# Keeping under fives safe online

**Top tips that you can put in place at home, to help keep younger children safe online.**

## 1 Establish clear boundaries

In the same way that you set boundaries for most areas of your children's lives, establish your expectations with technology use and online activities. Creating a family agreement is a useful step, which might include time spent online, where and when devices can be used and what to do if your child sees something upsetting.

It is also useful to remember that these expectations will change as your child gets older and their technology use develops. You can find the Childnet Family Agreement and other helpful resources in our Parents and Carers Toolkit.

## 2 Enjoy going online together

The best way to keep your family safe online is to use technology and the internet together. Get to know how a game or device works by exploring it as a family and finding where the main settings and safety features are.

Use The Family Gaming Database to explore different games, and to find alternatives for anything you think might be inappropriate for your child.

## 3 Consider the quality and quantity of online activities

Young children can be enthusiastic users of technology, but try to encourage a healthy mix of online and offline activities. There are some strategies that help manage the time your child spends online, such as setting time limits, designating weekly times to use the internet together, or removing devices from your child's bedroom at night. For further guidance, visit Childnet's advice page on screen time and healthy balance.

## 4 Make use of parental tools

Make use of parental controls and filters which can be used on your home internet, devices, phone networks and streaming services. Visit Internet Matters to find out how you can set these up.

Parental controls will work best in combination with supervision and engagement to help your child understand how to stay safe online. As your child grows and develops, their online needs change and develop too, so you should regularly review your parental controls to accommodate this. Always remember to choose a strong password and do not share it with your child.

## 5 Supervise your child's use

We recommend that you always supervise a young child when they are online as they may see something which could worry, upset or confuse them. We would advise you to keep family and child devices in a busy part of your home, e.g. the living room or kitchen. This makes it easier for you to be involved in their technology use and to answer any questions and help them.

## 6 Start the conversation early

It's important to start the conversation about staying safe online as early as possible in order to establish positive behaviours and routines in a child's life. As soon as your child starts engaging with technology and the internet, these conversations can begin.

You can also give your child strategies that they can use if something worries or upsets them online. These could include: switching the screen off, closing the laptop, leaving the website, or turning the tablet or phone over and asking for help.

Stories such as Smartie the Penguin, Digiduck and Hanni and the Magic Window show a variety of online risks how it is important to talk to a trusted adult.

## 7 Choose age appropriate apps and games

Online games and apps may be the first thing your child does online, and they can also support learning and development. When choosing a new game or app for your child, be aware of the age rating which is determined by the game's content. PEGI set ratings for online games, along with content warnings which indicate if a game contains things such as violence, bad language or scenes of a sexual nature.

You can also find age appropriate apps and games for young children on Common Sense Media. Many games also offer in-app purchases which means spending real money on in-game features. You can turn off in-app purchases and protect them with a password.

## 8 Know where to report

Reports can be made to websites or apps through their safety or help centres. Your child's school or nursery may also be able to provide help and support with any worries and concerns you may have.

If you are worried or suspicious about someone who contacts your child online, report them to the police or to CEOP.

For more information regarding reporting, visit the Childnet Get Help page.

## Conversation Starters

- What is your favourite thing to do on the tablet, games console etc?
- What is your favourite game or app and why do you like it?
- Where do we use the tablet or games console and when can we use it?
- What can you do if something online upsets you?
- Who can help you on the tablet or with your games and apps?
- If a message appears on the screen, what should you do?

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