



Keeping Safe On-Line



With the closure of so many schools, continued uncertainty about how schools will open in September and the imminent 'summer holidays' our children are spending an increased amount of time online, not just to support their home learning but also to enable them to reach out to their friends. While using technology can provide hours of education and important social opportunities for children and young people during this period, as well as a wealth of knowledge and resources, it can present risks and some uncertainties as there are always concerns about whether the information our children access is 100% safe.

Many children may not have previously spent as much time on line and so may not be as familiar with how to manage their use of technology but also how to be aware of keeping themselves safe when online. Similarly, many parents may struggle to keep up to date with the latest technology, app's and social media.

This newsletter has been put together to provide parents with a range of tips and techniques to help keep your child safe online during this continuing unsettling time as it is even more important in these times to monitor what your children are accessing and to talk to them about how to keep safe on-line.

The information has been designed to provide tips for younger children but also some ideas for how to manage the on-line and social media usage for older children.

For some more information the following web sites provide a more comprehensive range of information

www.internetmatters.org

www.net-aware.org.uk

www.thinkuknow.co.uk

www.saferinternet.org.uk

For other family support resources you can also visit www.gadeschoolsfamilysupport for more information.



Keeping your Children Safe Online

While many parents and carers may be worried about their children spending more time online during this time, it's important to understand what they're doing online rather than setting limits on their total screen time. Asking them about the sites, apps and games they use regularly can be a great way to start a conversation and help you identify any risks in what your child's doing online or who they may be talking to.

Use the Opportunity to Chat with your Child

With children and parents spending more time at home, now is a great time to continue to chat with your child about how they are using online technology and what it means to them. Ask them what they are doing online, and what they like and dislike about the apps and services they use. If you like, discuss some 'ground rules' like how much time they spend online doing different things and what games and apps are appropriate to use.

It can be difficult to know how to start talking to your child about what they're doing online or who they might be speaking to. But talking regularly, like you would about their day at school, will help your child feel relaxed and mean that when they do have any worries, they're more likely to come and speak to you. It can help to:

- Reassure them that you're interested in their life, offline and online. Recognise that they'll be using the internet to research homework as well talking to their friends.
- Ask your child to show you what they enjoy doing online or apps they're using so you can understand them.
- Be positive but also open about anything you're worried about. You could say "I think this site's really good" or "I'm a little worried about things I've seen here."
- Ask them if they're worried about anything, and let them know they can come to you.
- Ask them about their friends online and how they know they are who they say they are.
- Listen for the reasons why your child wants to use apps or site you don't think are suitable, so you can talk about these together.
- Ask your child what they think's okay for children of different ages so they feel involved in the decision making.
- Explore together: Ask your child to show you their favourite websites and apps and what they do on them. Listen, show interest and encourage them to teach you the basics of the site or app.
- Be non-judgemental: Explain that you would never blame them for anything that might happen online, and you will always give them calm, loving support.

Explore with Them

Chat about online safety little and often: Young people are likely to want to explore new apps and websites, whether that's for learning or for fun. Take this opportunity to talk to them about how to stay safe on these new services, and in general. Ask if anything ever worries them while they are online. Make sure they know that if they ever feel worried, they can get help by talking to you or another adult they trust.

Help your child identify trusted adults who can help them if they are worried: This includes you and other adults at home, as well as adults from wider family, school or other support services who they are able to contact at this time. Encourage them to draw a picture or write a list of their trusted adults.

Supervise their Online Activity

For primary aged children it is important to keep the devices your child uses in communal areas of the house such as in the living room or kitchen where an adult is able to supervise. Children of this age should not access the internet unsupervised in private spaces, such as alone in a bedroom or bathroom. For older children who may want some level of privacy be vigilant and if they are spending long periods of time on their own make sure you check in on them in a non-judgemental way.

For children of any age it is worth setting time limits on the amount of time your children may spend on line but this can be done together and if you involve your child in that decision making they are more likely to comply with the decision. Remember children of all ages will try to push the boundaries and limits so try to talk to your child about why the time limits are in place rather than punishing them by removing the device.

Talk about how their online actions affect others: If your child is engaging with others online, remind them to consider how someone else might feel before they post or share something. If they are considering sharing a photo/video of somebody else, they should always ask permission first.

Parental Controls

Setting parental controls can be a quick and effective tool to help protect your children online, and should be installed on all devices that children use. For advice and support in setting these controls visit <https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/articles/Parental-controls/>

Make use of the parental controls available on your home broadband and any internet enabled device in your home. You can find out more about how to use parental controls by visiting your broadband provider's website. Use 'SafeSearch': Most web search engines will have a 'SafeSearch' function, which will allow you to limit the content your child can access whilst online. Look out for the 'Settings' button on your web browser homepage, which is often shaped like a small cog.

Remind children to talk to you about anything worrying that they experience online. It's important that children and young people always know where to go if they come across something that worries them or makes them feel uncomfortable online. This is especially important during this time as trusted sources of support such as teachers may not be as available. Children may not have as many opportunities to confidently talk to their friends, who we know are often their first point of contact when they are worried.

Make sure they know that they can always report to CEOP, the national crime agency established to support the reduction of any child exploitation. This can be accessed by visiting <https://www.ceop.police.uk/Safety-Centre>. Young people can also report to CEOP if they are worried about a friend.

The best thing you can do is make sure they would feel they could talk to you if they were ever worried - make sure they know that you would never blame them for anything that might happen online.

Thinkuknow Resources

Thinkuknow is the online safety education programme from the National Crime Agency. Every fortnight Thinkuknow release a new set of simple online safety home activities to share with children and young people between the ages of 3 and 16. Use these to help you keep up a positive, supportive conversation about safety online in your home.

Information courtesy of [thinkuknow.co.uk](https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk)