



Chancery  
Education Trust  
*Aspire to Success*

# Parental Engagement

“Where Families and Schools Grow Side by Side”



## An introduction to Online Safety

# Online Safety



**Understanding the risks and how you can help keep your child safe online**

Spending time online or using digital devices can be very positive for children, particularly when it supports **learning, creativity and communication**. However, too much screen time can increase certain risks for children.

# Screen Time Risks

## What are the risks?

High levels of screen time may increase the likelihood of children:

- Experiencing **online bullying**

- Being exposed to **abuse or grooming**

- Seeing **inappropriate or harmful content**

- Getting less **sleep and physical activity**

- Experiencing **disruption to learning and studying**

- Developing **negative effects on mental wellbeing**

# Screen time Impacts

Constant screen time affects children across multiple developmental domains, with the severity of impact often depending on age, content quality, and whether an adult is present to co-view. While high-quality educational content can support learning, excessive use, typically defined as more than two hours per day for older children is linked to several physical and psychological risks.

## Key Impacts on Development

### Physical Health:

- **Sleep Disruption:** Blue light from screens suppresses melatonin, the hormone that regulates sleep, leading to shorter sleep duration and difficulty falling asleep.
- **Obesity Risk:** Increased screen time is strongly associated with higher body mass index (BMI) due to sedentary behaviour and exposure to junk food advertising.
- **Eye Health:** Prolonged focus on nearby screens can lead to digital eye strain and is a significant factor in the rising rates of childhood myopia (short-sightedness).
- **Musculoskeletal Issues:** Poor posture during device use, often called "text neck," can cause chronic neck and back pain.

# Screen time Impacts

## Cognitive and Language Skills:

- **Language Delays:** In infants and toddlers, high screen exposure is linked to delayed language acquisition, primarily because it replaces verbal interactions with caregivers.
- **Executive Function:** Constant multitasking and fast-paced content can impair attention span, memory, and impulse control.
- **Academic Performance:** Excessive recreational use is often correlated with lower test scores in reading and mathematics.

## Emotional and Social Well-being:

- **Mental Health:** Higher screen use (over 2 hours daily) is associated with increased risks of anxiety, depression, and lower psychological well-being, particularly in adolescents.
- **Social Skills:** Screens can displace real-world social practice, making it harder for children to interpret emotional cues and build empathy.
- **"Technoference":** A parent's own constant screen use can disrupt the parent-child bond, leading to increased attention-seeking behaviours or "acting out" from the child.



# Online Safety

## **4 Steps to Help Protect Your Child Online**

# 1) Parent Controls



**Set Parental Controls**

Parental controls allow you to:

- Restrict access to **age-inappropriate content**

- Control **in-app purchases**

- Set **screen time limits**

- Monitor app usage

Make sure you set a **separate password** for parental controls that your child does not know.

Parental control settings vary depending on the device. Check the manufacturer's website for guidance.

# Parent Controls

## **Microsoft devices (Windows computers and Xbox)**

Getting started with Microsoft Family Safety: <https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/account-billing/getting-started-with-microsoft-family-safety-b6280c9d-38d7-82ff-0e4f-a6cb7e659344>

Family-friendly gaming for everyone, Xbox: <https://www.xbox.com/en-GB/family-hub>

## **iPads and iPhones**

Use parental controls on your child's iPhone or iPad: <https://support.apple.com/en-gb/105121>

## **Android phones**

Manage devices, apps and screen time: <https://support.google.com/families/topic/7336331>

Get started with Family Link: <https://support.google.com/families/answer/7101025?hl=en>

## **PlayStation**

How to set up family accounts on PSN: <https://www.playstation.com/en-gb/support/account/playstation-family-account-set-up/>

How to set up parental controls on PlayStation consoles: <https://www.playstation.com/en-gb/support/account/ps5-parental-controls-spending-limits/>

## **Nintendo Switch**

Nintendo Switch parental controls: <https://www.nintendo.com/en-gb/Hardware/Nintendo-Switch-Parental-Controls/Nintendo-Switch-Parental-Controls-1183145.html>



## 2) Screen time Rules

### Agree Screen Time Rules

There is no universal “safe” amount of screen time, but setting clear boundaries can help.

You might consider:

- Creating **screen-free zones** (such as bedrooms or mealtimes)
- Avoiding screens **at least one hour before bedtime**
- Making a **family screen time plan**
- Encouraging **healthy habits** such as avoiding snacking during screen time
- **Leading by example** – children often copy adult behaviour



# Recommended Age Guidelines

Official recommendations focus on limiting sedentary "entertainment" screen time to ensure it does not displace sleep or physical activity.

| Age                       | Recommended Limit   | Rationale                                                  |
|---------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Under 18-24 months</b> | Zero                | Brains need real-world interaction for neutral development |
| <b>2 to 5 years</b>       | 1 hour or less      | High quality education content with an adult is the best   |
| <b>6 to 12 years</b>      | 1.5 hours – 2 hours | Balancing digital use with 2+ hours of daily outdoor play. |



# 3) Talk to your child

## 3. Talk to Your Child About Online Safety

Open conversations are one of the most effective ways to keep children safe online.

