Staying safe online - Advice for parents and carers (from Gov. UK)

We understand there may be more concern from parents about the safety of their children online. It is important for children and young people to stay both connected and safe online. Remember to make use of parental controls and to talk with your children.

Reliable information on COVID-19 can also be found at www.gov.uk/coronavirus.

Check your security and privacy settings

- Adjust privacy and safety settings to increase security and control the personal data you share. Look for the 'privacy and security' or 'settings' on the app or website.
- Review the security settings on your 'smart' devices. If your device is using a default or easily guessable password, change it.
- Set up two-factor authentication. This is a free security feature to stop unwanted people getting into your accounts. You'll receive a text or code when you log in to check you are who you say you are.
- Update your devices. Using the latest version of software and apps can immediately improve your security

Make use of parental controls

If you have downloaded new apps or bought new devices like web cams or tablets, remember to adjust the privacy and security settings to suit you.

There is technology to help you manage the content your children can access:

The Government has encouraged Internet Service Providers to help parents easily filter content. Switch on family friendly filters to help prevent age inappropriate content being accessed on devices in your home.
Parental controls put you in control of what your child can see. Internet Matters has step by step guides at https://www.internetmatters.org/parental-controls/ on how to set these up.

If you are concerned or upset about something your child has seen online:

Seek support from the online platform using the report function on the app or website - you can often find these in the 'help' section or 'settings' or seek support from other organisations and helplines.

The UK Safer Internet Centre offers a service, Report Harmful Content, which you can use if you are not satisfied with the result of a report.

Have a conversation with your child about staying safe online

Most children have a positive experience online, accessing educational resources and entertainment and connecting with friends and family.

Spending time online can be very beneficial for children, particularly at the moment, but we recognise that many parents may worry about online safety.

Reduce the risk. The UK Council for Internet Safety has guidance on minimising children's exposure to risks online. The UK Safer Internet Centre with Childnet International has specific guidance on under 5s.

Talk to your child. Childnet has guidance for parents and carers to begin a conversation about online safety and Ditch the Label teacher resources that can be helpful for parents to discuss cyberbullying and the government also has helpful advice. Encourage your child to speak to you or a trusted adult if they come across content that makes them uncomfortable.

If you have concerns about specific serious harms, this guidance outlines how to protect your child from child sexual abuse online, 'sexting' or radicalising, pornographic or suicide content.

Help your child to think critically

We can help protect our children by teaching them 'critical thinking skills' - a way of thinking that helps them spot potential harm and work out what to do.

Critical thinking empowers children because they can take what they know and adapt it to new situations or to solve problems that may emerge.

It helps them identify risks, which may protect them from different forms of threats and ultimately harm. Parent Zone's guide and Childnet's advice and top tips provides ways for parents and carers to help their child develop these skills.

Stay safe and healthy
You may be concerned about how long your children are using their devices. The government has published guidance for parents and carers on supporting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing during COVID-19.
The UK's Chief Medical Officer has also provided advice on screen time. Here are a few of the tips to help your children strike a balance:
- **Sleep matters** Getting enough good quality sleep is very important. Leave phones outside the bedroom when it is bedtime.
- **Sharing sensibly** Talk about sharing photos and information online and how photos and words are sometimes manipulated. Parents and carers should never assume that children are happy for their photos to be shared. For everyone – when in doubt, don't upload!
- **Talking helps** Talk with children about using screens and what they are watching. A change in behaviour can be a sign they are distressed – make sure they know they can

always speak to you or another responsible adult if they feel uncomfortable with screen or social media use.
- **Keep moving!** Everyone should take a break after a couple of hours sitting or lying down using a screen. It's good to get up and move about a bit. #sitlessmovemore
- **Family time together** Screen-free meal times are a good idea – you can enjoy face-to-face conversation, with adults giving their full attention to children.
- **Use helpful phone features** Some devices and platforms have special features – try using these features to keep track of how much time you (and with their permission, your children) spend looking at screens or on social media.

Remember you are allowed to leave your house for one form of exercise a day, and you can do this with members of your household as a family activity.

Use these resources to support you to keep your children safe online:

- [support for parents and carers to keep children safe online](#), which outlines resources to help keep children safe from different risks online and where to go to find support and advice
- guidance on [staying safe online](#) which includes information on security and privacy settings
- [Thinkuknow](#) provides advice from the National Crime Agency (NCA) on staying safe online
- [Parent info](#) is a collaboration between Parentzone and the NCA providing support and guidance for parents from leading experts and organisations
- [Childnet](#) offers a toolkit to support parents and carers of children of any age to start discussions about their online life, to set boundaries around online behaviour and technology use, and to find out where to get more help and support
- [Internet matters](#) provides age-specific online safety checklists, guides on how to set parental controls on a range of devices, and a host of practical tips to help children get the most out of their digital world
- [London Grid for Learning](#) has support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online, including tips to keep primary aged children safe online
- [Net-aware](#) has support for parents and carers from the NSPCC, including a guide to social networks, apps and games
- [Let's Talk About It](#) has advice for parents and carers to keep children safe from online radicalisation
- [UK Safer Internet Centre](#) has tips, advice, guides and other resources to help keep children safe online, including parental controls offered by home internet providers and safety tools on social networks and other online services