



Online Safety

Information for Parents

Online Risks

Research shows that the age at which children are accessing smart devices and the Internet is getting younger and younger. There are many risks online, which is why it is so important for you and your child to have a good understanding of how to navigate the online world.

Without guidance, children may not know what to do if they encounter potential risks online. These could include but are not limited to the following:

Requests for Personal Information

Requests for Money

AI Generated Content

Computer Viruses

Contact with Others

False Information



False Information

False information can be disguised in various forms of media, such as pictures, videos and news articles. It could start as disinformation and end up being misinformation. False information could be shared to confirm bias, gain financially, cause harm or gain personal information.

Why Is Online Safety Important?

It is never too soon to start good online safety habits with your child.

Just as you would want to protect your child from harm in the real world, it is vital to do the same in the digital one. It is important to give children the skills they will need to explore and engage with the digital world in a positive way.

Technology and the way in which we interact with it has a vast impact on both our mental and physical health so we need to think carefully about:

- screen time;
- interacting with others online;
- online content;
- privacy and security;
- digital footprints.



Screen Time

Monitor Screen Time

Children often do not realise how long they have been online so why not get them to use a timer to check how long they are spending in front of a screen each day? It might be useful to set a screen limit. You could discuss this together and create a timetable or use a timer to help them stick to the time limits. It is also important to discuss what they are using their screen time for, to ensure that it includes a balance of activities. This could include watching TV, doing homework, playing games and chatting with friends online.

Regular Breaks

Sometimes, your child might need a reminder to step away from the screen. You can prompt them to stand up, change position and gently stretch their muscles. You could also go for a walk for a change of scene too.



Screen Time

Stretch It Out

Making plans to do activities with friends or family that do not involve a screen can help us all see the benefit of other activities. Alternatively, your child could join a club or take up a hobby based on one of their other interests.

Screens Off Overnight

It is useful to encourage your child to turn their screens off an hour before bed. You may choose to keep devices in another room at night.

Device Settings

You can show your child how to use 'do not disturb mode' on their device so that they can focus on other things. There are also options such as changing colour settings to help reduce eye strain.

