



National
Online
Safety®

#WakeUpWednesday

12 Social Media

Online Safety Tips

FOR CHILDREN WITH NEW DEVICES

With Christmas only a few weeks away, many of you will be using social media to share your excitement with friends and family. Being active on social media is a great way to show others how much fun you're having, but it's important that you know how to use these apps safely and securely so that bad things don't happen. By following our safety tips below, you can make sure that your personal information stays private, your postings are positive and that your social media use overall is responsible, healthy and most of all enjoyable.



1 DON'T ACCEPT FRIEND REQUESTS FROM STRANGERS

Make sure that you set your profile to private so that people you don't know can't find you online. Always tell a trusted adult if a stranger or somebody you don't know sends you a message or a friend request.



2 NEVER SHARE YOUR PERSONAL INFORMATION WITH PEOPLE YOU DON'T KNOW

Keep your personal information personal. Sometime people online aren't always who they say they are and might ask you to share things that you don't feel comfortable sharing.

3 DON'T SHARE EMBARRASSING PHOTOS OR VIDEOS OF OTHERS ONLINE

This could really upset them and could get you into a lot of trouble. Always think twice before posting anything on social media and treat people online as you would in real-life.



4 NEVER SEND NAKED PICTURES OF YOURSELF TO OTHERS

This is illegal if you are under 18 and you could get into trouble with the Police. If you are being pressured by someone, always say no and tell a trusted adult. Even if you think it is innocent fun, the photo could be shared with other people and you won't be able to control who else sees it.



5 CREATE A POSITIVE ONLINE REPUTATION

Always be kind and polite when posting comments on social media and only upload pictures and videos of things you are proud of. This forms part of your digital footprint. Everything you do online can be tracked and monitored and could affect what people think of you in real-life if it is negative.



6 LIMIT YOUR SCREEN TIME

Social media can be addictive, and it is easy to keep checking newsfeeds or your notifications every 5 minutes which can affect your behaviour and stop you from doing other things. Remember to only use your phone at certain times of the day, turn notifications off at bedtime and go out and have as fun as much as possible. This will keep you fit and healthy and make you appreciate there's more to life than just what's on social media.



7 BLOCK ONLINE BULLIES

Sometimes people might say nasty things to you online or post offensive comments on your pictures or videos. If this happens, always tell a trusted adult who will help you block them from your profile and support you in taking further action.

8 REPORT INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

If you see something on social media that you don't like, offends you or upsets you, you should always report it to a trusted adult. You should also report it to the social media app who will be able to remove the content if it is against their user policy and can block the person who posted it.



9 ONLY USE APPS WHICH YOU ARE OLD ENOUGH TO USE

Before downloading any new social media app, always check the age-rating. If you need help, ask your parent or carer to make sure that the app is safe for you to use and never download anything which you are too young for as it may contain content that isn't safe for you to see.



10 ALWAYS SECURE ALL YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA PROFILES WITH A PASSWORD

This will help to keep your private information safe and won't allow others to access your profiles without your permission. Make sure your passwords are memorable and personal to you but something which other people can't guess, and always share them with your parents just in case you forget them.



11 ASK PARENTS TO SET-UP 'PARENTAL CONTROLS' FOR SOCIAL MEDIA

When you download a social media app, you should always ask a trusted adult to help you set it up for the first time. This will help you control who sees what you post, who can contact you and make sure you are able to enjoy using the app safely and securely.



12 ALWAYS TALK TO YOUR TRUSTED ADULT IF SOCIAL MEDIA IS MAKING YOU UNHAPPY

Sometimes, social media can make us feel bad about ourselves or sad that we aren't the same as someone else or doing the same things as someone else. Remember, if you ever feel this way, it's really important to talk to your trusted adult(s) like your parents, carers, other adult family members or a teacher, all of whom will be able to support you and discuss your feelings with you to help make you feel better.



The Diana Award definition of bullying is "repeated negative behaviour that is intended to make others feel upset, uncomfortable or unsafe." Cyberbullying is bullying which takes place online. It can involve anything from sending messages to posting offensive comments to uploading and sharing private or embarrassing photos. It is classed as an indirect form of bullying when compared to verbal or physical bullying, given it usually takes place through a digital device. However, for those experiencing bullying behaviour, the consequences can be just as serious and have far reaching effects.

ANTI-BULLYING
FROM THE DIANA AWARD

What schools need to know about CYBERBULLYING

3 KEY ASPECTS OF BULLYING BEHAVIOUR

There are three key aspects of bullying behaviour, namely that it is repetitive, negative and intentional. These behaviours apply both offline and online. Cyberbullying can almost heighten these behaviours, particularly with access to the internet available 24/7 and the different ways in which those displaying bullying behaviour online can target others. The fact that they can also easily hide their identity online can make cyberbullying much more difficult to stop.



DIFFERENT DEVICES & CHANNELS

Cyberbullying can take place over any device connected to the internet which allows for two-way communication. This includes mobile phones, tablets, computers and even games consoles as it becomes more and more common for players to chat to other players whilst playing online. From a snapshot of 1,400 students surveyed by the Diana Award in 2018, 33% of young people admitted to have experienced bullying on social media, 11% via text message and 12% whilst online gaming.



WHAT LEADS TO CYBERBULLYING

There is never any justification for cyberbullying and those who display bullying behaviour need to be held to account for their actions. Nonetheless, it can be useful to try and understand some of the factors that may lead young people into bullying behaviour. For example, family issues, personal difficulties and a lack of positive reinforcement may push some young children into bullying others as a form of coping mechanism. Similarly, those exhibiting bullying behaviour may blame their targets for provoking their behaviour in the first place or engage in bullying behaviour as a call for attention if they lack social skills or understanding. Others may view their position as dominant which makes themselves less vulnerable to being bullied or they replicate behaviour they have experienced themselves in the past.



SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Cyberbullying can affect anyone, at any time, at any place. The impacts of cyberbullying can be long-lasting and leave people feeling scared, anxious and lonely. Some of the more obvious signs that those experiencing bullying behaviour might show include weight loss, crying, mood changes, depression and regularly avoiding school. Other symptoms, which might be less obvious to spot and would be difficult to pick up on in isolation, may include changes in body language like hunched shoulders, walking slower or an inability to make eye-contact. In extreme cases, those experiencing bullying behaviour may have unexplained marks or scars which could be evidence of self-harm.

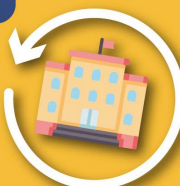


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Tips For School Staff

TAKE A WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH

In taking a whole approach towards cyberbullying, schools can cultivate a culture that relies on positivity and behaviour that is emulated by ALL members of the school community including staff, support staff, senior leaders, governors and parents and carers.



BUILD CONFIDENCE IN DEALING WITH INCIDENTS

This can be achieved by having clear knowledge of what constitutes bullying behaviour, having clear sanctions and courses of action and continually updating your knowledge of safety procedures regarding online and offline incidents.



USE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE AS A RESOURCE

Ensure you understand what is influencing the behaviour of young people in your community. If schools know what their students are engaging with, it can be easier to develop and implement relevant and effective tactics / strategies to counter cyberbullying issues.



UNDERSTAND THE CAUSES OF BULLYING

As previously mentioned, sometimes those who are behind the bullying are in need of support just as much as those who are being targeted. In better understanding the cause of the issue, schools can better position themselves to tackle the problem and also adequately support both those displaying and experiencing the bullying behaviour. Taking a proactive approach means that schools can gear themselves to tackle issues specific to their school environment, rather than treating each case the same.



ENSURE ALL STAFF KNOW THEIR ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

All staff have a role to play in educating and supporting children who are affected by cyberbullying, not just those responsible for safeguarding or online safety. Regular training, continuous professional development and clear school policies can help to empower staff in effectively managing any cyberbullying issues and in providing a united staff front on zero tolerance to all bullying behaviour.



In collaboration with



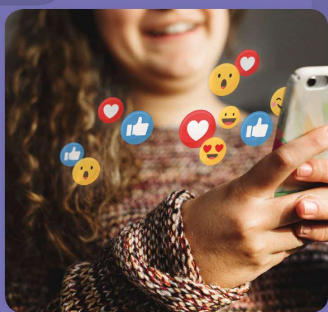
Ask For Help

For further support, advice or guidance to support you students at school, or to sign up to The Diana Award's free Anti-Bullying Ambassadors training events, head to www.antibullyingpro.com

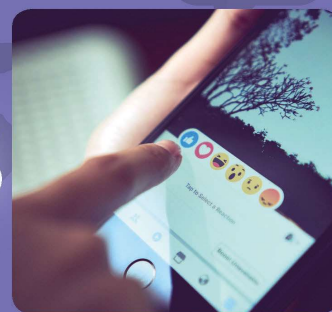




'Likes' are a simple way for users to show that they like a post on social media. This could be anything from photos and videos to status updates and comments. The feature is widely used on several social media platforms and is extremely popular on Instagram and Facebook. It is often used by children to measure the success of their social media post and gauge opinion. However, it can also bring a number of social pressures, particularly if users start to question their own levels of popularity.



What parents need to know about SOCIAL PRESSURES LINKED TO 'LIKES'



DAMAGING TO SELF-ESTEEM

Your child may use likes to measure their own self-worth, with more likes instilling a greater level of confidence and acceptance amongst their friends and peers. However, children who only receive a small number may in turn feel a sense of rejection or isolation and could potentially suffer from low self-esteem issues, impacting them in other aspects of their life such as at school or in social settings.



UNREAL VIEW OF THE WORLD

Your child may follow celebrities or other popular individuals on social media who receive millions of likes. Not everything on social media is a true reflection of the world and your child may feel pressured into behaving in a similar way in real life or posting similar material in order to feel popular and achieve a similar level of self-worth.



AN ADDICTIVE FEATURE

Like features encourage children to stay online for longer. In doing so, your child is likely to engage with app's for longer periods than they otherwise would have wanted, checking their phone more frequently, including at night when they should be asleep. This could contribute towards screen addiction which can cause sleep deprivation and consequently a lack of focus during the next day at school.



COMPETITIVE CULTURE

Children will often compare the number of likes they receive for their post against their friends or followers, possibly evoking emotions of jealousy or resentment. In a bid to increase their own status and receive more likes, this could lead to a competitive culture in which children try to better one another, potentially leading to them engaging in more and more riskier activities.



Safety Tips For Parents

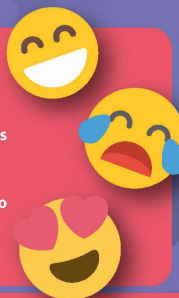
FOLLOW OR BEFRIEND YOUR CHILD ONLINE

Using the same social media sites as your child and connecting with them online will allow you to keep an eye on what their interests are and who may be influencing them. Following their likes will help you build a picture of what your child is being exposed to and what they find interesting.



MONITOR MENTAL HEALTH

If your child does post on social media, it is important to monitor their feelings and emotions, supporting them and encouraging them to talk to you about what they may be experiencing. Explain to them that not everything online is real and that life is not dictated by how many likes a post may or may not get.



ENCOURAGE HOBBIES OR OTHER ACTIVITIES

Try to help reduce your child's screen time and need for social media through encouraging them to do other things such as a sport or hobby or simply playing with friends outdoors. Supporting them to take up other activities that they enjoy can also help build self-esteem and increase their own confidence.



DISCUSS THE REAL WORLD

Talk to your child about online perceptions and about what they feel is and isn't important in their life. Try to establish an open and honest conversation and speak about what they feel is acceptable to post online and if they feel pressure to conform.



HELP TO BUILD YOUR CHILD'S SELF-ESTEEM

Try to help build your child's self-esteem through positivity and praise and listening to them if they are struggling with the way they look or feel. Talk to them about the positive aspect of their personality and help them understand that looks aren't everything. Try not to criticise or blame your child which could compound any negative thoughts they are already feeling.

Meet our expert

Pete Badh is a writer with over 10+ years in research and analysis. Working within a specialist area for West Yorkshire Police, Pete has contributed work which has been pivotal in successfully winning high profile cases in court as well as writing as a subject matter expert for industry handbooks.



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What parents need to know about AGE RATINGS

bbfc

If you have children, it is understandable to have concerns about the films and TV shows they watch, as well as the games they play. In this guide, we take a look at the two official ways you can assess if a particular title is suitable for your child. Both the BBFC and PEGI have search facilities on their websites that can be used to look up individual titles so you can check their ratings.

PEGI



RATINGS FOR FILMS, TV & MUSIC VIDEOS

Since 1912, the BBFC (British Board of Film Classification) has informed UK residents of the age suitability of films, TV and music videos - providing parents with the information needed to assess whether or not it is appropriate for their child's age. This applies to cinema releases, DVDs and streaming video services such as Netflix.

WHAT ARE THE BBFC RATINGS?