Important things children should understand:

- They should **never share personal information** such as their address, school or location
- They should **never send photos or videos of themselves** to strangers
- Profiles should be set to **private where possible**
- People online may **pretend to be someone else**
- Once something is shared online, **it may be difficult to control who sees it**
- If something online **upsets or worries them**, they should speak to a trusted adult

For advice on starting conversations about online safety, visit:

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/talking-child-online-safety/>

# 4) Encourage Off-Screen Activities

## Screen Free Activities For Kids



Have a Dance party  
Build an indoor fort  
Make Slime  
Do a Science Experiment  
Build an outdoor fort  
Have a Nerf Battle  
Make an Obstacle Course  
Make and Fly a Kite  
Play Hide and Go Seek  
Make Playdough  
Bake a Cake  
Play Kick Ball  
Have a Scavenger Hunt

Begin a Garden  
Make a Bird House  
Draw With Chalk  
Make Origami  
Tie Dye Something  
Have a Card Game tournament  
Ride Bikes

Have a Relay Race  
Make Cookies  
Have a Picnic  
Make an Art Show  
Color some Rocks  
Make Upcycled Art Work  
Make a Bird Feeder  
Make puppets out of old socks  
Have a Show with sock puppets  
Camp outdoors  
Blow Bubbles  
Make Popsicles  
Make a Fairy Garden

Re-organize Closet  
Have a Water Balloon fight  
Build with Card board boxes  
Put on a Play  
Have a Tea Party  
Write a Letter  
Do a Puzzle



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Children should aim for **at least 60 minutes of physical activity each day.**

Ideas to help include:

- Free activity ideas from the NHS:

<https://www.nhs.uk/change4life/activities>

- Local **sports clubs, youth groups or activity sessions**
- Apps designed to encourage children to move and exercise:

<https://www.internetmatters.org/resources/apps-guide/apps-to-help-kids-get-active/>



# Social Media

# Social Media

## **Understanding risks**

Social media is deeply embedded in the lives of many children and young people, offering spaces to connect, create, and explore. However, these platforms can expose them to experiences that are difficult to manage without support. Understanding the specific risks is essential for helping children navigate these environments safely and confidently.

## **Unwanted contact**

Children may encounter people online they don't know, and not all interactions are safe. Unsolicited messages, friend requests, or group invites can lead to uncomfortable or even dangerous situations.

## **Exposure to inappropriate content**

Children can be exposed to harmful material through group chats, disappearing messages, and peer pressure. Social media algorithms can also add to this risk by suggesting content based on what users engage with.

# Social Media

## **Distorted body image and unrealistic standards**

Filters, editing tools, and curated posts often present an idealised version of reality. This can lead children to compare themselves unfairly, which can affect their self-esteem and body image.

## **The pressure of likes and comments**

Online engagement – likes, shares, and comments – can feel like a measure of self-worth. Children may feel defined by their popularity online, leading to anxiety and a need for validation.

# Types of Social Media & Age Restrictions

## AGE RESTRICTIONS ON MAIN UK SOCIAL MEDIA SITES



Facebook **13+**



Instagram **13+**



Snapchat **13+**



TikTok **13+**



YouTube **13+**



WhatsApp **16+**

# Online Gaming

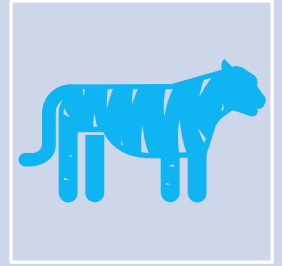
Online games are very popular with children and can be fun, social and creative. However, it is important for parents to understand how games work and how to keep children safe while they play.



**AGE RATINGS:** CHECK THE **AGE RATING** FOR GAMES. THESE RATINGS SHOW WHETHER A GAME INCLUDES VIOLENCE, STRONG LANGUAGE OR OTHER CONTENT NOT SUITABLE FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN.



**MESSAGING AND CHAT:** MANY GAMES ALLOW PLAYERS TO **CHAT OR SEND MESSAGES**. CHILDREN MAY COMMUNICATE WITH PEOPLE THEY DO NOT KNOW.



**IN-GAME PURCHASES:** SOME GAMES ALLOW PLAYERS TO **BUY ITEMS, SKINS OR REWARDS**, SOMETIMES USING REAL MONEY.

# Online Gaming

**Online behaviour:** Children may experience **trolling, griefing** (players ruining the game) or **scams** from other players.

A light blue downward-pointing arrow indicating a flow from the first point to the second.

