

## Safer Internet Use

Tips for encouraging open discussion about digital life

### Make your interest clear

Ask to see your child's favourite games and apps which will help you spot issues

### Be open, honest, and appropriate to their age

When answering questions about puberty, relationships, etc.

### Remind your child they can always talk to you

Even when they view harmful content, talking about it openly will help

### Discuss that not everything we see online is real

Use examples from your own online world, like posts that show perfect houses

### Try to remain calm

Your initial reaction could stop a child from speaking openly about what they've seen

### Create a family agreement

About device use including when to use devices, parental controls and why it's good to talk

### Keep talking

## Online Safety Newsletter

October 2024

## Instagram

Instagram has over 2 billion active monthly users; and despite its age limit of 13+ we are aware that younger children are among these social media regulars. As well as being able to follow others and upload videos and pictures to their page (called a 'feed'); users can also exchange private messages with each other creating a plethora of risks.



### What are the risks?

#### Influencer Culture

Influencers are paid thousands of pounds to advertise products to their fans. Ofcom research shows that 27% of young people accept this product endorsement unquestioningly.

#### Addiction

Like most social media apps, Instagram is cleverly designed to get us scrolling for longer. This can quickly get out of hand. It is sensible to set limits on screen time for social media platforms. Ensure your child's profile has their correct age as teen accounts allow greater controls over screen-time.

#### Going Live

Users can 'livestream' – where they upload video in real time which can be risky if the broadcast is public as anyone in the world can watch the video. We have recently had some students broadcast a video wearing school uniform which gives away which school they attend and could further place them at risk. Further risks include being encouraged to do inappropriate activities on camera or exposure to indecent language from those watching the broadcast. We would always advise setting children's accounts to private and discussing the importance of this with them.

**Staying safe online**  
Advice to share with your child

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**Tell a trusted adult if something upsets you**

**Take breaks from being online**

**Don't chat with strangers**

**Ask permission before downloading anything**

**Avoid sharing private photos**

**Don't give away personal information**

**Double check your news sources**

**Take notice of age restrictions**

**Stick to trusted apps**

**Be suspicious of new information**

**Show respect to others**

**Be honest with parents and carers**

## YouTube

You have almost certainly heard of this popular video-sharing platform but did you know that over 500 hours of video content is uploaded every minute? Not all of that is suitable for younger viewers...



What are the dangers?

### Mature content

Despite age-verification being introduced for most 18+ content, these controls are not fail-safe and lots of inappropriate content from profane language to nudity can be viewed on videos that are not rated 18+ without any age verification at all.

### Radicalisation

YouTube recommends videos based on past watches and what is popular. Some of the popular videos can include extremist content and, once watched, the platform will then recommend more extremist content. This can increase the risk of radicalization.

### Connecting with strangers

As well as leaving messages on videos, users can message each other privately. This can lead to children interacting with unknown and risky adults.

### How can you make it safer for your child?

- YouTube is owned by Google so setting up a Google Family account allows you to monitor the kinds of videos your child is watching.
- Enable 'restricted mode' on all devices connected to YouTube to reduce the risk of children watching 18+ videos
- Consider YouTube kids for under-12s to create a safer experience for them
- Limit spending – YouTube has some in-app purchasing. Check that your child's account is not connected to your credit card!!!

## Starting a conversation about life online

### Be positive and open-minded about the internet

**Talk early and often**  
Make conversations about the internet part of your daily routine

### Create a safe space for conversations

Talking face to face can sometimes be difficult, so talking while walking alongside or while in a car might be easier. Make sure there are no distractions

### Keep it relevant

The way your child uses the internet will change as they grow older. So, ask open-ended questions to let your child lead the conversations you have to get a feel of the challenges and experiences they face online

### Be proactive

Create an agreement together on how the internet will be used, including time spend online, who your child can communicate with, appropriate apps and games and safety tools to report and block harmful content

## Group Chats

At the start of a new academic year, group chats are one of the risks that we see most often. As friendship groups form and change, a child creates a group chat and adds lots of people to connect them together. Whilst this sounds lovely it creates its own set of challenges:

- Risk of adults or older children being added to the chat and communicating with your child
- Unkind comments can be shared freely and 'liked' which can lead to cyberbullying and social exclusion
- With large group chats, notifications of new messages can run to the 1000s every day – the Fear Of Missing Out (FOMO) leads children to spend hours catching up with every single message
- It only takes one person in the chat to share inappropriate content (image, video, foul language) for everyone to see it and be affected by it.
- The privacy of the platform on which the group chat is hosted (e.g. WhatsApp) can lull children into a false sense of security that what they are sharing is kept private (within the chat). Experience tells us that other children will sometimes screen-grab private messages from group chats and share them more widely creating distress.

## What should we do about it?

- Talk to your child about safe sharing. They should not be sharing personal details such as home address in group chats and should always assume that whatever is shared will be seen by people not in the group chat.
- If your child is in a group chat where inappropriate material is being shared, encourage them to have the courage to block the account, report the shared content, and leave the group chat.
- Silence notifications to enable your child to break free from FOMO and have a more relaxing evening without being bombarded by notifications. These can be silenced just for certain chats or at certain times of the day.
- Stranger danger – ensure that your child knows not to accept group chat invites from people that they don't know. We see this a lot with Y7s at this time of the year as they assume that the person inviting them must be from their new secondary school even if they don't recognize the name.
- Discourage your child from inviting younger children (e.g. siblings and cousins) to group chats with older children in them as quite often the content of the chat is not appropriate for younger eyes.