BBFC ratings are broken down into seven age categories:



Universal, suitable for all ages



Parental Guidance required



Suitable for people aged 12 and over



Suitable for people aged 12 and over; anyone younger must be accompanied by an adult



Suitable for people aged 15 and over



Suitable for people aged 18 and over



Adult content only available in specially licenced cinemas and specialist retailers

WHAT ELSE CAN BBFC REVEAL?

Accompanied with the age suitability rating, BBFC also provide an additional warning regarding the content and what to expect, such as swearing, sexual content, violence and anything you may consider to be inappropriate for your child. In addition to this, the content is also rated in three levels: frequent, mild or strong.

LIMITATIONS OF BBFC RATINGS

It's important to note that there is no obligation on streaming video services to use or display BBFC ratings. Due to this, we advise that you check the rating online before your child streams the content. It may also be a good idea to watch the content first yourself or discuss it with other parents to help you decide whether or not it is suitable for your child.

RATINGS FOR GAMES

PEGI (Pan European Game Information) is a content rating system that ensures all video games are labelled with a minimum age recommendation. These age recommendations are based on the types of content featured within a game. With each game, PEGI also provide a content descriptor that indicates the potential issues and concerns, including sex, violence, bad language and drugs.

WHAT ARE THE PEGI RATINGS?

PEGI ratings are split into age restriction and content descriptors. Additional 'content descriptors' help parents and children to understand the type of content featured within a particular game, including sex, fear, bad language, discrimination, gambling, drugs, violence, and in-game purchases. In combination, the two different ratings can provide a good level of information to help make informed decisions regarding the suitability for your child.

PEGI age ratings are broken down into five categories:



PEGI content descriptors are broken down into eight categories:



LIMITATIONS OF PEGI RATINGS

It's possible for young people to buy games online without a required proof of age, opening them up to age-inappropriate content without you knowing. We advise that you regularly monitor your child's gaming activities and maintain a honest and healthy dialogue with them about the online world.

PARENTAL CONTROLS

It is a good idea to put in place parental controls for all online accounts which your child may use to purchase or download online games e.g. The App Store, Google Play Store, PlayStation Store and Microsoft Xbox Store etc.

Source: www.bbfc.co.uk

Source: www.pegi.info



YouTube is an online platform - owned by Google - where anyone can upload & watch video content. All different types of information, advice & entertainment are uploaded & billions of people tune in to watch, rate & comment on it. As a parent, it's important you understand exactly what content your children might be seeing.

What parents need to know about YOUTUBE

INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT EASY TO ACCESS

Any child with a Gmail account can sign into YouTube & access videos. Some content is flagged 'age-restricted', but the platform relies on self-verification, meaning kids can get around the rules with a fake date of birth. This could enable access to vulgar, violent & dangerous videos.



USERS CAN PRIVATELY CONTACT YOUR CHILD

When your child is signed-in to YouTube with their Gmail account, there are various ways they can send & receive messages. This could be via the messages icon, or via the 'About' tab. There is scope here for users who your child does not know to make contact.



YOUTUBE SUGGESTS RELATED CONTENT

YouTube will often 'auto play' videos based on your child's viewing habits. The aim is to show related & appropriate content. But the problem is: it's possible your child will be exposed to inappropriate content that isn't accurately related.



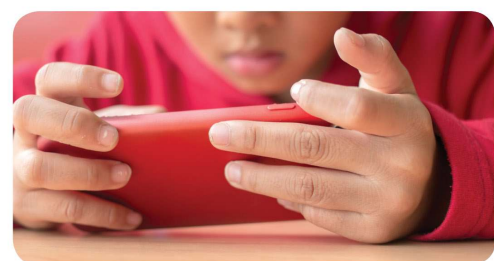
'CHALLENGE VIDEOS' CAN GO TOO FAR

Challenge videos refer to a stunt you're encouraged to recreate & film. Many challenge videos can be harmless & for a good cause, like the Ice Bucket Challenge. But some are dangerous & even life threatening, such as the Bird Box Challenge.



SHARING VIDEOS RISKS YOUR CHILD'S PRIVACY

If your child has a Google account, they can upload their own videos. To do this, they must create a personal profile page known as a 'YouTube Channel'. The videos uploaded here can be viewed, commented on & shared by anyone. This could put your child's privacy at risk.



Tips To Protect Your Child

APPLY 'RESTRICTED MODE'

Restricted mode helps to hide any mature or unpleasant videos from your children. It uses YouTube's own automated system & looks at what other users flag as inappropriate content. It must be enabled in the settings menu on each individual device.

CHANGE WHO CAN SEE VIDEOS

You can change who can view your child's content in the settings. Options include Public (available to all), Private (only available to people you share it with & cannot be shared) or Unlisted (available to people you share it with & can be shared further).



BLOCK CONCERNING USERS

To help protect your child from cyber-bullies, harassment or persistent offensive comments, you can 'block' individual users. Doing so hides your child's videos from the user & stops the user being able to contact your child in any way.

CUSTOMISE THEIR EXPERIENCE

Influence & control what your child watches using features such as Playlists (your videos play continuously rather than videos YouTube recommends) & Subscriptions (you choose channels your child can watch). It's also good to turn off auto play by toggling the blue button alongside the 'Up Next' title when viewing a video.

CREATE A 'FAMILY' GOOGLE ACCOUNT

Create a Google account to be used by the whole family. This will allow you to monitor exactly what your child is watching, uploading & sharing. Plus, your child's YouTube page will display their recently watched videos, searches, recommended videos & suggested channels.



GET YOUR OWN ACCOUNT

Create your own account so you can explore features yourself. Learn how to flag inappropriate videos, how to moderate comments & how to block users. This will help you feel more confident when providing advice & guidance to your children.

BE MINDFUL OF CYBERBULLYING

Once your child has posted a video, a worldwide audience can see it. Strangers may choose to comment on the video, both positively & negatively. So, be careful to check comments & any other interactions your child is making through the platform.



GET TO KNOW POPULAR CHANNELS

It's good to know which channels are most popular with your children. Some of the most popular channels right now are: PewDiePie, NigaHiga, Zoella, KSI, JennaMarbles, Markiplier, Smosh, ThatcherJoe & Casper Lee.

DON'T ASSUME YOUR CHILD IS TOO YOUNG

YouTube and YouTube Kids are quickly becoming the chosen viewing platforms for children between the ages of 3-15 & it's likely this trend will only increase. It's also possible children will become familiar with the platform at a younger & younger age. So it's important to understand the positives & negatives of the platform.



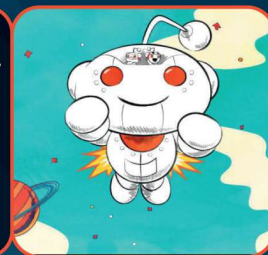
Meet our expert

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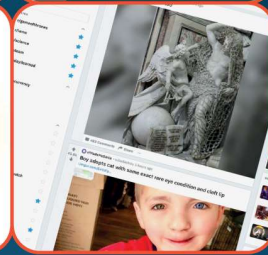
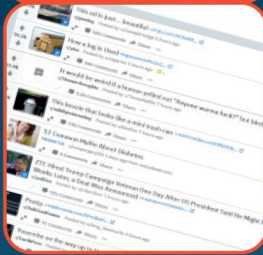




Reddit is a rather unique site that blends the idea of a social network with news, discussion forums and various other media. The site is broken down into a huge number of categories covering every topic imaginable. Each category is treated as a community and users can submit content for others to see and comment on. This can take the form of links to existing online content or user-generated text and image-based submissions. Submitted content can not only be commented on by others, but also rated using the upvote/downvote system.



AGE RESTRICTION
13+



What parents need to know about **REDDIT**



SUB-REDDITS

Each community (known as a sub-reddit) has its own set of moderators and its own set of rules, opening up the opportunity for your child to see inappropriate content or something they may find upsetting. Almost every sub-reddit is user-run, with practically no involvement from reddit employees. Anyone can submit content to a sub-reddit and it's not filtered.

REDDIT GOLD AND GIFTS

Reddit Gold is a premium membership scheme that gives 'extra features to improve the reddit experience', such as no adverts, custom themes and avatars, and the ability to create Reddit 'secret societies'. Payment costs \$3.99 a month (around £3), or \$29.99 a year (£23). Users can reward each other for content they post by giving Reddit Gold, a process dubbed 'gilding'. Reddit Gifts is a giant online gift exchange for sending a gift to a randomly assigned user. Reddit recommends that you spend around \$20 on a gift, so there is a concern that your child could rack up expenses if unmonitored.

ADULT AND NSFW CONTENT

While there are moderators in place for sub-reddits, they are not necessarily going to ensure that the sort of content you wouldn't want your child to see is banned. Reddit is concerned with free speech and light-touch moderation, so even the most open-minded of people may find deeply offensive content. Reddit generally provides a lot of leeway in the type of content which is acceptable. Some members choose vulgar usernames, while some communities have controversial or rude titles. Some content or communities are marked with 'NSFW' (Not Safe For Work) which means they may contain nudity, pornography, or profanity; it is easy for users to claim to be aged 18 and over to view this content.

REDDIT LINGO

Children and teenagers often manage to mask what they are talking about by wrapping it up in language their parents do not understand. While Reddit is certainly not used just by children and teenagers, like any online community there are words, phrases and abbreviations that may seem impenetrable to start with, such as TL;DR: Too Long; Didn't Read and ITT: In this thread.

CONTENT BIAS AND FAKE NEWS

Subreddits are particularly prone to bias - to the extent that some of them could be seen as propaganda. Reddit has been mentioned as one of the platforms used to promote Russian propaganda, for example. Other news stories can be completely false and not based on any evidence at all - known as fake news - these are written and posted online deliberately to create an impact. Both are nearly impossible to avoid.

TROLLS AND STRANGERS

Globally, millions of people of all ages use the Reddit platform to discuss any topic imaginable from just about every possible viewpoint. Although people can find users who have similar interests, some will choose to abuse the platform. Talking with strangers can lead to trolling and abuse, or your child encountering unsavoury subjects. Reddit users can also send each other private messages, so there is a danger of your child receiving inappropriate or unwanted communication.

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Top Tips for Parents



TURN SAFE BROWSING MODE ON AND ADULT CONTENT OFF

Some sub-reddits are marked as 'adult-only' and in order to access them users must be (or at least say they are) 18 or over. Within your child's user profile, it is possible to indicate that they are not 18 and this will block access to some sub-reddits, but certainly not everything you might consider to be unsuitable. Firstly, to protect them from unsuitable content, check that they have used their correct age when signing up. Secondly, turn off 'adult content' which will disable adult and NSFW (not safe for work) content from showing in the feed and search results. If you are happy to leave 'adult content' turned on, we highly recommend turning on 'safe browsing mode'; this blurs thumbnails and media preview for anything labelled NSFW (not safe for work).

REPORTING CONTENT

To a certain extent it can be useful to learn to just walk away from conversations that take a turn for the worse, but this is not always possible. Learn how to use the blocking feature and teach your child how to use it if someone becomes a problem. Beneath all content and comments that have been submitted by other users, there is an option to report it. Advise your child to report any form of abuse or harassment that they encounter on the platform. It is a good way to alert moderators to the user and hopefully, action will be taken against them.



SPOT FAKE NEWS

Encourage your child to read around topics and not to take something at face value. Just because something is said by someone on Reddit, in no way does this mean that it is true. Remember that the links people post and the comments they leave will cover the full range of political views, intelligence levels and opinions.

LEARN THE LINGO

It is impossible to provide a guide to all the vocabulary and language used on Reddit - it is something that is constantly evolving. There are some words and abbreviations that have become common Internet parlance (such as NSFW). If you want to check anything which your child has accessed (which can be seen in the 'Recently viewed links' panel on the front page of the site), be prepared to do a little searching if you encounter things you are unable to make sense of. There's probably a sub-reddit all about acronyms!

BLOCKING STRANGERS

Short of blocking access to Reddit completely, or blocking individual sub-reddits, it's difficult to police your child's use of the site without physically monitoring what they are doing. It is important to let your child know that there are unpleasant people out there and they need to take care about sharing personal information. Should someone start to be a harassment, you can control who can send you private messages and add users to a blocked list by simply clicking on the 'Block User' button.

SOURCES: https://www.reddit.com/r/announcements/comments/827zqc/in_response_to_recent_reports_about_the_integrity/, <https://www.reddit.com>, <https://www.reddit.com/gold/about>

What parents need to know about VPNs

Although a great privacy tool in the right hands, VPNs can be dangerous for children and let them bypass restrictions you have on web browsing.

What is a VPN?

A Virtual Private Network (VPN) is a privacy tool used to hide internet activity from prying eyes. Without a VPN, internet traffic is sent directly from your computer or smartphone, letting anyone in-between you and a website or service that you're accessing (such as a wireless hotspot owner or your ISP) see what you're doing. With a VPN, a secure tunnel is created between your computer or phone and what's known as the endpoint. The endpoint is merely the part of the internet where your connection comes out and can be in the same country as you or located anywhere else in the world.

Using a VPN has two main effects. First, as the tunnel is fully encrypted, nobody between you and the final endpoint can see what you're up to. Secondly, as all of your traffic looks as though it's coming from the endpoint, you can further avoid being tracked and monitored, hiding your real location from everyone.