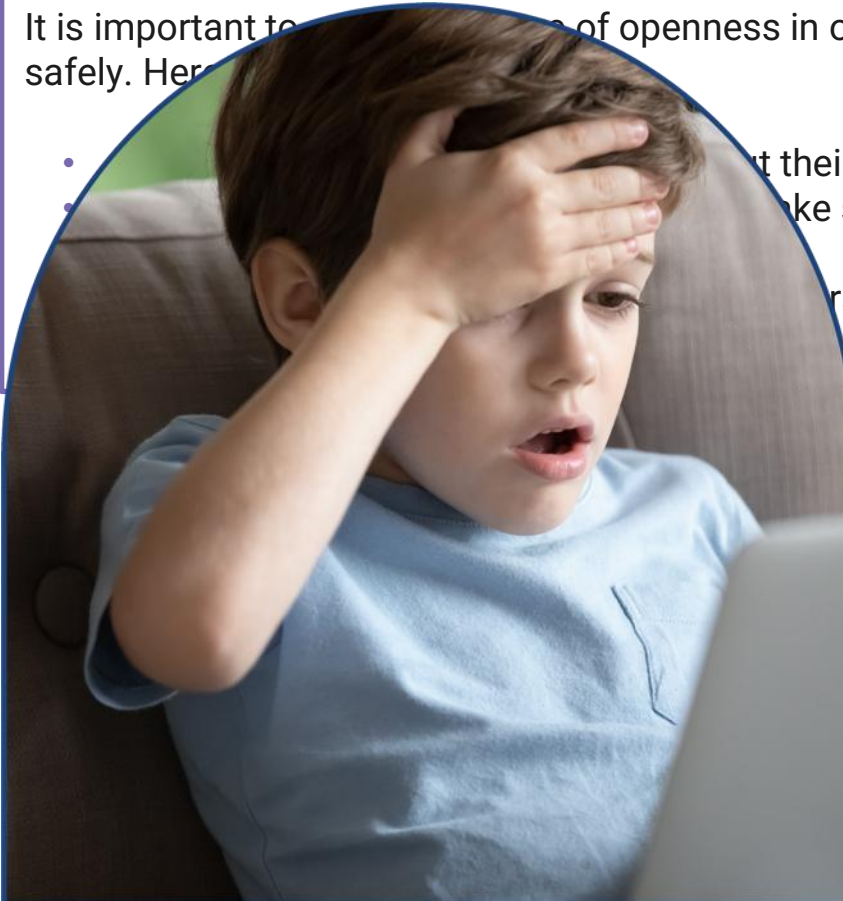


Interacting with Others Online

Online messaging or group chats can be a tricky area to oversee without your child feeling as though you are invading their privacy.

It is important to encourage your child to be open and honest about their online interactions. It is important to have a level of openness in order to make sure they are interacting safely. Here are some tips:

- Encourage your child to tell you about their group chats.
- Make sure that your child is only talking to people you know.
- Listen to their conversations so you can get a feel for what is going on.



Teach your child to be kind and respectful to others online and to expect the same treatment in return. Games and websites often have the option to block or report users and this is definitely worth investigating if your child has seen or heard something online that has upset them.

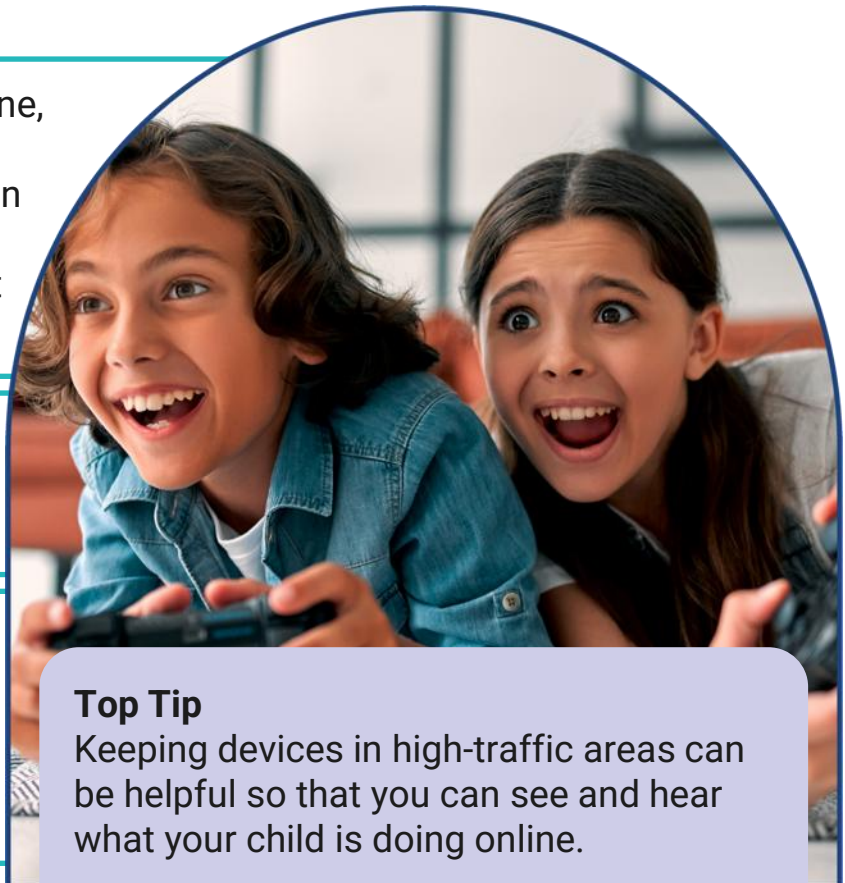
Interacting with Others Online

Online interactions can be risky. Teach your child about the importance of not sharing personal information with people they meet online, including their name, address or school.

If children are asked for this information online, then they should know that it is important to stop and to tell an adult immediately. Children need to understand that not everyone they interact with online is being open and honest about who they are and what they want.