**Reporting problems:** Most games include tools to **report or block players** who behave inappropriately.

A light purple downward-pointing arrow indicating a flow from the second point to the third.

**Different ages in the home:** Games suitable for one child may **not be appropriate for younger siblings** who might watch.

# Roblox, Minecraft, Fortnite

While online gaming offers creative and social benefits, it introduces several significant risks for children. Platforms like Roblox, Minecraft, and Fortnite share common negatives, such as potential for addiction, exposure to inappropriate content, and financial risks through in-game spending

## Common Risks Across Platforms

- **Stranger Danger & Grooming:** Many games use unmoderated voice and text chat, which can bring children into contact with adults posing as peers. Predators may use these platforms to build trust and lure children to private chat apps like Discord or Telegram.
- **Cyberbullying & "Griefing":** Children often face harassment, name-calling, or exclusion. "Griefing" where players deliberately ruin others' progress (e.g., destroying a Minecraft build) —can cause significant emotional distress.
- **Financial Exploitation:** All three games use virtual currencies (Robux, V-Bucks, Minecoins) that can feel "less real" to children, leading to impulsive spending. There is also pressure to buy "skins" to avoid being mocked as a "default" or "poor" player.
- **Scams & Hacking:** Children are frequently targeted by "free currency" scams designed to steal account passwords or personal information. Scammers may also "beam" (hack) accounts to steal and resell valuable virtual items.
- **Addiction & Mental Health:** Immersive designs with daily rewards can lead to "gaming disorder," where gaming takes priority over sleep, school, and hygiene. This can result in irritability, anxiety, and mood swings when children are away from the screen



## Understanding the Age of Criminal Responsibility Online

- When children use the internet - whether posting on social media, messaging, or sharing images - it's important for families to know that certain online behaviour can break the law, just like behaviour in the real world.
- Police have the power to seize all devices from a home whether they're the child's, parents or a sibling if online safety becomes a big issue. Police can also have your internet stopped in your home too.
- **What does this mean for children online?**
- From 10 years of age, if a child posts something online that is considered a criminal offence - such as threats, harassment, sharing illegal images, or encouraging harmful behaviour - they can be investigated by the police and may face consequences through the youth justice system.
- Children under 10 cannot be charged with a crime, but other steps may still be taken to support the child and keep others safe, such as safeguarding measures or child safety orders.

## **Talking to strangers online**

As children spend more time online, it is important for parents to understand the potential risks and how to support safe digital habits.

Remind your child that anyone can pretend to be someone else online. Children should never share personal information such as their name, age, address, school or location with people they do not know. If someone asks for photos or videos, they should say no, stop the conversation and tell a trusted adult.

**Social media age limits:** Most social media platforms require users to be **13 years or older**. If children are using social media, ensure profiles are set to **private** and remind them that once something is shared online, it can be difficult to control where it goes.

**Sharing images:** It is important for children to understand that it is **illegal to create, share or possess sexual images of anyone under 18**, even if shared between young people.

**Artificial Intelligence (AI):** AI tools and chatbots are becoming more common online. Children should know that information generated by AI may not always be accurate and they should **never share personal details or images with AI platforms**.

# Ten tips for Online Safety

**Digital footprint:** What children post online today can remain visible for years. Encourage them to think carefully before sharing content that could affect their future.

**Reporting concerns:** If children see something upsetting, experience online bullying or feel uncomfortable about something they see online, they should speak to a **trusted adult immediately**.

**Online scams and hoaxes**  
Teach children to be cautious of messages asking them to share personal information, passwords or payment details. Many scams target young people through games and social media.

**In-game purchases:** Some games include features such as **loot boxes or chance-based rewards**, which can encourage children to spend money repeatedly. Setting parental controls can help manage this.

**Unrealistic online content:**  
Remind children that many images and lifestyles shown online are edited or unrealistic. Social media and AI can create false impressions that do not reflect real life.

## Ten tips for Online Safety

# Discussion Questions for Parents

What games or apps  
does your child  
currently use?

Do you know who  
they play or chat  
with online?

Do you check age  
ratings before  
allowing a game or  
app?

What rules do you  
currently have  
around screen time?

How comfortable  
would your child  
feel telling you  
about a problem  
online?

What challenges do  
you find most  
difficult when  
managing  
technology at home?

If your child needs support or encounters something worrying online, there are trusted resources available:

- [NSPCC Helpline](#): For guidance and support on all issues affecting children
- [Childline's Online Safety Hub](#): Offers advice on staying safe, managing wellbeing, and dealing with online challenges
- [Report Remove Tool](#): If a child has shared a sexual image or someone is threatening to share one, they can use this tool to try to get it removed from the internet
- [Childline Counsellors](#): Available via phone, 1-2-1 chat, or email for children who need someone to talk to

# Where to get help

# Finally



**Q&A**



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**THANK YOU**