

Talking about Online Safety

It is really important to chat with your children on an ongoing basis about staying safe online.

Parental controls are designed to help protect children from inappropriate content online such as pornographic images, age restricted applications and other content not deemed suitable for them. These controls can be used in various ways; to limit screen time, block unwanted content, monitor activity and prevent unauthorised purchases.

Decide what works for your family.

Have a discussion with your children about screen time, how much time they spend online and what they like to do. Ask them what their favourite websites and games are, why they like them, even get them to show you what they do and how to play any games they particularly like. This should result in you gaining a better understanding of what your child is accessing and what their interests are which may in turn lead to you to want to change your filtering options and restrictions. Empowering your children to share their knowledge and interest with you should help you to keep them safe and happy. They may have things they wish to discuss with **you** such as where and when phones are used. You may even want to draw up a written family agreement that everyone signs and you return to when issues arise, especially as they get older and are further influenced by their peers and the world around them.

Communication is key but be aware and vigilant.

Despite good intentions, open conversations and well configured filter and block settings situations often arise that result in children being exposed to content we would seek to protect them from eg. the recent 'Huggy Wuggy' trend we brought to your attention last term. Ensure you talk to your children regularly about what they are accessing and make appoint of discussing basic principles regarding sharing information online, talking to people, clicking on pop ups etc. Make sure they know what to do if they do access inappropriate content and where they can get advice at home and school. Children are becoming increasingly adept at using modern technology and when asked can often explain how to bypass or even disable the parental controls you have chosen to set. They are far less likely to attempt this if you have a family agreement that everyone is invested in and respects. This is also more likely to mean they are safe when using different devices such as a friends tablet or phone because they understand why some content is restricted.

Click on this link to access a PDF of an example family agreement and a blank one for you to fill in with your children should you wish to do so.

<https://www.childnet.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Family-Agreement.pdf>

Conversation starter ideas

- ① Ask your children to tell you about the sites they like to visit and what they enjoy doing online.
- ② Ask them about how they stay safe online. What tips do they have for you, and where did they learn them? What is OK and not OK to share?
- ③ Ask them if they know where to go for help, where to find the safety advice, privacy settings and [how to report](#) or block on the services they use.
- ④ Encourage them to help. Perhaps they can show you how to do something better online or they might have a friend who would benefit from their help and support.
- ⑤ Think about how you use the internet as a family. What could you do to get more out of the internet together and further enjoy your lives online?

Family agreement

A great way to start positive family conversations around safe and responsible internet use, and to agree clear expectations and boundaries.

Things to consider

Getting started

- What do we enjoy doing online?
- What apps, games and websites do we use the most?
- What devices, tech, toys or games do we have with internet access?
- Do we already have any rules about use of tech we want to include in our family agreement?

Managing time online

- How long do we spend on our devices?
- How does it feel when we use tech for too long?
- How do we know when our screen use is interfering with family life?
- What can we do to help avoid overusing tech?

Sharing

- What is or isn't okay to share online?
- What should we check before posting images and videos online?
- How do we keep personal information belonging to ourselves and others safe?
- Do we need a family email address to use when signing up to new accounts?
- Do we know how to use privacy settings and strong passwords, and why these are important?
- How can we use features like livestreaming and disappearing content safely?

Online content

- What can we do if we see something online which seems unreliable or untrustworthy?
- When is it okay to download files, games or apps, or click on a link?
- Do we know what the age requirements, or ratings, on the games and apps we use mean?
- Do we need any restrictions on making in-game or in-app purchases?
- Which websites are okay for us to use?

Use the questions below to help guide your conversations, focusing on those most relevant for your family.

Turn over the page for a template where you can record your agreements and expectations in writing.

Communicating online

- Who can we talk/chat/play games with online? Do we only know them online, or offline too?
- How can we keep ourselves safe when communicating with people who we only know online?
- How can we be a good friend when we are online?

If things go wrong

- What can we do if we feel uncomfortable or upset by anything we see or hear online?
- What should we do if someone we only know online asks us for photos, to meet up, or to share personal information?
- Do we know where the report and block buttons are online?

To finish...

- How could parental controls help our family?
- What will happen if one of us breaks the family agreement?
- When should we review our family agreement?

Once you've talked about your family's use of technology and the internet, think about what simple steps you can take going forward. We've given some examples for different ages below...

We agree to... (Under 11s)	Who is responsible for this?
I will use my tablet for _____ mins a day.	Hannah and Izzy
I will make sure the children's favourite games are bookmarked for them to get to easily	Nan

We agree to... (Pre-teens)	Who is responsible for this?
I will tell mum and dad when I see something that worries me.	Tom, Ella and Jasmin
I will put parental controls in place but review it as the children grow up.	Mum

We agree to... (Teenagers)	Who is responsible for this?
I will make sure all my social networking sites are private.	Amar and Yusef
I won't post photos of our children without their permission.	Dad

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Family agreement

Use this template to put your agreement down in writing. Why not display it somewhere at home like on the fridge or a noticeboard?

Who is this agreement for?

We agree to...

E.g. Be kind and respectful online.

Who is responsible for this?

E.g. We will all make sure we only post kind comments.

What happens if someone doesn't follow the agreement?

How long will our agreement last for and when will we review it?

Signatures



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For further advice and resources, visit www.childnet.com/have-a-conversation

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UK Safer Internet Centre



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