VPNs have many legitimate uses. For example, running a VPN when on a wireless hotspot or hotel network that you don't trust, gives you additional security. There's also improved privacy by using a VPN, preventing ad networks and the like from tracking you and working out where you live. VPNs are also often used to bypass protections, say watching UK streaming TV when abroad by pretending that you're still in the UK. The way a VPN works means that children can also use VPNs to hide what they're doing and get around any restrictions that you might have in place.



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MEET OUR EXPERT

This guide has been written by David Ludlow. David has been a technology journalist for more than 20 years, covering everything from internet security to the latest computing trends and the smart home. A father of two (a nine-year-old and a six-year-old), he's had to control and manage how his children access online services and use apps.



What are the risks?

There are three main issues with VPN usage by children, potentially affecting their privacy (and yours), and opening them up to seeing inappropriate content.

1) Viewing age-inappropriate content

Parental control tools work by looking at the sites that a child is trying to visit, and then blocking according to a list of what's not allowed. With a VPN, the secure tunnel that's created means that web traffic can't be viewed, so parental controls stop working. Once on the open internet, a child using a VPN can look at anything they like unrestricted. This isn't just at home. Children that are allowed to take devices into school for work purposes can also use VPNs to bypass any filters that have been set up on the school network, too. VPNs can both be in software and via what's known as a proxy website. With a proxy website, a child visits this, then enters in a blocked website address that they want to view. The blocked website is then downloaded and viewed through the proxy, sidestepping any parental protection.

2) Malware infections

Installing any unknown application is fraught with danger, and the same applies to many free VPN applications. In an investigation, it was found that 38% of free Android VPNs contained malware, with 75% also designed to track activity. By installing suspect software, a child may be opening themselves up to being spied on and their private details being stolen. If you use a shared device with a child, an infection can also affect you. Malware can spread, and there's then a higher risk to other devices on your network. There's a chance that a dodgy VPN will use your computer and internet bandwidth, too. Back in 2015, the free Hola VPN extension was found to be secretly selling its users' bandwidth via another service and, in some cases, users' internet connections were being used for illegal activity.

3) Free VPNs can spy on people

The best commercial VPNs are built around privacy and have strict rules about hiding activity, not spying on users and not logging data. These tools are built for adults who wish to protect their anonymity. Children often go for free VPNs and proxy websites, which have a less strict code of ethics. Many free VPNs have been found to spy on activity, store private information and even sell this data on. When using a VPN like this, dodgy adverts and pop-ups can be inserted into web traffic, beyond the harmful things that your child may already be viewing.

What parents can do

Although the risks might seem entirely different, the protection from VPNs is the same for all of the threats.

Filter VPN sites

Check the parental controls software that you're using to see if there's a filter to block VPN/Proxy traffic. If this is selected, it will prevent most known VPNs from working, along with proxy websites.

Block VPN applications

Stopping and removing any VPN applications running on a child's device is a must. If you have parental control software that can restrict application use, make sure that you investigate any application that your child wants to install and block all VPNs. If you've recently enabled any applications, go back and check what they're used for and remove any VPNs that you find. If you don't have software to check what's running on a child's devices, then you should manually check. Searching for an application with VPN in the name is a good idea. Look out for tell-tale signs, too: computers and phones will usually display a different connection symbol when a VPN is connected. You can also use a child's computer to try and view a restricted website to ensure that filtering is still in place.

Monitor your child's online activity

In order to prevent your children from falling prey to inappropriate content, it's important to monitor your child's internet usage and have open and honest discussions with them about their online activities.

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Grooming is when someone befriends and builds an emotional connection with a child to gain their trust for the purposes of sexual abuse or exploitation. They can do this both offline and online, with technology and the Internet being commonly used to initiate and facilitate contact with a child. Gaining victims' trust is a key part of engaging them in sexually explicit behaviour. The groomer, who can either be a stranger or someone a child already knows, tends to use tactics such as engaging in small talk or exchanging personal information with the child about hobbies and relationships, using flattery and gifts to build a rapport or even making threats and intimidation to gain control. This can take place over varying periods of time – from a few days to several years.



What parents need to know about

ONLINE GROOMING

NUMBERS OF GROOMING OFFENCES ARE SOARING

In April 2017, a new government law came into force in England and Wales to allow police to charge adults who send sexual messages to children through mobile phones and social media. In the first year since the law change, there were 3,000 police-recorded offences of sexual communication with a child – a figure 50 per cent higher than experts expected in the first year.

ALL CHILDREN ARE AT RISK

According to a 2018 NSPCC report, a quarter of young people have experienced an adult who they don't know in real life trying to contact them online. One in four said they had been sent messages, images, videos or other content that made them feel sad, worried or uncomfortable. One in 10 girls and one in 20 boys under the age of 13 said they had received unwanted sexual messages.



CHILDREN ARE VULNERABLE TARGETS

Groomers use psychological tricks and methods to try and isolate children from their families and friends and will often choose to target more vulnerable children who may be easier to manipulate. In order to seek potential victims, predators are likely to use apps and websites that are popular with children and young people. Groomers can use a 'scattergun' approach to find victims, contacting hundreds online to increase their chance of success.

LIVE STREAMING CONCERNS

Predators may use live video to target children in real-time using tricks, dares or built-in gifts to manipulate them. Grooming often takes the form of a game where children receive 'likes' or even money for performing sexual acts. Social media channels, such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat, all have live streaming capabilities, but there are many apps which children can use to live stream, including Omegle, Live.me, BIGO Live, YouNow and many more.



GROOMING CAN HAPPEN RAPIDLY

Grooming is generally a slow, methodical and intentional process of manipulating a person to a point where they can be victimised. However, according to researchers at the University of Swansea, online grooming can also be very rapid, with analysis of chat logs revealing that it can take just 18 minutes for some predators to arrange to meet their victim. The fastest predators used sophisticated, persuasive, language-based strategies to rapidly build trust, including the use of small talk and praise which quickly escalated into requests for sexual messages.

ANYONE CAN GROOM YOUR CHILD

Many people expect groomers to be adults posing as children, but this is not always the case. Data from University of Swansea reveals that groomers' use of identity deception (around age, location and appearance) is fairly low. This can be because they approach many children, limiting their ability to lie. The worry is that honesty can be more damaging to the victim since they are more likely to feel as if they are in a real relationship.



National
Online
Safety

Top Tips for Parents



IT'S GOOD TO TALK

It's unlikely that you can stop your child using the Internet, nor can you constantly monitor their online activities, but you can talk to your child on a regular basis about what they do online. By talking openly with them about online relationships, they can quickly ascertain the kind of behaviour which is appropriate or inappropriate. Ask them whether they have any online friends or if they play online games with people they haven't met. This could then open up conversations about the subject of grooming.



CHECK PRIVACY SETTINGS

In order to give your child a safer online gaming experience, it is important to check privacy settings or parental controls on the networks, devices, apps, and websites they may use. If you use location-sharing apps to check where your child is, remember that these could always be used by strangers to follow your child without their knowledge. Ensure that you check options so that location information is never shared with anyone except those they have permission to share with.

DISCUSS SAFE ONLINE BEHAVIOUR

Make it clear to your child that they should not accept friend requests from people they don't know and to verify friend requests with people who they do know. They should never agree to chat privately with a stranger or someone they don't really know. Remind them that they should never divulge personal information, such as mobile phone numbers, addresses, passwords or name of their school.

DISCUSS HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Talk to your child about what a healthy relationship looks like and how to detect someone who might not be who they claim to be. Explain that groomers will pay your child compliments and engage in conversations about personal information, such as hobbies and relationships. They may admire how well they play an online game or how they look in a photo. Groomers will also try and isolate a child from people close to them, such as parents and friends, in order to make their relationship feel special and unique.

BE SUPPORTIVE

Show your child that you will support them and make sure they understand that they can come to you with any concerns they may have. They need to know they can talk to you if someone does something they are uncomfortable with, whether that is inappropriate comments, images, requests or sexual comments.

LOOK OUT FOR WARNING SIGNS

Child safety experts have identified key grooming patterns and advise parents to look out for:

- Secretive behaviour about what they are doing online.
- Internet or smartphone usage late at night.
- Going to unusual places to meet up with friends you have not heard of.
- They are clingy, have problems sleeping and eating or even bedwetting.
- A lack of interest in extra-curricular activities.
- Having new items, such as clothes or phones, which they can't explain.
- They seem withdrawn, anxious, depressed or aggressive.
- Having older boyfriends or girlfriends.

HOW TO REPORT

If you're worried that your child is being groomed online or sexually exploited, you can report your concerns to the Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) Safety Centre, which is part of the National Crime Agency at www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre. Reports are read by a Child Protection Advisor who will make contact by phone or email to work with you to make a plan to keep your child safe. If you think a child is in immediate danger, call the Police on 999 or NSPCC on 0800 800 5000.



SOURCES: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/research-reports/how-safe-children-2018-report.pdf>, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/06/17/police-reveal-3000-sex-grooming-crimes-against-children-young>, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/paedophiles-arrested-hundreds-police-warning-live-streaming-nca-online-dangers-uk-grooming-children-a8092851.html>, <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-we-do/news-opinion/facebook-tops-list-online-grooming>, <https://projects.swan.ac.uk/onlinegroomingcommunication/>



**National
Online
Safety**

7 questions to help you start a conversation with your child about online safety

#WakeUpWednesday

Publish date: 07/11/18



1



Which apps/games are you using at the moment?

THIS WILL GIVE YOU A GOOD OVERVIEW OF THE TYPES OF THINGS YOUR CHILDREN ARE DOING ON THEIR DEVICES, ALONG WITH THEIR INTERESTS. REMEMBER THAT THEY MIGHT NOT TELL YOU EVERYTHING THEY ARE USING, SO IT IS A GOOD IDEA TO ASK THEM TO SHOW YOU THEIR DEVICE, BECAUSE NEW APPS AND GAMES ARE RELEASED REGULARLY, IT IS IMPORTANT TO HAVE THIS CONVERSATION OFTEN TO ENSURE YOU ARE UP TO DATE WITH WHAT THEY ARE DOING.

Which websites do you enjoy using and why?

AS IN THE TIP ABOVE, ASKING THIS QUESTION WILL ALLOW YOU TO FIND OUT WHAT YOUR CHILD IS DOING ONLINE, AND ENCOURAGE POSITIVE CONVERSATIONS ABOUT THEIR ONLINE ACTIVITY. ASK THEM HOW THEY USE THE WEBSITES, AND TAKE AN INTEREST IN HOW THEY CAN USE THEM IN A POSITIVE WAY, ALSO ASKING THEM TO SHOW YOU IF POSSIBLE.



2

3



PLAY AGAIN?
YES NO

**How does this game/app work?
Can I play?**

SHOW A GENUINE INTEREST IN WHAT THEY ARE DOING. WHILST YOU ARE PLAYING A GAME OR USING AN APP WITH THEM, IT MIGHT HIGHLIGHT SOMETHING THAT THEY DON'T NECESSARILY THINK IS A DANGER TO THEM. IF THEY ACT LIKE THEY DON'T WANT TO SHARE THEIR ACTIVITIES WITH YOU, QUESTION WHY.

Do you have any online friends?

CHILDREN CAN FORM POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH PEOPLE ONLINE, AND THIS HAS BECOME MORE COMMON THANKS TO ONLINE MULTI-PLAYER OPTIONS, BUT THEY MAY NOT FULLY UNDERSTAND THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A FRIEND AND A STRANGER. YOU COULD MAKE THE QUESTION MORE SPECIFIC TO YOUR CHILD, FOR EXAMPLE: "HAVE YOU MET ANYONE ONLINE THAT YOU LIKE TO PLAY GAMES WITH?" THEY MAY NOT WANT TO SHARE THIS INFORMATION WITH YOU, SO ENSURE YOU TEACH THEM ABOUT HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS.



4

5

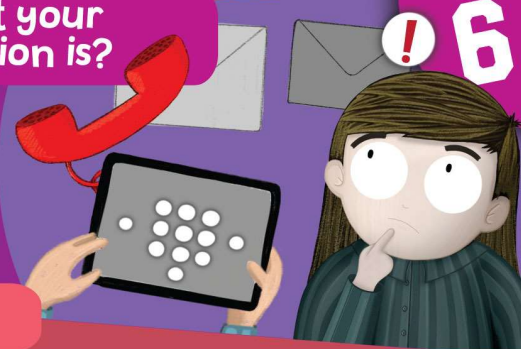


Do you know where to go for help?

ALTHOUGH YOU MAY BE THE ADULT THEY TRUST THE MOST, SOME CHILDREN STRUGGLE TO TALK ABOUT WHAT HAPPENS ONLINE DUE TO CONFUSION OR EMBARRASSMENT. BECAUSE OF THIS THEY MAY STRUGGLE TO APPROACH THE NORMAL PEOPLE WHO WOULD HELP, SUCH AS YOURSELF OR A TEACHER. HAVE A CHAT TO YOUR CHILD ABOUT EXACTLY WHERE THEY CAN GO FOR HELP, AND HOW THEY CAN REPORT ANY ACTIVITY THAT THEY BELIEVE IS INAPPROPRIATE ONLINE.

