

# Online Safety Newsletter for Parents

March 2026

I want to take this opportunity to share some useful resources you can use to keep your children safe online.

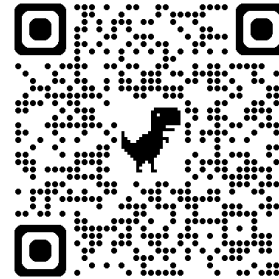
Our children are growing up in an age where technology is at their fingertips, so it is important we educate and keep them safe online.

Recent NSPCC paper suggests 84% of 3-4 year olds in the UK are going online.

I would highly recommend taking a look at NSPCC support pages including

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/advice-for-families/techosaurus/>

It is important to be aware of what your children are doing on devices, what they are watching, playing or who they may be talking to. Ensure you talk openly about what they are accessing.



**Take a look at the QR code for a useful link on open discussions with your children from the UK Safer Internet Centre**

Consider parental controls to ensure your child is accessing only age-appropriate content. These can also be useful to set usage times and monitor activity or preventing in game purchases.

## Parental Control Step-by-Step

### 1. Apple Devices (iPhone/iPad)

Apple uses **Screen Time** to manage what your child can see and do.

- Go to **Settings > Screen Time**.
- Select **Content & Privacy Restrictions** to block specific websites or adult content.
- Tap **App Store Purchases** and set "Installing Apps" and "In-app Purchases" to **Don't Allow**.

- Use **App Limits** to set a daily countdown for games or YouTube.

## 2. Android Devices (Tablets/Phones)

Google provides a dedicated app called **Family Link** for comprehensive oversight.

- Download the **Google Family Link** app on your own phone.
- Link your child's Google account to yours.
- From your phone, you can **remotely lock** their device at bedtime or approve every app they try to download.
- Set **Google SafeSearch** filters to "On" to hide explicit results.

## 3. Nintendo Switch

Since many children in this age group play games like *Animal Crossing* or *Mario Kart*, the Switch has excellent built-in protections.

- Download the **Nintendo Switch Parental Controls** app on your smartphone.
- Link it to the console via a registration code.
- **Set Play-Time Limits:** The console will automatically suspend the game when the time is up.
- **Restrict Communication:** Disable "Communicating with Others" to prevent your child from talking to people they don't know online

## Time recommendations

The World Health Organisation makes the following recommendations:

- **2–5 Years (Pre schoolers):** Maximum 1 hour of high-quality, educational, or interactive programming per day, accompanied by a caregiver.
- **5–12 Years (School-aged):** Generally no more than 2 hours of recreational screen time (non-educational) daily.

## National College Parental Help Guides

These have been produced for a variety of different games, platforms and situations; helpful parental guides can be found [here](#)



At National Online Safety we believe in empowering parents, carers and trusted adults with the information they need to hold an informed conversation about online safety with their children, should they feel it is needed. This guide focuses on one topic of many which we believe trusted adults should be aware of. Please visit [www.nationalonlinesafety.com](http://www.nationalonlinesafety.com) for further guides, hints and tips for adults.

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# What parents need to know about ONLINE CHALLENGES

In today's digitally connected world, children and adults are constantly presented with new ways to engage, react and contribute. We're social beings. It's a natural human instinct, especially amongst young audiences, to want to belong and join in. Viral Challenges (as they're often known) draw on these emotions and, as the name suggests, spread and gather pace very rapidly. New challenges are constantly emerging and evolving. They're often completely innocent, rising awareness of worthy causes or simply providing amusement. However, they can have much more sinister undertones, putting children at risk of physical harm or, in extreme cases, fatal injury.

## MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING

As well as having the potential to cause actual physical harm, some challenges can be extremely upsetting for children. Many are created with the sole purpose of instilling fear in an individual in order to coerce them into doing things that could have a long-term emotional effect on them.

## VARYING LEVELS OF RISK

As a parent or carer, it's important to take a balanced view and understand that not everything online has the potential to do harm. Mass-following and interaction can be a force for good. For example, the Ice Bucket Challenge, which swept the nation, set out to raise money and awareness of Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS). At its height, over 28 million people uploaded, commented on, or liked Ice Bucket Challenge related posts on Facebook. It's equally important to be aware though that online challenges often have a darker side. Malicious trends and challenges can expose children to dangerous or even life-threatening situations, so it's critical that parents and carers are aware of the latest risks and understand what steps to take to mitigate them.