They must never arrange to meet someone they have met online without your permission.

Children are not always aware of how appropriate it is to share certain information with others. It is important as a parent or carer to listen out and guide them in the right direction in their online chats.



Top Tip

Keeping devices in high-traffic areas can be helpful so that you can see and hear what your child is doing online.

Misinformation and Disinformation

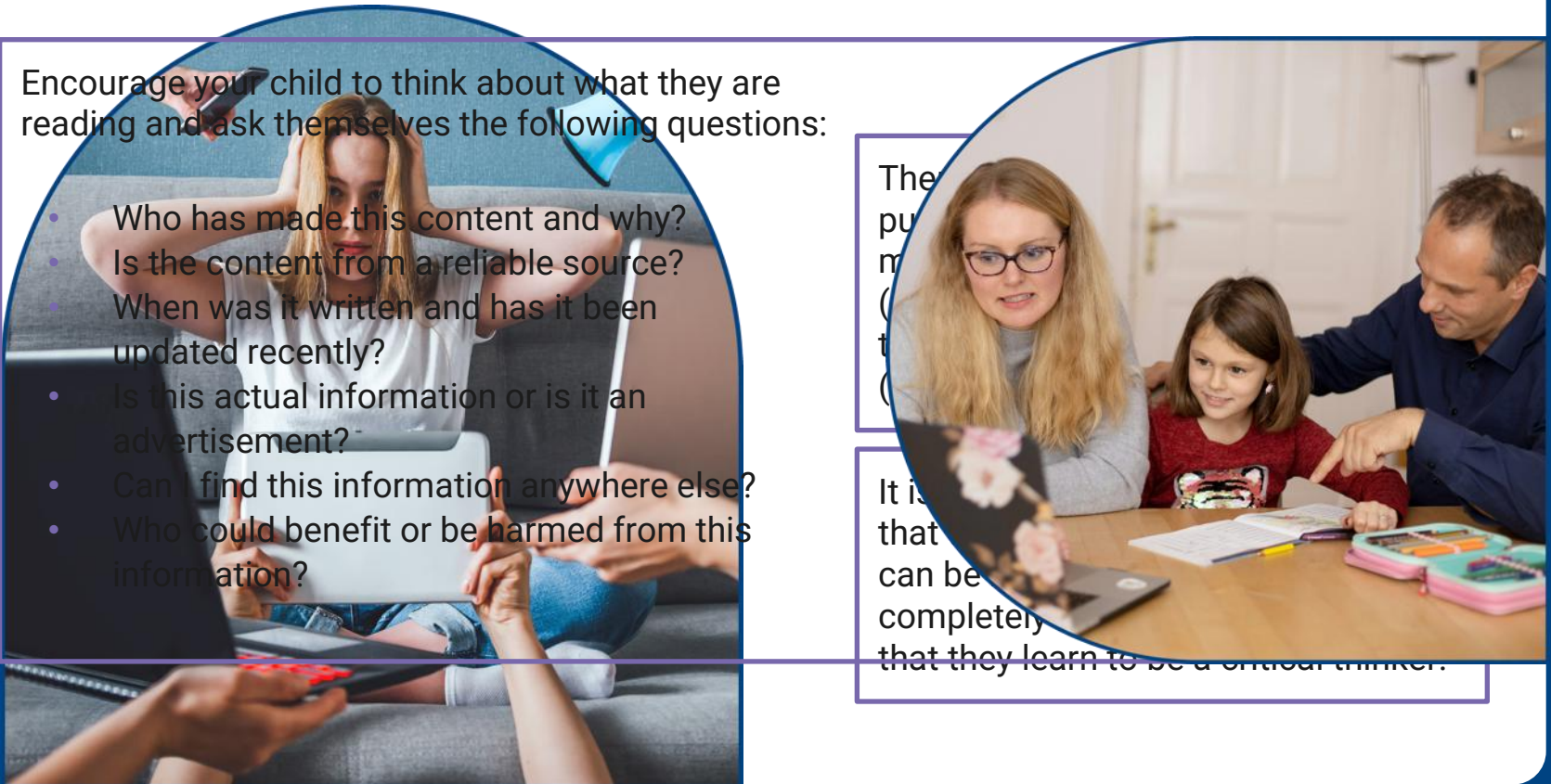
With the wide breadth of information online, along with news and social media designed to grab our attention and keep us engaged, it is hard to know what is real and accurate these days.