Do you know what your personal information is?

YOUR CHILD MAY ALREADY KNOW WHAT THEIR PERSONAL INFORMATION IS BUT THEY MIGHT NOT THINK ABOUT HOW IT CAN BE SHARED. HAVE A CONVERSATION ABOUT WHAT PERSONAL INFORMATION IS AND HOW THIS CAN AFFECT THEM IF IT IS SHARED BEYOND THE INTENDED RECIPIENT. IT IS IMPORTANT THAT YOUR CHILD UNDERSTANDS THE DANGERS OF SHARING CONTACT DETAILS OR PHOTOS, AS INFORMATION SUCH AS THIS CAN SPREAD QUICKLY ONLINE.



6

7



Do you know your limits?

CHILDREN MAY NOT UNDERSTAND THE NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF DEVICE OR GAME ADDICTION. TALK TO THEM OPENLY ABOUT HEALTHY HABITS AND ASK WHETHER OR NOT THEM SPENDING TIME ONLINE OR PLAYING A GAME IS AFFECTING THEIR SLEEP, PERFORMANCE AT SCHOOL OR IF THEY ARE GENERALLY LOSING INTEREST IN OTHER ACTIVITIES. YOU MAY LEAD ON TO ENCOURAGING ALTERNATIVE ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSING THE INTRODUCTION OF TIME LIMITS WHEN AT HOME.





Sexting occurs predominantly on, but is not exclusive to these apps...



Snapchat



Tinder



WhatsApp



Kik

Did you know?
IT IS ILLEGAL TO TAKE, MAKE OR SHARE AN INDECENT IMAGE OR VIDEO OF A CHILD UNDER THE AGE OF 18 – EVEN IF IT IS CONSENSUAL



Sexting involves sending and receiving explicit messages, images or videos of a sexual nature. This content is usually uploaded on a mobile device, which can then be uploaded onto social networking sites and shared further. They can be sent to or from a friend, boyfriend, girlfriend, or someone your child has met online. Sexting is often described as the new flirting for children – but it is illegal for anyone under the age of 18, with police forces in England and Wales recording 6,238 underage "sexting" offences in 2016-17, a rate of 17 a day.



What parents need to know about SEXTING



BREAKING THE LAW

Sexting is illegal if you share, make, take or distribute an indecent image or video of a child under the age of 18. It is an offence under the Protection of Children Act (1978), the Criminal Justice Act (1988), and under Section 67 of the Serious Crime Act (2015). Sexting or 'youth produced sexual imagery' between children is still illegal, even if they are in a relationship and any images are shared consensually.

CHILDREN THINK IT'S HARMLESS

Many young people see sexting as 'banter' or a joke, an easy way to show someone they like and trust them, or just a cool thing to do. But they may not realise the consequences of sharing personal information and how it can be potentially harmful to them in the future.



REGRETTING THEIR ACTIONS

Although some children are willingly exchanging images, many may regret sharing the messages, images and videos after they have sent or uploaded them. Once it's out there, there's no going back, and your child may feel ashamed, vulnerable, worried or anxious about imagery resurfacing later, especially if a relationship or friendship has broken down. 'Sexting' was the most viewed information and advice topic on the Childline website in 2017, showing the need for people to get help.

BULLYING, COERCION & BLACKMAIL

Your child may feel pressured into sexting, so they don't come across as boring, or think it's a way to show someone they care for them. They may feel under pressure to give in to repeated requests or feel obliged to share sexual messages and imagery. Sexting can also expose young adults to the risk of being exploited by paedophiles or sexual predators, who then use images to extort additional photos, sexual favours, and sometimes money from victims.

SHARING

Once a photo or video is out there, there's no way of knowing how many people have saved it, tagged it or shared it. Children like to show off to their peers and suddenly, an image has gone beyond its intended recipient, to classmates, friends, and even strangers. Once an image or video has been shared online, there's nothing to stop it being archived and repeatedly shared.

Top Tips for Parents

TALK TO YOUR CHILD

Encourage open dialogue about appropriate information to share with others both online and offline, discuss the word 'sexting' and ensure that they know what it is and what it involves. Show that you understand that sexting can reflect natural adolescent curiosity about nudity, bodies and exploring their sexuality, but explain why it's important to think twice before sharing something. Show that you are approachable and understanding.

DISCUSS THE LEGALITIES

Children and young people may not realise that what they are doing is illegal. Ensure that your child understands that when they are aged under 18, it is against the law for anyone to take or have a sexual photo of them – even if it's a selfie, and even when the activity is consensual.

EXPLAIN THE REPERCUSSIONS

Let your children know that once they have sent a message, they are no longer in control of it, and the messages, images and videos that they may intend to share with one individual may end up where the whole world can have access to them. Even if they completely trust someone, other people using their phone might accidentally see it. And, later in life, it may affect their online reputation, especially if universities, employers or future partners access the imagery.

HOW TO REMOVE IMAGES

If an image has already been shared, either your child or yourself should speak to the person that the image was shared with and ask them to delete it. You can also use the report button on a website where the image was posted. Speak to your child's school, as they may be able to confiscate phones if they know that they have sexual imagery stored. If you believe the child was forced into sending the message, report this to the police. You or your child can also report the content to CEOP with one of their child protection advisors (Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command).



BLOCKING AND STOPPING SEXTING

Show your child how to use the block button on their devices and favourite apps to stop people sending them unwanted messages. You can also set up parental controls with your internet service provider or on your child's phone to stop them from accessing harmful content.

HAS YOUR CHILD RECEIVED A SEXUAL IMAGE?

Firstly, reassure your child that they have done the right thing by speaking to you about the incident. Ask them if they requested the image or if they received it unwillingly. If the image has been sent to your child by an adult and you are concerned about sexual exploitation or grooming, contact CEOP immediately.

SOURCES: NSPCC (2015) Review Under Pressure: What's Affected Children in April 2013 - March 2014. [online] [nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/annual-reports/childline-review-under-pressure.pdf](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/annual-reports/childline-review-under-pressure.pdf). Last accessed on 25/07/18; [theconversation.com/one-in-seven-teens-are-sexting-says-new-research-92170](https://www.theconversation.com/one-in-seven-teens-are-sexting-says-new-research-92170); [learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/childline-annual-review](https://www.learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/childline-annual-review); [bbc.co.uk/news/uk-41880500](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-41880500)



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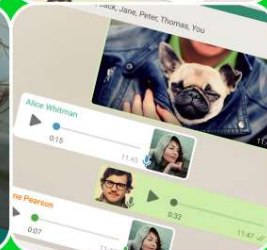
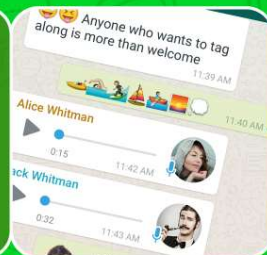
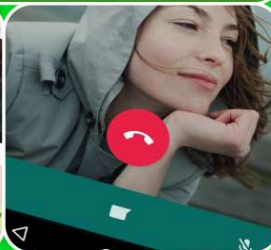
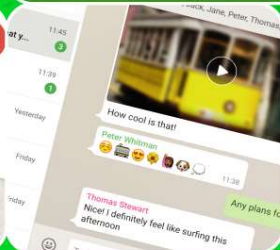
A whole school community approach to online safety
www.nationalonlinesafety.com

Email us at hello@nationalonlinesafety.com or call us on 0800 368 8061





WhatsApp is one of the most popular messaging apps in the world, with more than 1.5 billion people in more than 180 countries using it to send and receive text, photos, videos and documents, as well as make voice and video calls through an Internet or Wi-Fi connection. The free app offers end-to-end encryption, which means that messages can only be read by the sender and the recipient in one-to-one chats, or all members if it is a group chat. Not even WhatsApp can read them.



AGE RESTRICTION
16+



What parents need to know about WhatsApp



AGE LIMIT CHANGE

Since May 2018, the minimum age for using WhatsApp is 16 years old if you live in the European Union, including the UK. Prior to this, the minimum age was 13, which still applies for the rest of the world. WhatsApp has not yet stated whether it will take action against anyone aged between 13 and 16 who already hold accounts under the old terms and conditions, such as closing their account or seeking parental permission.

SCAM MESSAGES

Occasionally on WhatsApp, people receive spam messages from unauthorised third parties or from fraudsters pretending to offer prizes to 'lucky people', encouraging recipients to click on a link to win a prize. A common scam involves messages warning recipients that their WhatsApp subscription has run out with the hope that people are duped into providing their payment details. Other scam messages include instructions to forward the message in return for a reward or gift from WhatsApp or another person.

FAKE NEWS AND HOAXES

WhatsApp has been linked to enabling the spread of dangerous viral rumours. In India, for example, a number of attacks appear to have been sparked by false rumours shared on WhatsApp.

THE 'ONLY ADMIN' FEATURE AND CYBERBULLYING

Cyberbullying is the act of sending threatening or taunting text messages, voice messages, pictures and videos, with the aim to hurt and humiliate the receiver. The group chat and group video call features are great for multiple people to chat simultaneously, but there is the potential for people to hurt others with their comments or jokes. The 'only admin' feature gives the admin of a group chat greater control over who can send messages. Whilst this can be good for one-way announcements, the group admin has the power to block somebody from responding to an offensive message in a chat, which could result in a child being upset and unable to reply.

CONNECTING WITH STRANGERS

To start a chat in WhatsApp, you need to know the mobile number of the contact you want to speak to and they also need to have the app downloaded. WhatsApp can find contacts by accessing the address book of a device and recognising which of those contacts are using WhatsApp. If your child has shared their mobile number with somebody they don't know, they can use it to get in touch via WhatsApp.

LIVE LOCATION SHARING

WhatsApp's 'Live Location' feature enables users to share their current location in real time to their contacts in a chat, allowing friends to show their movements. The feature, which can be found by pressing the 'attach' button, is described by WhatsApp as a "simple and secure way to let people know where you are." Location-sharing is already a common feature on other social apps, including Snapchat's Snap Map and Facebook Messenger and can be a useful way for a child to let loved ones know they are safe. However, if your child is in a group chat with people they do not know, they will be exposing their location.



National Online Safety

Top Tips for Parents



CREATE A SAFE PROFILE

Even though somebody would need your child's phone number to add them as a contact, as an extra security measure we suggest altering their profile settings to control who can see their profile photo and status. The options to choose from are 'Everyone', 'My Contacts' and 'Nobody'. We suggest selecting 'My Contacts' or 'Nobody' to ensure their profile is protected.

EXPLAIN HOW TO BLOCK PEOPLE

If your child has received spam or offensive messages, calls or attachments from a contact, they should block them. Messages and status updates sent by a blocked contact will not show up on the phone and will stay undelivered. Blocking someone will not remove this contact from the contact list - they will need to be removed from the phone's address book. To block a contact, your child needs to open the person's chat stream and tap on the settings.

REPORT SCAM MESSAGES

Advise your child not to tap, share or forward any message that looks suspicious or sounds too good to be true. When your child receives a message from an unknown number for the first time, they will be given the option to report the number as spam directly inside the chat. They can also report a contact or a group as spam using the following steps: 1) Open the chat. 2) Tap on the contact or group name to open their profile information. 3) Scroll to the bottom and tap 'Report Spam'.

LEAVE A GROUP

If your child is part of a group chat that makes them feel uncomfortable or has been added to a group they don't want to be part of, use the group's settings to show them how to leave. If someone exits a group, the admin can add them back in once, if they leave again, they cannot be added again.

USING LIVE LOCATION SAFELY

If your child needs to use the 'Live Location' feature to share with you or a friend, advise them to only share it for the amount of time they need to. WhatsApp gives the options of either 15 minutes, one hour or eight hours. However, your child can choose to stop sharing at any time.

DELETE ACCIDENTAL MESSAGES

If your child has sent a message to the wrong chat or if a message they sent has contained a mistake, they can delete it. To do this, simply tap and hold on the message, choose 'Delete' and then 'Delete for everyone'. The app allows seven minutes to delete the message after it has been sent, but it is important to remember that recipients may have seen and screenshot a message before it was deleted.