## 'FOMO' - FEAR OF MISSING OUT

The Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) is a strong emotional characteristic, particularly displayed in young people. The nature of viral challenges encourages children to explore and push boundaries. They tap into FOMO by feeding on a child's natural desire to join in, be accepted and share experiences with their friends and the wider online community. A recent study also found that FOMO is one of the greatest causes of Social Media addiction.



**NOS National Online Safety**

## STRIVING FOR LIKES

In a major study by the Children's Commissioner, it was found that children as young as ten years old are reliant on 'likes' for their sense of self-worth. A major concern around viral challenges is not knowing how far children will go to earn 'likes'. Despite this growing appetite for acceptance with commonplace peer pressure and the potential problem is compounded. The result is that when young people are drawn into online challenges, because it's what all their friends are doing, saying 'no' can seem like a very hard thing to do.

"The coolest person at school will start a trend and then everyone copies her"  
Merran, 12, Year 7

"If I got 150 likes, I'd be like that's pretty cool it means they like you"  
Aaron, 11, Year 7

# Top Tips for Parents

### COMMUNICATION & MONITORING

It's important to talk to your child regularly and monitor their online activities. Encouraging honesty and openness will give you a much clearer viewpoint of how your child is interacting online and what concerns they have. Create an atmosphere of trust. Ensure they feel they can confide in you or another trusted adult regarding anything they may have seen or experienced online that's upset them.

### THINK BEFORE ACTING

As with most concerns in life, let common sense prevail when it comes to Viral Challenges. Young people need the freedom and space to explore and going in all guns blazing may well be counter-effective. Address the importance of safety and wellbeing, both online and offline, by discussing the facts and understanding the risks. Start a conversation about the Online Challenges that may have captured your child's interest, gauge their likely involvement and explain the importance of thinking and acting independently when it comes to participating.

### SETTING UP EFFECTIVE PARENTAL CONTROLS

As with all online activity, ensuring you have effective parental controls set up on all devices will help filter and restrict the dangerous or inappropriate content your child isn't wish your child to access. Additional measures for protecting your child include checking the privacy settings on your child's devices, monitoring their friends list, ensuring their personal information is safe and secure and keeping a watchful eye on the content they're sharing.

### REPORTING & BLOCKING

Parental controls can only go so far in blocking potentially harmful content. A rise in the reporting of social media algorithms, has led to an inappropriate content increasingly appearing on platforms and apps used by children. Where possible, you should regularly monitor what your child sees online and flag/report any content which is inappropriate or dangerous. You should take the time to talk to your child, discuss what you consider to be appropriate content and show them how to report and block users/accounts themselves.

### VALIDATE SOURCES

Not everything is as it seems. Some people create fake content that's designed to 'shock' in order to encourage rapid sharing. If your child has seen something online that has triggered concern you should encourage them to check its origin, verify that it came from a credible source and check the comments made for any clues to its validity.

### FACING REALITY

Trends and Viral Challenges can be tempting for children to take part in, no matter how dangerous or scary they may seem. As a parent or carer it can be difficult to keep pace with the very latest Online Challenges emerging. In recent months there have included potentially dangerous ones, including the 'Bird Box' challenge, which was inspired by Netflix's popular film and encourages followers to upload videos of themselves attempting everyday tasks while blindfolded. The best advice is to keep talking to your child. Show that your taking an interest and not just paying. Ensure your child knows they don't have to get involved and if they're unsure, let them know you're there to help where they consider participating. Children often need reassurance that not everything they see online is real. If your child has viewed distressing or frightening content it's important to talk to them about their experience, support them and, if required, help them find additional support.

## The "Super Explorer" Digital Safety Quiz

**Parents:** Read these questions to your child and see what they think! There are no "wrong" answers—just great chances to talk.

1. **If a game asks you for your real name or where you go to school, what should you do?**
  - o *Goal:* Teach them to **check with you** before sharing information.
2. **If you are playing a game and a "pop-up" window appears with a bright button, is it okay to click it?**
  - o *Goal:* Explain how to **prevent in-game purchases** or accidental downloads.
3. **What should you do if you see a video that makes you feel "yucky," scared, or sad?**
  - o *Goal:* Reinforce that they can **talk openly** about what they access without being in trouble.
4. **If someone you don't know in real life tries to talk to you in a game, what's the best thing to do?**
  - o *Goal:* Help them understand **who they may be talking to** and when to get an adult.
5. **When the timer goes off for "screen time," what is your favourite "offline" thing to do?**
  - o *Goal:* Support the use of parental controls to **set usage times** and balance tech with play.

