

# Keeping Your Child Safe Online



Keeping children safe is what all parents want but with ever changing technology, it can be a challenge to keep up to date with what children are doing on the internet.



[www.safeguardingchildren.co.uk](http://www.safeguardingchildren.co.uk)

**NSPCC**

NSPCC registered charity numbers  
216401 and SC037717.

The issue of online safety can feel daunting and very different to what you experienced when you were a child, however whether we like it or not, the internet is here to stay and will only continue to increase in popularity and be used in more aspects of our lives.

## How can I protect my child?

You may feel unprepared to deal with this issue but it is important to talk to your child about the internet and how they feel about it. Simple conversations can be started by asking about what your child likes to do online or if they will show you their favourite website. It may also be helpful to:

- Increase your understanding of the internet so you can feel more confident. More information can be found at [www.nspcc.org.uk/onlinesafety](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/onlinesafety)
- Extend parenting rules you already use to include online behaviours e.g. the way you expect your child to behave at home and school can be extended to how you expect your child to behave online.

- Encourage your child to tell you of anything which upsets them. Reassure them that regardless of what it is, you would prefer them to tell you than be distressed.
- Recognise that children's levels of curiosity will increase as they get older. Offer advice to help fill any knowledge gaps they have i.e. about issues such as sex and relationships.
- Try not to overreact if something happens online, as your child will be looking to you for help.



## What about inappropriate materials?

Being sure that online content is age appropriate can be difficult. While a curious child will always be able to search for specific topics, many inappropriate sites disguise themselves by offering free games, prizes or other such things to entice visitors.

To help keep your child safe, there is 'parental controls' software available. These controls are available free of charge from the UK's major internet service providers and can help limit what your child is able to see online. It is also important to be realistic, for example recognise that older children may find loop holes to get past these controls and therefore it is important to also discuss this issue with your child.

## What about cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying is the bullying of a person 'online' and can occur in many forms. While adults may see cyberbullying and bullying as separate issues, children do not. This means that bullying that starts in the playground may continue online and that bullying that starts online can continue offline.

Stopping your children from using the internet or mobile phones will not keep them safe from cyberbullying. It may instead stop them talking to you about their concerns because they do not want their devices to be taken away. To help with this it may be helpful to:

- Use opportunities such as news events or television storylines to start conversations about what your child would do if they were being bullied or what they think should or should not be said online.
- Check the privacy settings on your child's online social media accounts to help keep personal information private.
- Encourage your child not to respond or retaliate to any bullying. Instead tell them to block and report the bullies. This way your child could continue being online, while being less likely to experience bullying.



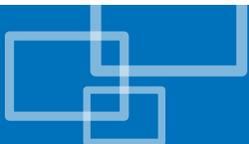
## Who is my child talking to?

The internet is great for helping people stay in touch but unfortunately some people also use the internet to abuse children. Online abuse is made easier because an abuser can hide their age, gender and identity. Victims are often not aware that they are being 'groomed' for abuse, but instead believe they are simply talking with a similar aged child.

Abusers may make contact within online 'chatrooms', on social media websites or within online computer games; this includes games that are played from computer consoles. Abusers may offer compliments, attention or advice to get a child to think they are talking with a kind and caring individual, before later trying to abuse the child.

### To help reduce this risk:

- Discuss with your child who they are friends with online, how they chose their friends and what information they share. Include discussing how people your child only knows online are effectively strangers.
- Agree what your child should do if they are contacted by someone they do not know.
- Discuss that even if 'trusted' friends ask them to behave sexually online that they should avoid doing so, as peer to peer grooming exists.
- Advise your child that if they want to meet a person who they're only friends with online, that a trusted adult should accompany them when they meet with this person for the first time.



# Are there risks with mobile phones and online computer games?

## Mobile Phones

Technology is always advancing and now mobile phones can fit in your pocket and may have additional features like a camera and internet access.

One risk associated with mobile phones is the exchanging of sexually explicit images that a person has taken of themselves. This is sometimes referred to as 'sexting' and can lead to risks such as losing control of photo's or photo's being posted on the internet and being seen by others.

### To help reduce this risk:

- Talk to your child about 'sexting' when they get their first phone. Explain the dangers and how images can last forever.
- Ask your child how family members would feel about seeing any photo they are considering sending.
- Help remove the myth that being asked to send a 'sext' is a positive thing. Discuss how the person who requested the picture is also likely to be asking other people.
- If an inappropriate picture of your child has been placed on the internet, contact the Internet Watch Foundation [www.iwf.org.uk](http://www.iwf.org.uk) so it can be removed.

## Online Games

Playing computer games is nothing new, however nowadays children do not just compete against the computer or other friends who are in the same room, but can play together or against strangers over the internet across the world. Playing games with other players can be great fun but with modern consoles also having audio and video equipment attached, it can mean there is the added risk of children seeing inappropriate images, hearing upsetting language or being bullied or groomed by other game players.

### To help reduce the risks:

- Ensure all games are suitable for your child's age and understanding.
- Use parental controls, including controls that are specific for your child's games console. You will normally find these instructions on the console manufacturer's website.

- Check the capabilities of your child's games console. This would include checking whether it is connected to the internet and how your child may be communicating with other players.
- Agree with your child how much time they should spend playing online games.
- Confirm rules about downloading games, spending money, or providing personal details on websites.
- Check if your child's favourite games have their own websites with an information page for parents to learn more about the game.



## Getting extra help

If your child does have a negative online experience or tells you they have been abused, they will be looking for your support. Your child sharing such news may be a shock but try to compose yourself as quickly as you can before:

- Emphasising that your child made a positive decision in sharing their concerns.
- Allowing your child to share with you what they want. Your initial role is to listen rather than ask lots of questions.
- Offering emotional support, including letting them know that you will help.
- Sharing with them the next steps you will be taking, such as reporting the abuse and calling the NSPCC helpline for further advice.

If your child does disclose concerns you should contact Children's Social Care on 0845 0349410 for further advice and support. If you are concerned a crime may have been committed you should also contact North Yorkshire Police on 101.

The NSPCC provides advice and support to parents, carers and other adults and can be contacted on 0808 800 5000 or [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk). Children and young people can contact Childline on 0800 1111 or [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk).

## Where can I find more information?

More information regarding online safety can be found at:

[www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents)

[www.internetmatters.org](http://www.internetmatters.org)

[www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-andresources/parents-and-carers](http://www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-andresources/parents-and-carers)

[www.nspcc.org.uk/onlinesafety](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/onlinesafety)

[www.safeguardingchildren.co.uk](http://www.safeguardingchildren.co.uk)

[www.ceop.police.uk](http://www.ceop.police.uk)



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