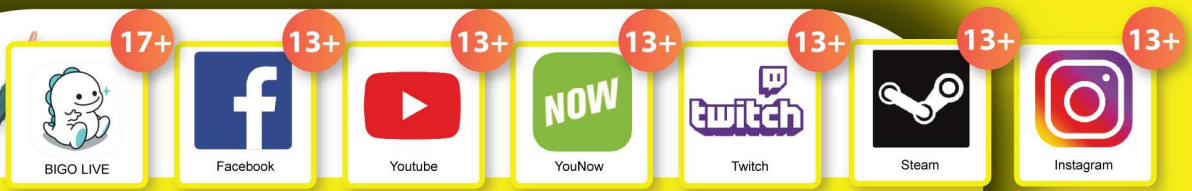
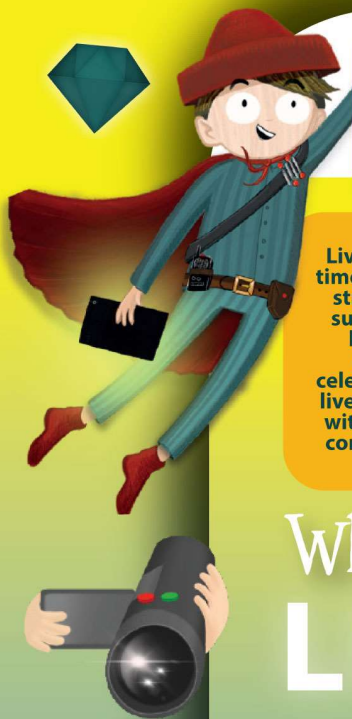
SET TIME LIMITS

A 2017 study found that by the age of 14 the average child will have sent more than 35,000 texts, 30,000 WhatsApp messages and racked up more than three solid weeks of video chat. Although it is inevitable that your child will use technology, you can still set boundaries. This is not easy, especially since teens use their devices for both schoolwork and free time, often simultaneously.



SOURCES: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/apr/26/whatsapp-plans-to-ban-under-16s-the-mystery-is-how>, <https://whatsappbrand.com/>, <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/gadgets-and-tech/news/whatsapp-update-latest-india-hoaxes-forward-messages-app-download-a8456011.html>





Live streaming is the term used to describe the broadcast of a real time video from a mobile device, tablet or games console. Many live streaming apps have functionality for interactions from viewers, such as commenting, live chats and sending reactions during the broadcast. Live streaming opens up a world of excitement for children, where they can watch live concerts, their favourite celebrities and bloggers/vloggers, connect with their friends, watch live gaming and much, much more. Whilst there are many positives with live streaming, it creates a worldwide platform for unsuitable content to be streamed and creates a host of dangers for children.

98%
of child sex abuse
live streaming victims
are 13 or under



What parents need to know about LIVE STREAMING

SIGN UP PROCESS & AGE RESTRICTIONS

Most live streaming apps have an age restriction of 13 and above. It is important to note that some platforms do not require proof of age when signing up to the app, meaning that anyone can register for an account. This also opens up the opportunity for people to lie about their age to seem older or younger.

WHO IS WATCHING YOUR CHILD?

If your child's privacy settings are not set up effectively, anybody can be watching their live streams. One of the main characteristics of live streaming is its ability for videos to be instantly shared all over the world, but this creates the opportunity for more people to watch anybody regardless of whether they know them.

LIVE CONTENT

As the streams are live, children can instantly be exposed to anything inappropriate. Most live streaming apps will have filters, rules and guidelines in place to ensure their services are monitored. They will also have report buttons where inappropriate content will be sent for review. Bear in mind that a report may not be dealt with instantly, which means your child may be further exposed to inappropriate content during a live stream.

RECORDINGS OF YOUR CHILD

Each streaming app and website that allows live streaming has different rules about how they store their live videos once completed. For example, a live stream on Periscope will be automatically deleted after 24 hours, but apps such as Facebook and YouTube allow the video to be posted on the app and will only be deleted once the creator decides. It is important to realise that deleting a video will not stop it from being shared. A live stream can be recorded (or screenshots can be taken) by other viewers using certain software and then shared on other platforms. Research conducted by the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) discovered that apparently recorded illegal videos of live streams were redistributed on other sites.

WHAT IS YOUR CHILD WATCHING?

Live streaming apps don't just allow children to stream their own videos, they can also watch other people's streams. Anything can be streamed at any time and any place, including violence, graphic imagery, nudity, illegal behavior, drug use, profanities etc. Most live streaming apps claim to monitor live streams and will take action to stop any that do not adhere to their guidelines. However, with millions of live streams each day, it is extremely difficult to monitor them all.

GROOMING

There have been recent reports of paedophiles coercing children as young as three on live streaming apps. Due to the anonymous nature and lack of identification needed to sign up to some apps, almost anyone is able to sign up and use the service. Users can use fake identities to sign up to the apps and watch/stream videos. Recent research by the IWF revealed that children may be asked to do things and perform 'suggestive acts' during their live stream by strangers.

Top Tips for Parents

BE PRESENT

In a recent three month study by the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF), 96% of streams showed a child on their own, often in their bedroom or bathroom. If your child is going to conduct a live stream, ask them if you could be present for it. This will give you a greater knowledge of what your child is doing during their live streams and who they are streaming to.

PROTECT THEIR PERSONAL INFORMATION

Your child may unknowingly give away personal information during a live stream, including their location. Talk to them about what constitutes 'personal information' and make sure they do not disclose anything to anyone during a live stream, even to their friends. Advise them to remove any items in their live stream (school uniform, street name, posters etc.) that could potentially expose their location or personal information.

TALK REGULARLY WITH YOUR CHILD

Ask your child which live streaming apps they are using and how they are using them. Are they watching live streams or making their own? What types of live streams do they like watching? If they are under 13, it is strongly advised that they are not using any live streaming apps due to the dangers involved, but you may feel that they should not be using the apps even if they are over the age limit. With live streaming being such a popular feature on apps, it is important that you are aware of the dangers associated with it in order to protect your child effectively.

PRIVACY SETTINGS

Each live streaming app will have its own privacy settings with options varying from platform to platform. Generally, we advise that your child's account is set to private. This will ensure that only their friends/followers will see their live stream. It is important to check each app to ensure that the privacy settings are in place to protect your child from strangers viewing their streams and engaging in conversation with them. The settings on most apps will allow you to turn off the chat feature during a live stream, restricting conversations, but live chat is part of the 'fun' when it comes to live streaming.

PROTECTING THEIR ONLINE REPUTATION

What your child does now may affect their future opportunities, and it is important that they have a good understanding of this. As the videos are live, it may lead to the misconception that whatever happens in the video will disappear once the live stream ends. This is incorrect. Tell your child that their live streams cannot be undone and this has the potential to affect their online reputation.

REMOVE LINKS TO OTHER APPS

Some live streaming apps/websites give users the ability to link and share the content through other social media platforms to share their video further. For example, a live stream on Periscope, can be shared on Twitter and Facebook during the stream if the accounts are connected. While it may seem like a good idea to show the video to more people, the privacy settings may differ on each app, opening up the potential for unwanted viewers to join the stream. We suggest checking the privacy settings on each app and where possible, only streaming on one app at a time in order to have greater control over who sees the live stream.

<https://www.iwf.org.uk/> <https://www.pscp.tv/content> <https://www.channel4.com/news/children-bombarded-with-sexually-explicit-chat-on-musical-ly-and-live-ly>



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12 Smartphone Online Safety Tips

FOR CHILDREN WITH NEW DEVICES

The Christmas season has finally arrived and soon many of you will be opening your presents in the hope that Santa has listened to your request for the latest mobile phone or smart device.

Owning a mobile phone can be fun, but it's important to use it safely and responsibly. By following our safety tips below, you can make sure that you set up your phone securely, keep your personal information private and enjoy using your phone in the healthiest way possible.

1 ALWAYS SECURE YOUR PHONE WITH A PASSWORD

This will help to keep your private information safe and won't allow others to access your phone without your permission. Make sure your password is memorable and personal to you but something which other people can't guess, and always share it with your parents just in case you forget it.

2 DISABLE LOCATION SETTINGS

This can usually be done from the device's privacy control settings. Disabling location settings means that your phone can't be tracked by others and strangers can't tell where you are when you're using it. It also helps to save battery.

3 ALWAYS USE A SECURE WIFI NETWORK

When you use your WIFI at home usually it is a secure network that only you and your family know the password to. Public networks, like those in coffee shops, can be accessed by anyone which means that people could potentially hack into your device and access your personal information without you realising.

4 ONLY PAIR WITH BLUETOOTH DEVICES YOU KNOW

A Bluetooth connection with another device means that you can send and receive data wirelessly. For example, you could listen to music wirelessly or receive pictures and videos from your friends. However, pairing your phone with a device you don't know means that you could be sharing personal information with a stranger or could leave your device open to receiving viruses.

5 ONLY USE APPS WHICH YOU ARE OLD ENOUGH TO USE

Before downloading any new apps, always check the age-rating of the app. If you need help, ask your parent or carer to make sure that the app is safe for you to use and never download anything which you are too young for as it may contain things that aren't safe for you to see.

6 BEWARE OF BECOMING ADDICTED TO YOUR PHONE

Your phone can be fun to use and it's easy to become too attached, whether it's keeping in touch with friends, discovering new features or downloading the latest apps. Remember it's always good to talk in person, go out and have fun and get regular exercise. This will keep you fit and healthy and make you appreciate there's more to life than just your mobile phone.

7 LIMIT YOUR SCREEN TIME

Using your phone for too long, particularly in the evenings, can make you feel tired at school, affect your concentration and make you lose interest in other things in life. Only use your phone at certain times of the day and don't use it close to bedtime. You can set a 'screen time limit' via the settings on your phone. This will help you stay fit and healthy and means that you will still be able to focus and perform well at school.

8 THINK OF OTHERS WHEN TAKING PHOTOS

Don't take embarrassing photos of other people on your phone. If other people get access to the photo and share it with more people, it could make that person really upset and treated as a form of bullying. Always be mindful of the photos you take using your camera and who you share them with.

9 MAKE SURE YOUR PARENTS SET UP 'PARENTAL CONTROLS'

This means that you will be able to use your phone safely and securely and won't accidentally do things you shouldn't do. The best time to do this is when you get a new phone or device so that you're protected from the very beginning.

10 ALWAYS TALK TO YOUR PARENTS IF YOU DON'T FEEL SAFE

Sometimes, even though your phone is really secure, you might see something you don't like, or someone might contact you who you don't know. If this happens, always tell your trusted adult like your parents, carers, other adult family members or a teacher, all of whom will be able to support you and advise you on what you should do next.

11 DON'T TEXT AND WALK

This might seem like a strange thing to say but it can be dangerous to stare at your mobile phone whilst walking outside alongside busy roads or bicycle paths. In some cases, children have been knocked over by cars or cyclists because they haven't been aware of their surroundings whilst texting or playing games on their mobile devices.

12 DON'T SHARE YOUR NUMBER OR YOUR DEVICE WITH PEOPLE YOU DON'T KNOW.

Never feel pressured into sharing your phone number with people you don't know and don't lend your phone to strangers or keep it where others could get hold of it. Look after your device and always keep it hidden from sight to avoid it being stolen or broken into.



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Online Safety Tips For Children

Do's



1 KEEP YOUR PERSONAL INFORMATION PRIVATE ONLINE

Only share it with people you know like friends and family. Ask a trusted adult, like your teacher or a family member, to help you change your privacy settings so that strangers can't see it.

2 SPEAK POLITELY AND BE KIND TO OTHERS WHEN YOU SPEAK TO THEM ONLINE

Treat them like you would treat them in real life and always remember your manners.

3 TELL A TRUSTED ADULT IF YOU ARE BEING BULLIED ONLINE

If other another person is sending you nasty messages, a trusted adult will be able to help you collect evidence and report the person to the relevant authorities.

4 USE PASSWORDS TO PROTECT YOUR PERSONAL INFORMATION

Ask a trusted adult to help you create a password that you can easily remember but which is hard for other people to guess.

5 ALWAYS CHECK WITH A TRUSTED ADULT FIRST BEFORE USING A DEVICE OR DOWNLOADING A NEW APP

This is so that they can check it is safe for you to use and make sure the privacy settings are right.

6 TELL A TRUSTED ADULT IF YOU SEE SOMETHING ONLINE WHICH YOU DON'T LIKE

This can include anything that upsets you, makes you feel sad or which you're unsure about.

7 USE THE INTERNET TO HAVE FUN AND TO HELP YOU FIND OUT INFORMATION ABOUT THINGS

Remember to ask your trusted adult for help and always use child friendly search engines so that the information you get back is safe.

Don'ts



1 ACCEPT FRIEND REQUESTS FROM STRANGERS OR PEOPLE YOU DON'T KNOW

Always tell a trusted adult if somebody you don't know tries to contact you online.

2 SPEND TOO MUCH TIME ON YOUR DEVICE

Instead, go out and play with your friends, get some fresh air and try to exercise more. This will help you stay fit and healthy.

3 REPLY TO MESSAGES FROM ONLINE BULLIES OR PEOPLE WHO SEND YOU NASTY MESSAGES

The most important thing to do is to tell a trusted adult and then block the person from contacting you.

4 COPY PEOPLE'S WORK ONLINE OR PRETEND IT IS YOURS

This is called plagiarism and can get you into a lot of trouble.

5 BE MEAN OR NASTY ONLINE

Behave online like you would in real life and don't post anything that can make you look like a bad person. Things that you post online can stay there for a very long time.