Encourage your child to think about what they are reading and ask themselves the following questions:

- Who has made this content and why?
- Is the content from a reliable source?
- When was it written and has it been updated recently?
- Is this actual information or is it an advertisement?
- Can I find this information anywhere else?
- Who could benefit or be harmed from this information?

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that they learn to be a critical thinker.



AI-Generated Content

AI-generated content, such as text, audio, images and videos, is created by an AI system after a person inputs a prompt.



Chatbots are AI applications that use data to simulate spoken or written human conversation. Chatbots can process questions or messages and generate answers based on available data. They may be called a bot but they are often given human names.

AI-generated summaries appear on many search engines. AI technologies process data from a range of sources and summarise it, usually at the top of a page or search engine result.

AI-Generated Content

It is important to start discussions with your child about AI. Talk about where they are seeing AI tools and AI-generated content online. This helps to start conversations about the risks and benefits of using AI technologies they are experiencing in their everyday lives.

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Generative AI models can be used to generate content that could be harmful. Discuss with your child that it is not OK for anyone to create content intended to harm someone and talk about what to do if they see something upsetting online.

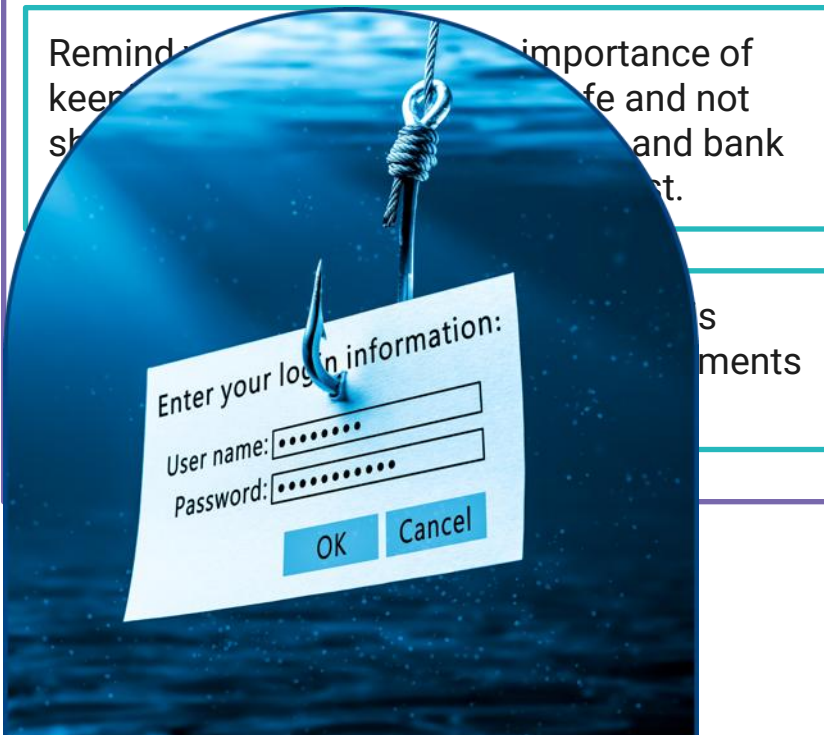
Encourage your child to check sources. AI-generated summaries, voice assistants and chatbots can give us quick answers to questions but these may be biased or incorrect.



Scams and Phishing

Phishing describes a person or group of people who try to scam you by sending emails or creating web pages that look real. It is a cyber-attack where cybercriminals try to gain sensitive information from you by pretending to be someone you would normally trust.

Encourage your child to think critically about offers – are they too good to be true?



