



## **DFE Advice for parents and carers – Online Safety**

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.

### **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: 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 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 Centre offers a service, Report Harmful Content, which you can use if you are not satisfied with the result.



## Talk, Talk, Talk

Have a conversation with your child about staying safe online 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.

Childnet has guidance for parents and carers to begin a conversation about online safety and Ditch the Label and 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.

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.

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