6 USE YOUR DEVICES CLOSE TO BEDTIME

This will allow your brain to rest so that you can get a good night's sleep, stay focused at school and perform better in class.

7 SHARE PERSONAL INFORMATION ON THE INTERNET WITH STRANGERS

Always tell a trusted adult if somebody you don't know asks you for your personal information.



FaceApp, as the name suggests, is an app by Wireless Lab which uses uploaded images of someone's face and allows them to add a variety of interesting filters making themselves look older, younger, appear with different hair colour and so on. The app uses either the camera on your phone to take a selfie, or lets you use a picture from somewhere like Facebook or Instagram to apply these filters. While this all sounds like innocent fun, there have been some valid concerns raised about the terms and conditions, and what the company is doing with all these selfies and pictures.



What parents need to know about FACEAPP



WHY IS IT SO POPULAR?

The app went viral in the middle of July 2019 with the #faceappchallenge, where users download Faceapp, take a picture of their face adding the old age filter, and then share the image of themselves online with friends. It can be fun to see what you might look like when you're more well travelled, and the results are pretty convincing (much to the amusement of older family members!).



HOW DOES IT WORK?

The app scans the uploaded face, and uses a neural network (basically a huge database of sample faces) to show what it thinks you'll look like when you're old; adding wrinkles, grey hairs, yellowed teeth etc. Anybody can upload an image they have access to, even those of children, without any kind of consent being needed. As explained in the lengthy terms and conditions of the app, these images are saved by Wireless Lab and can be used however they see fit, at any time in the future.



IS IT SAFE?

This is the contentious question. Wireless Lab, the Russian company behind the FaceApp app, are particularly vague with their descriptions of what they can potentially do with a person's details, to the point where a lot of people are worried about their images being used for nefarious purposes like cyber crime or political campaigns. In reality, the app is no more or less safe than any other, but that doesn't mean you shouldn't be vigilant of what you or your child is agreeing to online.



LEVEL OF ACCESS?

Buried in the legal jargon and technical mumbo jumbo, FaceApp has a worryingly large amount of access to your or your child's device. As well as storing any pictures you upload to the app, it also has access to your internet history, and basic information like your name and location. Naturally this sounds scary because it has been highlighted so publicly, but this is the normal kind of access and information apps take from us nowadays. If you are at all concerned it's worth leafing through those lengthy Terms Of Service before making a decision on if you're happy for your child to use an app.



SHOULD I BE WORRIED?

While your details COULD be used in the wrong way, the company has publicly stated they have no desire to do so and a number of independent probes into the app seem to suggest everything is being stored correctly and safely. That's not to say it will always be this way, so it's worth bearing in mind that this could change further down the line.



FACIAL RECOGNITION SOFTWARE

An app that takes an image of a face and uses it to commit online crimes or say things pretending to be somebody else might sound like the plot of a Hollywood thriller, but with today's technology it can be a very real fear. Facial recognition software is now so advanced, a fake picture or video of a face can be produced without your knowledge or permission, potentially by a company you thought was safe. Now it must be stressed that this is extremely unlikely to happen, especially as this advanced technology is still being worked out, so you shouldn't be too worried about it - but always be aware of the permissions you're giving to unknown parties.



Safety Tips For Parents



CHECK DOWNLOADS

It may seem obvious to keep an eye on what is downloaded on a device, but it can be very easy to miss out on new fads and viral hits. Most app stores let you see what's currently trending, alongside descriptions of what an app is. Talking to your child about what current trends they're enjoying will help you keep an eye on what's popular. You also get to see what you might look like in the future, which could be a blessing or a curse!



BE REALISTIC ABOUT YOUR DATA

When it comes to online security, the phrase 'better the devil you know' is particularly apt. While companies like Facebook and Google are by no means virtuous in their collection of our data, we do at least know (for the most part) a lot about how it's being handled. Luckily, we know Wireless Lab are treating our information correctly for now, but apps you don't know or trust, may not. It's always worth reading up on an app and making sure it's the real deal before downloading it.



BE AWARE OF COPYCAT APPS

When something like FaceApp goes viral, many copycat apps can pop up on the store piggybacking off the success of the original. These apps can contain viruses that are often far more malicious and dangerous to you and your child than the terms in the 'safe' version of the app. Make sure you're aware of which is the original before making any downloads.



KNOW IF YOU CAN SPEND MONEY ON AN APP

Like most things these days, there is a way to spend money on FaceApp. You can purchase a 'pro' version which unlocks additional filters either through your phone's app store, or on the app itself. This subscription ranges from 1 month for £3.99, 12 months for £19.99 or lifetime access for £38.49. It's very easy to make this purchase without too much thought so do make sure you know about any additional costs of an app your child is using.



ALWAYS READ THE TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Many of us don't have the time or energy to read through pages and pages of legal speak, and that's normal, but leafing through the fingerprint can unearth a lot of grizzly permissions you didn't know you were giving. Often, at times they are unavoidable, but knowing what you're signing up for and if there's anything you can do about it could help you make more informed decisions on the types of content you expose your child to.



Meet our expert

Mark Foster has worked in the gaming industry for 5 years as a writer, editor and presenter. He is the current gaming editor of two of the biggest gaming news sites in the world, UNILAD Gaming and GAMINGbible. Starting gaming from a young age with his siblings, he has a passion for understanding how games and tech work, but more importantly, how to make them safe and fun.





Fortnite: Chapter 2 has finally landed! With a whole host of new in-game features including a brand-new map, more water-based activities, upgraded character skins and a more streamlined arsenal of weapons, this Fortnite is promising to be the best yet. Almost all of the changes are cosmetic which means the concept of the game remains the same, with players still aiming to be the last man standing. Players will no doubt find the game much more enjoyable with so much more to explore. For parents and carers however, it pays to remain vigilant.



What parents need to know about FORTNITE

CHAPTER 2

BATTLE ROYALE

Battle Royale games have become very popular over the last couple of years, and most tend to follow a very similar setup. Taking Fortnite as an example, 100 players drop into a map, loot buildings for weapons and armour and attempt to beat all the other players to be crowned victor at the end. If you've ever seen the Hunger Games movies, you'll have an idea of what this entails. Each game can take up to 20 minutes (assuming you last to the end) and can be restarted relatively quickly once 100 free players have been found.

IS FORTNITE ADDICTIVE?

Fortnite is at the forefront of gaming addiction discussions because it is so popular with young people. But whether it actually contributes to gaming addiction is up for debate. WHO (World Health Organisation) have classified gaming as a legitimate addiction, but this is not solely a concern with Fortnite. Signs of addiction can include irritability when not playing, lying about the amount of time played and a preoccupation with thoughts of the next gaming session. Realistically, it must be down to parents and carers to recognise these symptoms and act accordingly if they think they are developing.

FREE TO PLAY... OR IS IT?

While Fortnite is technically free to play (in that you can download and play it without paying) it does come with the caveat that spending money on things like skins and emotes in-game is heavily pushed to players. The currency used in-game is called 'V-Bucks' and can be bought with real money through the game's online store. It's worth remembering that these purchases are absolutely not necessary, are cosmetic only and that V-Bucks can be earned in-game with enough play time.

SEASONAL UPDATES

Every 10 weeks or so Fortnite is updated with a new season. This essentially adds new things like skins and emotes to the game, while also sometimes changing up the game map in interesting ways. These seasons are free to everybody and don't require additional money to play, though battle passes for each season can be bought with V-Bucks. A battle pass will typically allow a player to earn experience faster and gain fun in-game items by completing a host of daily challenges.

CROSSPLAY IS AVAILABLE

One of the wonderful things about Fortnite is that it can be played cross-platform. This means that no matter what platform a person plays on (PC, PlayStation 4, Xbox One etc) they can play with friends who own the game on a different platform. To do this, an Epic Games account must first be created online (which is free) and then linked with your platform account. Doing this removes the age-old boundary of not being able to play together because you don't have the same console and opens up a whole new world of playing online with friends.

IS FORTNITE VIOLENT?

Fortnite has been rated by the ESRB (Entertainment Software Ratings Board) as teen, as it contains cartoon violence and the weapons and acts depicted in the game are some way removed from their real life inspirations. Characters don't draw blood when shot and instead of dying, they are simply beamed up off the map. Naturally, players younger than the recommended age limit will want to play the game and that should be at the discretion of parents and carers.



Top Tips for Parents

BUYING V-BUCKS

As mentioned, Fortnite does contain in-game purchases and microtransactions in the form of V-Bucks which can be bought with real money. If you do decide to let your young one spend money in the game, be sure to delete your card information afterwards as it can be very easy to purchase more items at the press of a few buttons. It's important to set a limit on any purchases (as mentioned they are absolutely not necessary to play the game) and a suggestion would be capping the spending at around £50 - this is the normal retail price of a game.

GAMING WITH STRANGERS

Fortnite Battle Royale is an online game, and as such, there is a chance that young children could come into contact with strangers who are randomly placed into their groups in a game. It's difficult to predict what another person might say or do in a game, so it's a good idea for friends playing together, to be grouped together. The only real countermeasure to interacting with strangers offered by Fortnite is to turn off all mic communications, which can be done in the game's settings. Using outside chat apps, like Skype or Discord while playing, is a great way to make sure you know who you're talking to and that nobody else is listening in.

LIMIT TIME, BUT BE FLEXIBLE

A game of Fortnite can last up to 20 minutes, so be flexible when it's time to put it away. The approach of 'one more game' as opposed to '10 more minutes' will stop any complaints that a match is still ongoing. Better still, play with your child and take it in turns; that way you're helping control the time played and can keep an eye on what they're experiencing.

TALK TO OTHER PARENTS / CARERS

If you're concerned about play time or spending money in the game, talk to other parents and carers of your child's friends. If you approach as a collective, it will be easier to know when their friends are online and you don't have to worry about who they're playing with. It can also help curb expectations on spending money on battle passes and skins if you stick together.

CAN DEVELOP SOME IMPORTANT SKILLS

It's often overlooked just how good gaming can be for young people. Fortnite encourages team play, quick and complex problem solving and communication; that's not to mention the lightning fast reflexes gamers can develop. While taking breaks to do other activities is of course important, there are benefits to screen time which might not be immediately obvious.

PLAY THE GAME YOURSELF

There's no substitute for sitting down and playing the game yourself to learn all about it. Fortnite is available for free on almost anything you can imagine, even your smartphone, so there's never been a better time to get involved and see what all the fuss is about. You never know, you might even be able to impress your children when you show them your impressive Victory Royale tally!

Meet our expert

Mark Foster has worked in the gaming industry for 5 years as a writer, editor and presenter. He is the current gaming editor of two of the biggest gaming news sites in the world, UNILAD Gaming and GAMINGible. Starting gaming from a young age with his siblings, he has a passion for understanding how games and tech work, but more importantly, how to make them safe and fun.



<https://www.theguardian.com/games/2018/mar/07/fortnite-battle-royale-parents-guide-video-game-multiplayer-shooter>, <https://www.psychguides.com/behavioral-disorders/video-game-addiction/>, <https://www.polygon.com/2018/3/23/17146848/cross-platform-crossplay-ps4-xbox-pc-switch-ios-mobile-enable-friends-compatible-matchmaking-701E7d>, <https://www.esrb.org/ratings/34948/Fortnite/>



'Sadfishing' is described as a behavioural trend where people make exaggerated claims about their emotional problems to generate sympathy and attention. The term was created at the beginning of the year by a blogger using the term to describe certain celebrities who embellish their emotional difficulties to generate sympathy and gain more followers. The term has now gained traction and is seen as a growing trend on social media. The challenge with sadfishing is that sometimes real problems can become overlooked or young people can even be bullied for having shared their problems online.



What parents need to know about SADFISHING

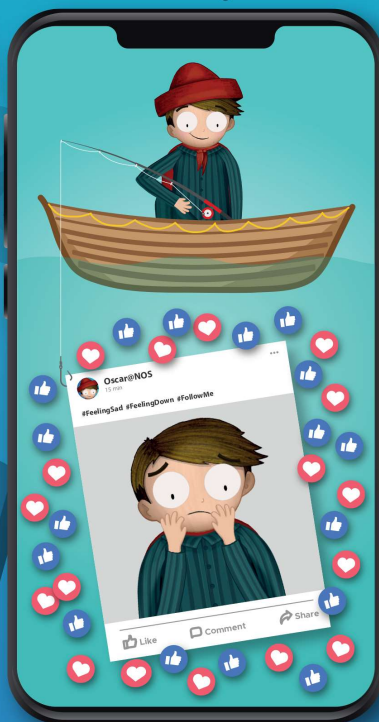


ATTENTION NEEDING

This is sometimes also called attention seeking. The urge to belong is universal. Everyone seeks attention. The feeling of belonging and knowing that others are thinking about you is part of what it is to be human. As the use of social media has grown, the opportunity for attention is enormous but this sometimes comes at a price. Positive interactions (such as someone liking your tweet) trigger the same kind of chemical reaction (dopamine) that is caused by gambling and recreational drugs. This reaction reinforces a behaviour and for minimal effort, a young person is rewarded with dopamine and attention.