Online Challenges and Dares

The Internet allows us all to connect in new ways. Online challenges and dares are becoming increasingly popular, can spread rapidly and new ones are constantly emerging and evolving. Most are completely innocent providing fun and amusement. However, some can be harmful, putting children at risk of physical harm or even fatal injury.



It's important to understand the strong feeling of

It is important to talk to your child regularly and monitor their online activities. Start a discussion about any online challenges that your child has shown an interest in.

are and saying "no" can be very difficult.

Remind your child of the importance of thinking before acting. Encourage them to get the facts and understand the risks before participating.

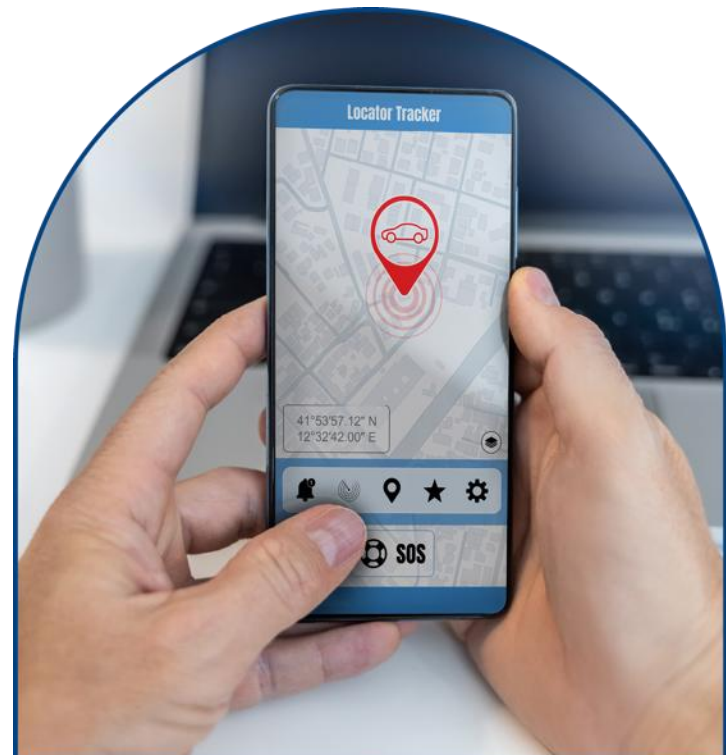
Location Sharing and Tracking

There are many apps and devices that allow us to track the location of others giving parents the peace of mind by knowing where their children are.

However, it is important that we are aware of the potential risks when tracking and sharing our locations.

Some apps and devices allow others to track a person's location and/or store a user's location. It is important to test tracking devices and ensure safety settings are followed when setting up an app or device.

Teach your child the importance of not sharing location details online or with people they don't know.



Online Content

Shielding your child from inappropriate online content is a high priority.

One way to do this is to set up filters or parental controls on devices.



Even with the best filters in place, children are still likely to come across inappropriate material occasionally. Talking openly with your child about this and setting simple rules for what to do is an important way to build your child's digital resilience.



DuckDuckGo.

PEGI Ratings

The age ratings for green PEGI 3 and PEGI 7 games are advisory. The age ratings for the orange PEGI 12 and PEGI 16, as well as the red PEGI 18, are legally enforceable. This means that shops cannot sell or hire games with an orange or red rating to people who are not the right age. Online and downloaded games are not technically included but many major providers voluntarily add the limits to their games.



Suitable for all age groups. These games should not include any sounds or pictures which will frighten young children. There should be no bad language. Mild forms of violence can only be used in a comical or childlike setting.



Games may contain scenes or sounds that could frighten young children. They can also contain mild forms of violence but this must not look realistic and must not be too detailed.



Games may show violence in a slightly more graphic way towards fantasy characters. Violence towards human-like characters is still unrealistic. There may be gambling and suggestive activities or language included. Bad language must be mild.



Games can feature more realistic violence. Games may include tobacco, alcohol or illegal drugs and stronger bad language.



This is an adult classification. These games can show all of the content from the PEGI 16 rating but also contain realistic and extreme violence, as well as other events that are only suitable for adults.

