups can be useful for sharing information and reminders, but it is important to use them thoughtfully. Here are some tips on how we can ensure they remain positive and respectful:

1. Be considerate –we know messages can sometimes be misinterpreted so carefully think about what you share. These groups should not be used to share criticisms of the school, staff or other parents and children. Any concerns should always be discussed with the school directly.
2. Don't spread rumours – avoid sharing any gossip within the group.
3. Protect privacy - do not share photos or videos of other children.
4. Think before you send – be mindful of the time and if the message is necessary for everyone.



Our children watch how we communicate, so let's model healthy, online communication to them.

WhatsApp Channels

Users should be at least 13 years old to use

WhatsApp. If your child is using WhatsApp, then you should be aware of WhatsApp Channels. Channels are a one-way broadcast tool used by companies and individuals to send updates to followers. WhatsApp Channels can be found on the Updates tab. From here you can view a whole host of channels, including channels that will not be age appropriate and may include adult content.



You cannot switch off access to channels and there is no age rating associated with the channels so you would have to access them to know what the content truly is. Klicksafe highlight what you should be aware of: <https://www.klicksafe.eu/en/news/was-sind-whatsapp-kanale-und-was-muessen-eltern-beachten>

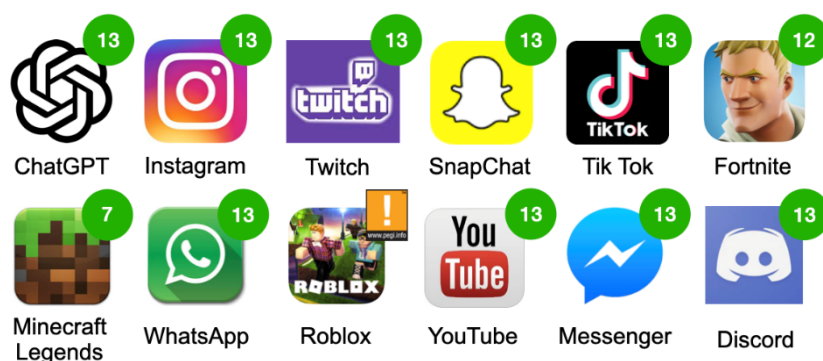
Find out more about WhatsApp channels in general here: <https://faq.whatsapp.com/549900560675125>

Age Ratings for Apps

Age ratings exist to help protect your child by showing whether content is suitable for your child's age. Whether your child is viewing films, accessing apps, playing games online or using social media— make sure you check the age rating first to see if your child is old enough.

Popular apps and their age ratings

Here are the age ratings of some of the more popular apps that young people are currently accessing.



For users under 18, a parent or legal guardian's permission may be required to use the service

In addition to checking the age rating, the likes of PEGI (Pan European Game Information) provide further content descriptors, which will give you an indication of the type of content that your child might encounter e.g. violence or bad language within a game.

What else should I review?

It is important to note that whilst age ratings do allow you to see if something may be appropriate for your child, **it is also vital to review the content yourself**. This will allow you to make an informed decision as to whether it is suitable for your child to access and if it is necessary to apply further parental controls. For example, does it include the ability to communicate with others and are in game/app purchases available?

What else can I do?

- Explain the importance of age ratings to your child and how they protect them.
- Go online together to see what your child is accessing.
- Set up parental controls on your broadband, devices and on any individual apps that your child is using. This will reduce the chances of them accessing or viewing anything unsuitable.
- Chat to your child regularly about what they are doing online and remind your child that if anything is worrying them then they should talk to you or another trusted adult.

Further information

You can find out more here:

<https://parentzone.org.uk/article/age-ratings>

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Help to keep children safe online with Techosaurus

The NSPCC have created Techosaurus, a friendly dinosaur to assist you in having chats with your child about online safety. It is aimed at younger children and includes a book and activity pack (both chargeable). You can find out more here:

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/advice-for-families/techosaurus/>

Online Roasting

Have you heard of this term? It has been around a while now, but Online Roasting refers to a form of cyberbullying. Roasting typically involves making fun and insulting somebody, sometimes with their consent and other times not.

What can I do?

- Talk to your child about what online roasting is, ask them if they have ever experienced it and what they think about it.
- If this has negatively impacted your child then save any evidence and involve the school (if appropriate). Childline also offer further advice and support in relation to cyberbullying.

Further information

Find out more here:

<https://www.bark.us/blog/online-roasting-signs-cyberbullying/>

What to do when...from CEOP

CEOP Education have published this poster directing you to the relevant information around six different situations, such as what to do to protect your child from online blackmail. You can access it here:

<https://www.ceopeducation.co.uk/globalassets/professional/resources/wtdw-round-up.pdf>



The Online Safety Act

Coverstar

Coverstar say they are “the safe TikTok alternative.” They state, “there is no specific age limitation...however, if you are under the age of 13, you must obtain parental consent.” Users can post, comment and livestream.

Whilst Coverstar does not include private messaging, users can still interact via public comments. Coverstar does use moderation tools to scan all user-generated content. It is also important to be aware that Coverstar does allow in-app purchases ranging from £0.99 - £59.99.

If your child is using this app, ensure they know how to use the reporting tools. Bark provide a full review of Coverstar here, but they rate it as suitable for 10+:

<https://www.bark.us/app-reviews/apps/coverstar-app-review>.