SHOWING VULNERABILITY

Being vulnerable and oversharing can sometimes lead young people open to being groomed online, offering predatory social media users an opportunity to gain their trust by offering sympathy. A Digital Awareness UK report includes the case study of a teenage girl who, after posting about her depression online, was approached by a friend of a friend who shared their experiences and later ended up pressuring her to send him explicit pictures.



OVERSHARING

Oversharing is the act of revealing too much personal information. When young people share too much about their feelings or problems they are often desiring very much to connect and belong. In order to gain more attention and likes a young person might be tempted to overshare their feelings beyond a normal face to face conversation. The challenge with this is that the young person is sharing personal thoughts and feelings with people they do not know and the support they gain back is 'unregulated' and might be very unhelpful.

BULLYING AND DISAPPOINTMENT

According to Status of Mind report by Royal Society for Public Health UK, social media platforms are a useful tool to maintain or build on real world relationships, improving mental health and wellbeing. When young people do share their feelings and worries online, they are seeking emotional support from others. However, whilst some friends may comment and like a post to be helpful, other friends may accuse the post of 'sadfishing' and trying to gain attention, ultimately making the situation and feelings about themselves worse.



Safety Tips For Parents

A CULTURE OF OPENNESS

Maintain and commit to having a culture of openness at home where your child can express their feelings without judgement, and you acknowledge their world and current difficulties. Support your child to navigate growing up in a world with social media and their developing sense of self.



ASK MORE THAN ONCE

Being a parent of a teenager means a constant negotiation between keeping them safe and letting them go. If their behaviour has changed or they have a prolonged bout of low mood or stress, let them know you are there for them when they are ready to talk. Sometimes this may mean asking them more than once. This gives them the message that you are there for them and that they are not alone.



POSITIVE ATTENTION

Provide opportunities during the week for time together. Teenagers sometimes prefer side by side conversations like going out for walk, at the dinner table or driving in the car somewhere. Regularly commit time to a family evening together where you can share time and/or an experience together like a home movie and popcorn, a game (even an online game which may be suitable), shopping or cooking.



PROMOTE HEALTHY FACE TO FACE RELATIONSHIPS

Where possible, help your child maintain healthy relationships with friends who are helpful and supportive. This may mean inviting them over regularly, providing transport to and from activities with the group of friends, or helping your child organise activities. Spend time helping to encourage healthy, supportive face to face relationships.



TALK ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF BOUNDARIES

Discuss the consequences of oversharing, particularly on social media. Maintaining a healthy privacy outlook is important when we are perhaps sharing our feelings with people who are not known to us. But as friendship and trust develop, it is healthy to share more information and talk more openly.



Meet our expert

Anna Bateman is passionate about placing prevention at the heart of every school, integrating mental wellbeing within the curriculum, school culture and systems. She is also a member of the advisory group for the Department of Education, advising them on their mental health green paper.





You don't need to be the biggest football fan in the world to have heard of FIFA (Federation Internationale de Football Association) - the governing body for football. And, the video game series bearing the organisation's name is one of the most successful ever. The lure of this football series is that official licensing gives your child the opportunity to play games in the role of their favourite players. They can either work through a story mode version of the game or play online in competitions against other players. The game, released annually by Electronic Arts under the EA Sports label, is available for a range of consoles, and there are also mobile versions available for smartphones and tablets.



What parents need to know about FIFA 20



CONSTANT SERIES REFRESHES

The big selling point for the FIFA range of games is that it includes current players; a feature which no other football video game offers. However, this means that a new version of the game is released every year, with updated teams, players and stadia, plus new gameplay features and tweaks. And, with every annual update of the game, there is an expectation that it will be far better than the previous one, so the pressure to upgrade and buy the new version is likely to be immense!

FAKE EMAILS AND SCAMS

Your child may receive an email or see a message on social media or in forums which appear to be a genuine FIFA promotion. While the link may seem like a FIFA login page, it's a phishing scam to capture a login name and password. Scammers may use names that sound legitimate, like 'EA Admin' or 'FIFA Developer'.



JUST ONE MORE GAME

Your child could be playing FIFA games on their computer or console for very long periods of time. That's not to say that computer-based matches are a full 90 minutes long, but a series of 20-minute matches can very quickly fill up a day! The World Health Organisation has classified 'gaming disorder' as a mental health problem - this is when children have trouble controlling their gaming behaviour and let it reign over their lives and daily routine.

IN GAME CHAT

While the FIFA video game is suitable for children of all ages as it does not include any inappropriate content, there is the issue of in-game chat. Your child can play with other people online and chat with them using headsets. As this is largely unregulated, it could mean that your child is exposed to language or conversations that you deem unsuitable.



BUYING ADD-ONS

In-game purchases are to be expected in any modern game and FIFA is no different. FIFA Ultimate Team (commonly called FUT) is a mode in FIFA that lets gamers build teams of players from any league, playing both offline and online to win coins. These can be used to buy better players or packs containing random players. While some purchases can be made using in-game currency, other purchases involve spending with real world money, which could become expensive. There have been reports of parents receiving large credit card bills resulting from in-game purchase made by their children.

FIFA GAMEPLAY

The FIFA series has been criticised for the competitive nature of gameplay leading to aggression in some players. Add to this the chance to converse with other players via in-game chat, and the potential for anger levels is likely to rise... especially if you're losing heavily!



Top Tips For Parents

ABOUT THE SERIES REFRESHES

As a parent, the implications of this really depends on the age of your child and your relationship with them. It may be that playing and sharing games is part of your family life and so this isn't a problem, but just be mindful that being involved with the FIFA franchise is unlikely to be a one-off event - it's the start of a gaming journey that could last for many, many years and involve numerous (potentially expensive) upgrades.



STEER CLEAR OF SCAMMERS

You should teach your children to stay clear of scams. Explain to them that they must be wary of any link which asks them to either verify their username and password or provide other sensitive information; game developers will never send a message asking for login information. Console messages, emails and websites, or social media posts promoting contests for in-game content, such as packs, players, or coins requiring login information are fake.



MONITOR ACTIVITY

The parental controls on consoles can be used to restrict the amount of time spent playing. Physically monitoring how much time your child is spending in FIFA is recommended - just as you might monitor how much time they spend watching TV. Keep an eye out for warning signs, such as a lack of interest in other activities, tiredness or fatigue, neglect of personal hygiene, changes in character or anger issues when your child is told to stop playing a game.



HAVE THEM REPORT ABUSE

It's unlikely that you'll be able to convince your child to play FIFA without making use of the chat facility - it's something that adds to the experience. However, you should ensure your child is aware of how to silence any abusive players and how to report anyone who becomes problematic.



RESTRICT PURCHASES

To spend real money in FIFA, a credit or debit card must be linked to a gaming account, so ensure that your card is not being used for this! There's also support for PayPal payment, so also check who has access to this type of account. Depending on the platform your child is using to play FIFA, there are different parental controls that can be put in place to restrict spending should you allow them to link a card to their account. There is also a payment option called Paysafecard, which allows you to make payments online without the use of a bank account or credit card. As you can top up balances, this makes it easy to control spending.

ENCOURAGE BREAKS

Monitoring in-game chat may be difficult as you're likely to only be able to hear one side of a conversation. However, noticing how your child is reacting may be a reasonable indicator of the general mood. Dealing with both the frustrations of a game as well as troublesome people can serve as useful life lessons, but as a parent, you know your child better than anyone else. If you notice your child is getting too upset or angry, that's the time to intervene and try to encourage them to take a break from the game.

Meet our expert

Mark Foster has worked in the gaming industry for 5 years as a writer, editor and presenter. He is the current gaming editor of two of the biggest gaming news sites in the world, UNILAD Gaming and GAMINGBible. Starting gaming from a young age with his siblings, he has a passion for understanding how games and tech work, but more importantly, how to make them safe and fun.



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Call of Duty is undeniably one of the most recognisable video games on the planet. The first game was released for the PC way back in 2003, and the franchise has spawned a whopping 16 titles to date, and featured on almost 20 gaming consoles and devices. Despite being one of the most popular games on the market, CoD has never been a stranger to controversy; themes of war, terrorism and other adult subjects parents and guardians might feel uncomfortable exposing their children to, have always been a part of the series. The latest iteration, Call of Duty: Modern Warfare, is no different, even doubling down on some of these mature themes. So with that in mind, here's a helpful guide to aid you in navigating the world of Call of Duty.



What parents need to know about CALL OF DUTY: MODERN WARFARE



VIOLENCE AND GRAPHIC CONTENT

Call of Duty has been given an 18+ rating due to "violence against vulnerable and defenceless characters, motiveless killing of innocent characters, graphic violence and use of strong language." Despite the rating, the game is still extremely popular amongst under 18's who could be exposed to violent themes or foul language that parents and carers may not deem suitable or age appropriate for their children.



INCREDIBLY RAW CAMPAIGN

The single player campaign in Call of Duty: Modern Warfare focuses around a war in the fictitious Middle Eastern country of Urzikstan. It features special forces operations, large open battles, chemical weapons and torture. Infinity Ward (who developed the game) have gone on record saying this is the most realistic and grounded game they've ever made, so it stands to reason that the campaign has generated a huge amount of controversy, especially in today's heated political climate. While younger players might not fully grasp what's going on on screen, it's bound to raise some uncomfortable questions if they're left to play it unsupervised.



CHATTING TO STRANGERS

By far the biggest pull for players to Call of Duty is the expansive multiplayer. As well as offering up a wide variety of competitive game modes, Modern Warfare also includes some co-op gameplay modes. Ideally, this means players and children can join a group with their friends and play together online. However, players can play against or with anyone in the world and, with no filter, the language used may often be inappropriate for young children. Due to the competitive nature of gaming and the fact conversations are not moderated, your child could also be at risk of cyberbullying.



ADDICTIVE NATURE

Call of Duty: Modern Warfare has promised to be the best yet. The game features a number of new game modes and now includes crossplay for the first time, whereby players can now play each other across any device (i.e. Xbox, Playstation or PC). As always tends to be the case when a new game is released, players spend large amounts of time getting to grips with the new features and the repetitive nature of COD means children can find it difficult to stop playing and realise their limits.



LOOT BOXES SWAPPED FOR BATTLE PASSES

Previous versions of Call of Duty have included 'loot boxes', which have been widely discussed in the news and are considered by critics to essentially promote a form gambling. Players could unlock items as they progress but wouldn't know what they were purchasing beforehand. Modern Warfare however has swapped loot boxes for 'battle passes'. This means a greater level of transparency as players know exactly what they are buying, how they will be unlocked and when they will receive them in the game.



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Safety Tips For Parents

STICK TO THE PEGI RATING

It really can't be stressed enough how much this game is not for younger children. While you could argue that most of the horrific scenes are in the single player campaign, and you can just play multiplayer and co-op to avoid them, those modes are not without their shortcomings. For example, one of the killstreaks you can attain in multiplayer is white phosphorus - a chemical weapon that can do indescribable things to the human body. This really comes down to the personal judgement of the adult, and the emotional maturity of the child, but if there's still any doubt, stick to the PEGI rating - it's there for a reason.



BE WARY OF GORE AND VIOLENCE

There's no getting around the fact that this is an incredibly realistic game, from the themes down to the gameplay, and that includes the amount of gore in the game. While there is an option to disable dismemberment of bodies in the game (options > general > dismemberment off) it still includes a rather visceral amount of violence that is prevalent throughout.



STAY SAFE DURING IN-GAME CHAT

By default, Modern Warfare allows multiplayer in-game lobbies to have an open chat feature. This basically means that anybody in the lobby with a mic can hop in and say whatever they like. Naturally, this could lead to some profane language or undesirable viewpoints being expressed. Turning this off is as simple as going to the game options, clicking the audio tab, then setting voice chat to off. Be aware that this also disables the mic on your end too, so the safest and best option is always to make sure children are in a party with their friends before they start the game, then they can still chat to each other without outside interruption.



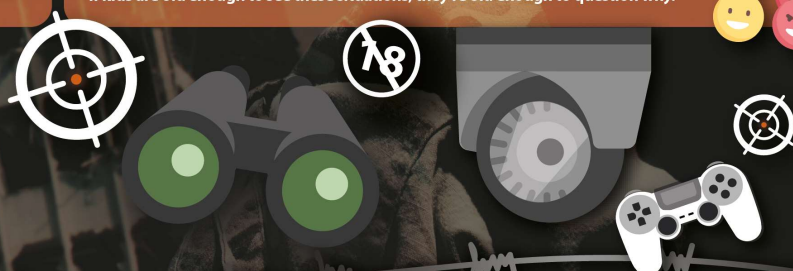
TALK TO YOUR CHILDREN ABOUT THE THEMES

Modern Warfare at its heart, is a game about good vs bad and the grey areas in between. Morally complex characters and situations are more prevalent in today's modern age than they've ever been before, and it does carry some important political and social commentary. If you're okay letting children play the game, it's definitely worth sitting down with them to discuss the themes and why it's important to approach them critically. For example, Captain Price is clearly a good character, but he does questionable things in order to achieve his goals. Does this make him a bad character? If kids are old enough to see these situations, they're old enough to question why.



