



Helping your child to **'Stay Safe Online'**



We are often asked by parents for advice about how to keep their children safe whilst they spend time online.

To help, we have produced this guide for you and your child.

In today's world, there is much publicity and concern about inappropriate content having an impact on children when they spend time online. In addition to this, children are spending increasing amounts of time using devices. Reading this advice together will help you make sure that you are aware of potential risks and assist you in doing everything you can to make time online as safe as possible.

After reading this helpful guide, **please let us know if you have any questions or concerns** and we will endeavour to help in any way that we can.



Strangers on the internet

Talk to your children about people that they interact with online. Advise them that they should treat people on the internet in the same way that they treat strangers in real life. These people may not always be who they say they are. Even if your child regularly plays games online with somebody, they are not a real friend. Your child should never give out personal information such as their address, phone number, real name or school.

Emma is playing her favourite online game with some of her school friends. They have a 'friend' who they met online when they were playing together. Emma and her friends know that this person is not the same as one of their real-life friends. They do not chat with him or give him any personal information. Emma and her friends have told their parents about this person they play with.

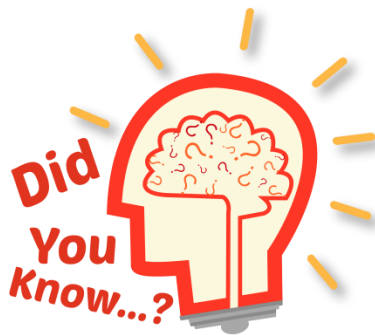




Bullying on social networks

Unfortunately, sometimes children can be unkind to each other when interacting online. This can be very upsetting as other people can see it. Talk to your child about this and encourage them to tell you, a teacher or another trusted adult if anyone is posting mean or unkind things about them on the internet.

Luke has seen something upsetting which has been written about him on the internet. He is very upset and he has told his dad straight away. His dad knows exactly what to do and he has reassured Luke that he will sort it out and that everything will be OK. This has made Luke feel happier.



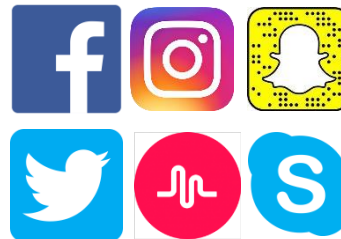
Age Restrictions

Despite the fact that there is a growing trend in the use of social media platforms, there are strict age restrictions that apply to the use of such platforms.

We strongly recommend that you observe these age restrictions and do not permit your child to hold an active account on these platforms.



You must be at least **16 years of age** to use WhatsApp.



You must be at least **13 years of age** to use Facebook, Instagram, SnapChat, Twitter, Musical.ly and Skype.



Online Gaming

As part of today's world, we understand that a growing number of children have access to gaming consoles, portable gaming devices and PCs. These platforms often have a facility for users to interact with other people through message and voice chat. It is critical you set up appropriate controls to protect your child. Ensure that you child's privacy settings prevent them from receiving and accepting unknown 'friend requests' and that you monitor their usage regularly. Additionally, we strongly advise that you are guided by PEGI age ratings when deciding which games to allow your child to play.

Amit's gaming console is in a busy part of the house where his parents can monitor what he is up to. All of the games that Amit has are age-appropriate because his mum has checked their suitability using the PEGI website. Amit's privacy controls prevent him from receiving friend requests from unknown users. When Amit uses his headset to talk to his friends whilst he plays, he always tells his mum who he is chatting to.



PEGI Age Ratings



Please use the PEGI website when deciding which games to purchase and permit your child to play <https://pegi.info/>.

Through investigating this website, you may be surprised by the content of games. As a parent, it is essential that you know exactly what content your child has access to and the impact that this may have on them.



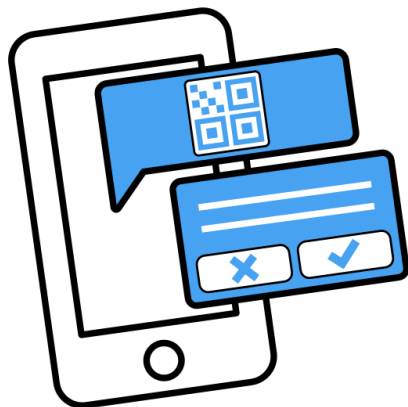
The game '**Fortnite**' has a PEGI age rating of 12. It is strongly advised that primary school aged children do not play this game.



Q What is your child up to?

A sad fact is that it is far too easy for your child to find inappropriate content on the internet. You must keep an eye on what your child is doing online. This can be made easier by requiring your child use their device in a busy part of the home. Make sure that all of the devices your child interacts with have parental controls enabled so that you only give them access to age-appropriate material. It is also a good idea to regularly check the 'history' on devices so you can see the pages they have been visiting.

Lou is searching the internet to find information to help her complete her homework project. Her mum is checking what she is looking at, and enjoying finding out what Lou has been learning about in school. Lou enjoys sharing this with her mum and they now often do research together.



Protecting devices

There are so many ways that viruses can attack or access your computer and other devices. It is critical you protect all of your devices with anti-virus software and that this is regularly kept up-to-date. Talk to your child about the risks associated with picking up viruses so that they take care about the sites they may visit. Also talk to them about the danger of opening links or attachments to emails, as these carry viruses, too. Where they have passwords, talk to them about keeping them secure (but share them with you) and choosing passwords that are difficult for anyone else to guess.

Thomas' dad has made sure that all of the devices in their house have anti-virus software and it is kept up-to-date regularly. Thomas has set up a password to access a website so it is secure, but he has also shared this information with his dad and knows that his dad has the ability to log in and see what it is that he is up to.





Sharing information

Talk to your child about what happens to the information they choose to post on the internet. If something is shared on the internet, for example on social media, you have limited control over who sees it and how long it stays on the internet. Encourage your child to think carefully about any pictures, videos or opinions that they may post online. As part of your discussion, it may be useful to reflect on what kind of 'footprint' they are leaving online.

Sam is setting up some information about himself on a website that his school friends also use. He is talking to his nan about what information he would like people to know about him and what he and his nan think should be kept private. Sam is thinking carefully about everything he shares and knows the risks.



Upsetting content

Despite all of the safeguards you have put in place, your child may still come across something online which is frightening or upsetting to them. If this happens, tell them to shut the device down or walk away from it and talk to you, or another grown-up, right away. Reassure your child that they will not be told off if this happens to them.

Maisie has clicked on a link that has led her to something upsetting. As she only uses her device in a busy family area of her home, she is able to tell her parents right away. Her dad tells her to close down the device and has a chat with her about what she has seen. After Maisie has talked to her dad, she feels less worried.

