Online safety: How to keep your child safe

Talking to your child regularly and openly is the best way to help keep them safe on line. It might be useful to discuss as a family, what's appropriate and set agreed boundaries.

Explore sites and apps together

- ✓ Talk about what might be OK for children of different ages. Ask your child what sites or apps they like. Write a list, and look at them together
- ✓ Be positive about what you see, but also be open about concerns you have: "I think this site's really good" or "I'm a little worried about things I've seen here"
- ✓ Talk to your child about what you think is appropriate – but also involve them in the conversation. Ask what they think is OK for children of different ages – they'll feel involved in the decision-making
- ✓ Be aware that your child might talk about friends who use apps or visit sites that you've decided aren't suitable. Be ready to discuss your reasons, but recognise that they may not agree with you. Listen carefully for the reasons why.
- ✓ Go through a final list of sites you both agree are OK, and work out when you'll next discuss it

Ask about things they might see online which make them feel uncomfortable

- ✓ Talk about things they, or their friends, have seen that made them feel uncomfortable:
- ✓ Be specific. What exactly made them feel uncomfortable and why? Is it people or animals being hurt? Nasty comments about others?
- ✓ Link these to things in the real world, and explain that you're always here to protect and help them online and off
- ✓ Reassure your child that they can always talk to you about anything that makes them feel uncomfortable
- ✓ Show them how to report or block on the sites and apps they use. Use Net Aware to find out how
- ✓ Tell them you'll help them to report anything upsetting they've seen, or to deal with online bullying

Talk about how they can stay safe on social networks

Ask your child if they know:

- where reporting functions are
- how to block someone
- how to keep information private.

Show them how to do these things. Use the NSPCC [Net Aware](#) to help you.

Talk about online privacy, and use the NSPCC [Share Aware](#). Explain that online behaviour – including sharing personal information – should mirror behaviour in person.

Explain that it isn't easy to identify someone online. People aren't always who they say they are, so don't share personal information. If it's someone who genuinely knows your child, they shouldn't need to ask for personal information online

I'm worried my child is...

Looking at porn online

- ✓ Ask open questions about what they have been looking at. But be prepared for the fact that they may not want to talk about it and might feel embarrassed
- ✓ If you're really worried about what they've been viewing, tell them why and make it clear that you don't want them to view it again
- ✓ You can also block the content by using the NSPCC [parental controls](#) and explain why you've done this. Suggest other age-appropriate sites where they can find out about sex and relationships. [Childline](#) has information that's suitable for children aged 9+, and the [BBC has some clear, straightforward advice for young people](#)
- ✓ If you're less worried and think they may be 'experimenting', talk to them about the differences between online porn and real sex, love and relationships
- ✓

Being bullied online

- ✓ Recognise that online bullying might be just one part of bullying that's happening in their day-to-day lives, and there might be a lot of underlying issues
- ✓ Reassure them that you can help to remove the content that's upsetting them and block the person who made the comments
- ✓ Look at the negative comments with them and contact the provider to get them removed
- ✓ Save the evidence by taking screen shots
- ✓ Contact the UTC to let us know about the incident, if you think it's appropriate

Spending too much time online

- ✓ Agree what times your child can go online. For example, not going online just before bed time or in the morning before school
- ✓ Explain that you think it's important they do a variety of activities. You recognise that they enjoy being online, but you think it's important they do other things as well

- ✓ Discuss your family agreement and remind them why it's important. Use technical tools to help you reinforce online times. Many sites have timers that you can set, or you can set it up on the computer, mobile or tablet
- ✓ Make sure that you stick to what you've agreed and that you manage your own time online

Sharing personal information online

Talk to your child about the things that they can safely share, like their interests and hobbies. And explain what counts as personal information, for example:

- their full name
- address
- mobile number
- email address
- passwords.

Remind them they wouldn't share this information with people they didn't know in the real world.

They might be happy to share thoughts and feelings online with friends, but explain that they should be wary of doing this with strangers. Not everyone is who they say they are online, and sometimes things like your hopes and fears can be used against you by people you don't know.

If your child is worried they've shared too much, make sure you're able to help them if needed.

The NSPCC Net Aware guide to the social networks your kids use has links to information that will help you and your child, including how to:

- remove content on different apps and sites
- block people
- report abuse