Meet our expert

Mark Foster has worked in the gaming industry for 5 years as a writer, editor and presenter. He is the current gaming editor of two of the biggest gaming news sites in the world, UNILAD Gaming and GAMINGBible. Starting gaming from a young age with his siblings, he has a passion for understanding how games and tech work, but more importantly, how to make them safe and fun.



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'Call of Duty: Black Ops 4' (COD) is an online first-person shooter game. It's available on PC, Playstation 4 and Xbox One. COD allows players to choose different game modes, including a multiplayer mode, 'Zombies' mode and a 'Blackout' mode. In the game, players can customise their character and weapons.



AGE RESTRICTION
18+



What parents need to know about **CALL OF DUTY BLACK OPS 4**

GRAPHIC VIOLENCE & LANGUAGE

Inspired by war and undercover agents, COD has extremely violent themes. Players must harm and kill in violent and graphic ways. There's also a horror element in 'Zombies' mode, where players must kill monsters. The language used is not suitable for anyone under eighteen.

NO OFFLINE PLAY

Unlike other COD games, COD: Black Ops 4 doesn't have an offline single-player mode. For this reason, much of the game requires an internet connection in order to battle against others online. Normal multiplayer games can last up to fifteen minutes, or twenty-five in 'Blackout' mode. Due to the repetitive nature of the game, it can be difficult for children to stop playing and know their limits.

CHATTING TO STRANGERS

During a multiplayer game, if there is a microphone built into the PC or console your child is using, it is possible for them to talk to any other player of the game around the world. As it's an adult game, the language used may often be inappropriate for young children. Due to the competitive nature of gaming and the fact conversations are not moderated, your child could be at risk of cyberbullying.

IN-GAME PAYMENTS

Players can gain an advantage over other players by spending money on new characters and attributes. The currency within the game is known as 'COD points', which can't be earned by playing the game, only purchased in the online store. COD point packs range from £1.79 to £84.99.

USER GENERATED CONTENT

Players can personalise certain elements of their character and profile in the game, creating emblems or decorating weapons. Some players use this as an opportunity to show inappropriate imagery. It's possible to report users for this, but it will not prevent your child being exposed to inappropriate content.

Meet the expert

Eammon Jacobs has been a pop culture and entertainment journalist for the last 6 years covering TV, film and gaming. He's been published on sites like Macworld and Tech Advisor offering other how-to guides on apps and technology as well as writing for Wikia previewing new games.



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Top Tips for Parents



DISCUSS TIME LIMITS

It's not possible to pause a match of COD, so it's a good idea to suggest to your child a limit of matches they can play in one session. In 2018 the World Health Organisation made 'gaming disorder' a recognised health disorder, so it's important to monitor how often your child spends on the game.

REMOVE GRAPHIC VIOLENCE & LANGUAGE

At the very beginning of the game an option appears giving players the chance to disable the graphic content. You also have the option to disable graphic content in the game's settings. You can change the profanity setting in the content filters tab, so that the harsh language doesn't appear in the game. In addition to this, players also have the option to change the zombies mode to a cartoon setting, making the overall theme less frightening.

DISABLE COMMUNICATION FEATURES

It's important to talk to your child regularly about who they're interacting with online. If you have serious concerns, you can disable the voice chat function in the Audio tab of the game or disable the text chat function in the content filters section too.

MONITOR & LIMIT SPENDING

To prevent your child incurring unwanted COD point costs, it's recommended you remove your bank account details. Alternatively, you can set up parental controls on your child's console to limit access. To keep a limit on spending, it's a good idea to use a gift voucher, or a Paysafe card (if you're using an Xbox or PlayStation).

BLOCK USER-GENERATED CONTENT

You can prevent your child from viewing any user-generated content by changing the settings in the content filter tab. Choose 'hide from the menu' so any offensive content won't show up on screen when your child is playing a match.

ENCOURAGE ALTERNATE ACTIVITIES

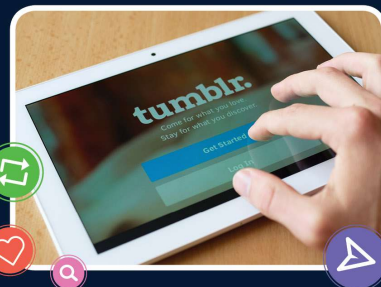
Players are given incentives during the game the more time they spend playing it. This presents the potential risk that your child could become addicted to the game. It's why you should make sure you talk to your child regularly about the importance of alternative activities away from the game, such as playing sports, playing a musical instrument or pursuing other creative interests such as arts and crafts.



Tumblr is a popular social media platform and microblogging site with over 463 million blogs on its platform. In Europe you must be over 16 to sign up, but the age limit is just 13 elsewhere. However, in both cases, age verification is limited. The platform is designed to share different types of content, such as videos, photos or short articles. People can react to each other's content, share items they like, and even interact through the platform with direct messages.



What parents need to know about TUMBLR



WATCH OUT FOR ADULT CONTENT

You can post almost anything on Tumblr, so it's important you're aware of what your child is exposed to. In fact, it was briefly removed from the Apple store when it was found users were sharing illegal content involving the sexual abuse of children.

There has since been a ban on being able to share 'adult' material, but some material still slips through the net.



A BROAD SEARCH FUNCTION

The broad search tool on Tumblr makes it very easy for anyone to find almost any kind of content. In fact, an NSPCC investigation found there to be content about eating disorders and self-harm that could be damaging to a young person's mental health. There is no easy way to stop this broad search function, so it pays to educate your child on the risk of searching for such topics.



MISLEADING TAGS / ACRONYMS

The 'tagging' function on Tumblr allows users to label relevant content and makes searching more effective. However, such tags often employ words with a dual meaning or strange acronyms that can lead to inappropriate content being associated with something innocent.



BE AWARE OF OVERSHARING

Tumblr is a public platform and anything that's shared on it can be viewed by anyone with a Tumblr account. It's important your child understands people they do not know could comment on what they share. You should remind your child not to share anything they would not be happy for everyone to see.



PROFILES AREN'T CLEAR

Due to the vague nature of the profile function on Tumblr, it's easy to remain quite anonymous. This means it's difficult for your children to be clear about whom they're interacting with. This increases the potential for cyber-bullying or grooming.



IT'S EASY TO POST 'FAKE NEWS'

It's easy for anyone to create and share information on Tumblr, whether it's true or not. Sometimes, this is done as a joke. Other times, it's done to be malicious or support an ideological or political agenda. It's important to understand your child could be exposed to this misinformation and take steps to encourage them to question it.



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Top Tips to Protect Your Child



1 FILTER CONTENT

It's not possible to filter out all mentions of a potential harmful phrase, but you can filter out certain posts that are tagged with the phrase. You can do this in your account settings.



2 ACTIVATE SAFE MODE

You can turn on 'Safe Mode', which will hide sensitive content, however it's equally important to monitor your child. If you see their behaviour changing, calmly offer support and ask them if something is bothering them.

SAFE MODE



3 KEEP YOUR CHILD INFORMED

Encourage your child to seek alternative opinions and news stories and not rely on a single source for information, especially if it appears to be unsupported.



4 REPORT & BLOCK USERS

Show your child how to report and block specific content that is potentially harmful or upsetting. You can find details of how to on the 'Community Guidelines' page. Though blocking can be effective, you're only able to block a single post. To block a user, you must add them to the block list of each post.



5 RESPECT ORIGINAL CONTENT

It's easy to repost any content on Tumblr so it appears as your own. To avoid your child falling foul of any copyright or trademark infringements, make sure they understand the importance of citing the original author of anything they wish to share.



6 PROTECT THEIR PRIVACY

Check your child's Tumblr account settings to make sure they're hidden from all internal and external search engines. Turn off the auto-play function on all media and set it so only approved friends can message your child. Setting strong passwords and two-factor authentication will also make it especially difficult for anyone other than your child to access their Tumblr account.



Meet our expert

Claire Woffenden has been a technology journalist since 1998 with a specialism in consumer technology (apps, websites, home computing and digital devices). As a Mum of two young children - aged 8 and 6 - Claire is passionate about helping to keep children safe online.



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What parents & carers need to know about CHILDREN ACCESSING DRUGS ONLINE

Why?

The expansion of the online world, including the rise of the dark web and social media, has made it increasingly easier to sell and buy drugs with limited risk of getting caught. With many children and young people now browsing the internet via their own tablets and mobile phones, the digital world has allowed drugs to become more accessible to a younger audience. There are four main reasons why a young person may choose to access drugs online.

Anonymity

The 'dark web' has become an infamous place where illegal drugs are regularly traded. The 'dark web' is a part of the internet which cannot be indexed by search engines, allowing users to communicate through encrypted messages, and to buy and sell anything with anonymity. The secrecy provided for customers using the dark web removes the need for any direct interaction with dealers, making it an appealing option for children to purchase drugs without anybody finding out. Packages ordered online will be delivered by the postman in discreet packaging and will arouse little suspicion from parents.

Accessibility

Many young people are purchasing drugs online because of how easy it is to access them. Any prescription drug is available over the internet without the need for a prescription or proof of age. Many websites that are based overseas, such as India and China, deliver to the UK, opening up the door to many more prescription drugs being available.

Availability

Websites which sell these substances can often resemble common online marketplaces (such as eBay) and feature customer reviews, giving young people the ability to choose their drugs based on the thoughts and feedback of other people who have tried it. There are even YouTube channels dedicated to their hosts reviewing the drugs they have purchased on camera.

Appealing designs

There are many online drug sellers that use popular culture in their drug designs to encourage a young audience to purchase their products, replicating well-known brands/icons such as Fortnite, Snapchat, Rick & Morty, and Instagram amongst many others.

What are the dangers?

It's against the law

Online or offline, it is illegal to possess, supply, import or export and unlawfully produce Class A, B, and C drugs. It is also an offence to produce, supply, possess, import or export psychoactive substances. A psychoactive drug is any form of substance intended for human consumption that is capable of producing a psychoactive effect. Although this excludes substances such as alcohol, tobacco and nicotine, it is still illegal for anyone under the age of eighteen to purchase these substances.

You don't know what you're buying

Buying drugs online from unregistered sources, such as purchasing through the dark web, can be extremely dangerous with fatal consequences. The strength of drugs can vary massively from batch to batch, and they are not subject to any form of testing or quality control. Additionally, drugs are very rarely exactly what they are advertised as being and are frequently cut with other substances to bulk them out and increase the profit margins of the dealers throughout the supply chain – it is no different within the online marketplace.

Personal and financial risk

Due to the anonymity that the dark web offers, it has become a venue for criminal activity – including selling and purchasing illegal drugs. Buying drugs from the dark web is a risk as your personal and financial details could be exploited by criminals. However, this also counts for the 'open' web too. Not all drugs are illegal and can easily be found and purchased, however, this still puts your personal and financial details at risk.

Did you know?

- ▶ The UK is one of the biggest global purchasers of drugs on the dark web.
- ▶ Around 800 cases of posted drugs via RoyalMail were reported in 2018.
- ▶ Two of the biggest dark net marketplaces – Silk Road and AlphaBay – have been shut down by international law enforcement but new sellers will always appear.
- ▶ In 2018, students from the University of Manchester were jailed for up to 15 years for selling £800,000 worth of drugs on the dark web.

What parents can do

Conversation & monitoring

It's crucial that you have honest and frequent conversations with your child about their activities (online and offline) and general wellbeing. We believe it's important to have age-appropriate conversations about the consequences of taking drugs, including the possibility of jail time and the dangers of overdosing. As a parent or carer it's important to be one step ahead. Make sure you know enough about the topic to talk to your child in an informed way. Websites such as www.talktofrank.com can help. In addition to this, advise your child to ignore emails advertising cheap medication and explain how medication should only be bought from registered online pharmacies with verification logos if necessary. It's important to monitor their online activity to spot if they are purchasing or selling drugs online. Keep track of their online conversations as well as their internet searches – look out for keywords such as "buying drugs" if you are suspicious of drug use. Lastly, look out for changes in behaviour that could point to drug use.

Discuss the law with your child

Ensure that your child knows the laws surrounding buying and selling drugs. You can get a fine or prison sentence if you take, carry, make or sell drugs or psychoactive substances. It is illegal for anyone under the age of eighteen to possess an illegal substance and they can be charged if caught with drugs, whether it's theirs or not. Ordering a controlled drug, such as morphine or methadone, over the internet risks prosecution. Importation of drugs, which refers to receiving drugs from a foreign website, can be treated as a possession or supply offence, although you can still potentially be charged for a supply offence if purchasing online from within the UK. It is also considered a supplying offence to share or sell amongst a small group of friends.

This guide was created in association with Leicestershire Police



Leicestershire Police
Protecting our communities



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SOURCES

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