Online Privacy and Security

It is important to educate your child about the importance of privacy settings on social media and gaming platforms. As a parent, you will need to help them understand what information is safe to share and what should remain private.



Children should be made aware of the importance of keeping passwords private

Help them ensure that their passwords for

Encourage them to use avatars and usernames to stay anonymous.

symbols.

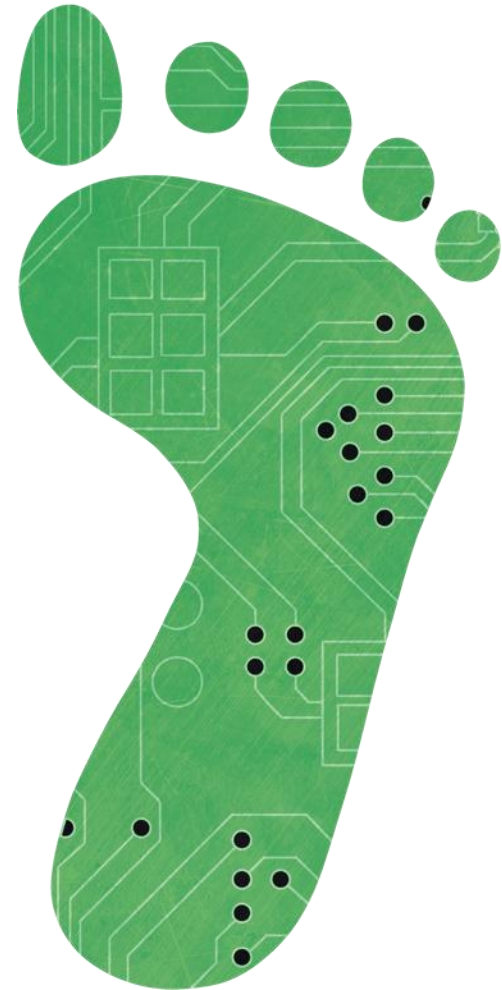
children to realise that you are not just snooping on their activity.

Digital Footprint

A digital footprint is a trail of information you leave behind when using apps or websites. Every time you visit a website, download an app or play a game online, a tiny bit of information about you is saved. This makes up your digital footprint.

It is important to talk to your child about the concept of a digital footprint and that what they post online stays there.

Encourage them to post responsibly and remind them that future employers and places of education may see their online activity. It is important that children think about the image they want to portray of themselves.



What Is Safer Internet Day?

Staying safe online is a vital skill to be put into practise every day. Sometimes, it can be useful to have a fresh reason to focus on something that we have to do every day, to revive enthusiasm and give us the chance to reflect and make improvements. Safer Internet Day provides just that reason!

Safer Internet Day takes place every year in February and is a chance to promote and celebrate online safety.



It is a perfect opportunity to think about the online world and discuss with your child how they can stay safe there.

Online Safety Bill

In October 2023, the UK government passed a bill that changed the laws around online safety.

The aim of the Online Safety Bill is to give you greater control over what your child sees online and to reduce the risk of them seeing things that you feel are inappropriate for them. Platforms must show that they are committed to removing inappropriate, harmful or illegal content, including:

- child sexual abuse
- controlling or coercive behaviour
- extreme sexual violence
- illegal immigration and human trafficking
- promoting or facilitating suicide
- promoting self-harm
- animal cruelty
- selling illegal drugs or weapons
- terrorism

The new law holds platforms responsible for inappropriate, harmful or illegal content.

Ultimately, it means that if platforms do not tackle or remove the content, they will be subject to legal consequences.



Further Support

Navigating the online world with your child can be both exciting and challenging.

Remember to:

- stay involved;
- foster open communication;
- address concerns.

You can empower your child to explore the digital world safely and responsibly.

Useful websites:

www.childline.org.uk

www.reportharmfulcontent.com

<https://www.ceopeducation.co.uk>

www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/talking-child-online-safety

www.saferinternetday.org

www.internetmatters.org