Test your knowledge: Online Scams

Childnet have created a quiz for 9-13 year-olds that includes a range of potential online scams, as well as tips to help your child protect themselves online. Find out more here:

<https://www.childnet.com/blog/test-your-knowledge-about-online-scams-with-our-quiz-for-9-13-year-olds/>

Online Safety Act

What is the Online Safety Act?

The Online Safety Act 2023 is a set of laws introduced to protect children and adults online. Ofcom is the regulator for online safety in the UK, responsible for ensuring companies follow the new rules. As part of this role, Ofcom have designed the Children Codes of practice, which came into force in July



2025. The codes outline what all online services likely to be accessed by children must do to protect children online, for example:

- Enforce age limits.
- Protect children from accessing harmful or age-inappropriate content. This includes content relating to self-harm and eating disorders.
- Ensure users can easily report harmful content.

Ofcom has the power to enforce the rules as well as issue fines if companies fail to comply. You can find out more here:

<https://www.ofcom.org.uk/online-safety/protecting-children/new-rules-for-a-safer-generation-of-children-online>

How will it help to protect my child?

One of the main purposes of the Act is to protect children online. Ofcom has published information on how they are helping children to be safer online. The first link is a guide for parents, which also includes a section on what you can do as a parent. You can access this information here:

- <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/online-safety/protecting-children/how-ofcom-is-helping-children-to-be-safer-online-a-guide-for-parents>
- <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/online-safety/protecting-children/how-the-online-safety-act-will-help-to-protect-children>

Further information

Online Safety Act: explainer:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/online-safety-act-explainer/online-safety-act-explainer>

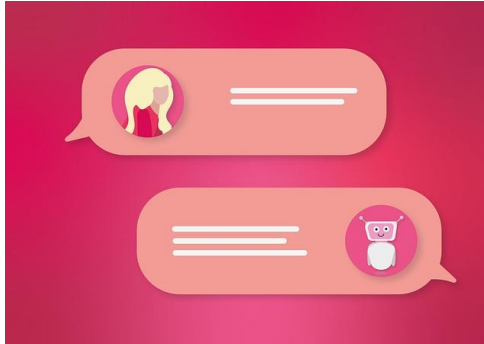
Would you like to read this newsletter in a different language? You can use the translate tool on our web version: <https://www.knowsleyc.lcs.org.uk/sept-2025/>

AI Basics

What is AI?

AI is when a computer/machine can learn and perform tasks like a human. Its popularity continues to grow, and examples include:

- **Search engines** such as Google now include an AI-generated overview as part of their results.
- **Virtual assistants** like Alexa, Meta AI and Siri.
- **Chatbots** such as ChatGPT and My AI from Snapchat.



Opportunities

AI can be an effective tool when used correctly, for instance:

- **Homework** – children can use AI to support and assist their learning.
- **Advice** – AI can be used to provide information and suggestions on a variety of topics.

Risks and concerns

- **Misinformation** – ensure your child understands that AI can sometimes provide incorrect or misleading information.
- **Privacy issues** – read any privacy policies before using.
- **Chat apps** - a simple search of “AI Chat” within the App store highlights the number of apps already available that are not suitable for children as many are rated as 17+.
- **Image manipulation** – there are AI tools that can be used to digitally remove clothes from photos, which clearly raises serious safeguarding and privacy concerns.
- **Deepfakes** – there are also AI tools that create realistic, fake videos that can be used to spread misinformation or cause harm.

How can I protect my child?

To help keep your child safe online, it is important to:

- Check age ratings of any apps or websites that your child accesses.
- Develop your child’s digital literacy by highlighting the risks of AI and showing them how important it is to verify what they see online.
- Set up appropriate parental controls on their devices/ broadband.
- Chat to your child regularly and ensure your child knows that they should talk to you or another trusted adult if anything concerns them.

Further information

- Overview: <https://www.internetmatters.org/advice/by-activity/using-artificial-intelligence/what-is-ai-artificial-intelligence/>
- Should you worry if your child has an AI friend? <https://parentzone.org.uk/article/should-you-worry-if-your-child-has-ai-friend>

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Roblox: Grow a Garden

Roblox is a platform consisting of a collection of games. Grow a Garden is one of the latest games available on Roblox and is extremely popular. The game is labelled as ‘minimal’ for content maturity, which Roblox define as “may contain occasional mild violence, light unrealistic blood, and/or occasional mild fear.” Roblox believe that the game play is suitable for everyone. However, as the game is on Roblox, it is important to be aware of the following:

- **Chat** – strangers can interact with your child.
- **In-game purchases** – this game does include in-game purchases.
- **Screentime** – set limits for how long your child is playing.

A lot of the content on Roblox is user generated, which may mean not all games will be suitable for your child to view/play. If your child is playing Roblox, it is important to monitor what your child is accessing, ensure they know how to use any reporting tools and set up appropriate parental controls.

Further information

<https://en.help.roblox.com/hc/en-us/articles/30428310121620-Parental-Controls-Overview>

Grooming online

Grooming is when somebody seeks to build a relationship with a child to exploit them or cause harm.

It is important that we teach our children how to recognise red flags. Childline have lots of useful information on their website, including where to get further support from:

<https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/online-mobile-safety/online-grooming/>