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Children are using smart devices from a much younger age than ever before. It's why it's essential we talk to our children about how to use them safely. There are so many positive benefits to the new technology at our disposal these days - however there are plenty of downsides too. As a parent, it's important you understand these risks and how you can take steps to protect your family against them.

- 1 PUT YOURSELF IN CONTROL**  
Make use of the parental control settings available to you. With most devices, you're able to change the settings to control the content your child has access to. This isn't difficult to do, as you'll often find guidance in the instructions that come with the device. By setting a private pin code on certain devices, you can make sure your child can only access it when you allow it.
- 2 PROTECTING ANDROID DEVICES**  
You can set up restricted users on Android tablets through a Google account. Open the settings menu (look for a cog icon) and select the 'Users' option. Here you can add a new restricted user. After setting up a password and username, select which applications you want to restrict access to. On an Android smartphone it's similar, but first select 'Parental Controls' in the play store.
- 3 PROTECTING APPLE DEVICES**  
For Apple devices, you can simply visit the preferences/settings menu and within 'General' there is an option for 'Restrictions'. Here you can turn off any applications or features on your child's device that you do not want them to have access to.
- 4 THINK ABOUT ALL YOUR SMART DEVICES**  
As well as tablets and smartphones, you should think about any device in your home connected to the internet - games console, a media hub, or a personal computer. In each case you can usually find parental controls in the settings. Think carefully about how much access you want to allow your child, especially when it comes to accessing the internet.
- 5 MAKE SEARCHING MUCH SAFER**  
Most search engines, such as Google, Bing or Yahoo, have a 'safe search' setting. You should activate this. Otherwise, it's extremely easy for a seemingly harmless search on the internet to return unexpected and inappropriate results. Depending on the browser you're using, go to the settings and search for 'safe search'. Make sure you save the change so it defaults each time you open the browser. This will seriously reduce the chances of your child being exposed to something they shouldn't be.
- 6 REGULARLY CHECK SOCIAL MEDIA SETTINGS**  
Before you allow your child to use social media, you should discuss the dangers with them. You should also make sure you're able to access their profile and privacy settings and check them regularly. The companies behind social media platforms often make privacy changes without making it very obvious to the user, such as Facebook's introduction of facial recognition software.
- 7 DON'T LET PEOPLE SEE WHERE YOU ARE**  
Location software sounds useful for seeing where your child is, but it also provides the opportunity for others to locate your child too. For safety, it's a good idea to disable location software on all devices or at least turn it off when it's not required. Also, be mindful of specific apps that record running routes or locations where your child might be playing a game. Talk to your child about why these can be dangerous and how to turn the setting on and off as required.
- 8 WATCH OUT FOR FAKE PROFILES**  
Sadly, social media presents an enormous opportunity for the likes of paedophiles to set up fake profiles and interact with children. Keep a track of the people your child interacts with on social media and if you do not recognise a user as a friend, consider blocking them.
- 9 KEEP A CHECK ON SCREEN TIME**  
Managing how much time we spend on screens is a new challenge for us all. It's critically important when it comes to children, especially younger children who are still developing. It's not just a case of setting arbitrary time limits. Guidelines published by The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health suggest it's more important to consider the 'context and content' of what the screen is being used for. Still, it is helpful to put limits on devices using 'Guided Access' functions, which you can find in the settings of certain devices.

**Meet our expert**  
Emma Davis was a secondary school Computer Science teacher for more than a decade. Since leaving education, she has been working in a cyber security firm delivering cyber awareness training to businesses and carrying out network testing. She is a mother of a five-year-old, she's had vast experience of controlling and managing how children access online services and use apps.

[www.nationalonlinesafety.com](http://www.nationalonlinesafety.com) Twitter - @nationalonlinesafety Facebook - /NationalOnlineSafety

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**Useful Links:**

- <https://www.internetmatters.org/>
- <https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-centre/young-people/resources-3-11s>
- <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/>
- <https://www.internetmatters.org/advice/>
- <https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/>

Please do not hesitate to approach school for further support on this area.

Campton Academy

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