

Top 10 Tips to Staying Safe Online.

Guide by <https://swgfl.org.uk/online-safety/10-online-safety-tips/>

Ofcom's [Media Use and Attitudes Report 2019](#), published in February 2020, tells us that half of ten-year-olds now own their own smartphone. More children watch video-on-demand (VoD) than watch live broadcast TV.

For parents and families, and for anyone working with children and young people, it's not easy to keep up with what's going on.

With a huge increase in device ownership and use of online services, it is important to ensure that you and your children are safe when enjoying the potential of technology.

Staying Safe Online - The Tech

E-safety doesn't just happen. It needs awareness of the possible threats that online activity can bring, and how to deal with them.

1. Learn your way around

Most devices have controls to ensure that kids can't access content you don't want them to. Make sure your "in-app" purchases are disabled to avoid nasty surprises.

Check out the [Parent's Technology Guide at the UK Safer Internet Centre](#) for more help.

2. E-Safety on Tablets

Tablets are really popular with younger children, and the market has several which are geared specifically towards delivering child friendly content.

When it comes to using them, start slowly: only download games and apps you have checked out carefully and steer them towards age targeted content such as [BBC iPlayer Kids](#) or [YouTube Kids](#).

Sites like www.net-aware.org.uk and or www.common sense media.org also provide useful advice.

3. E-Safety on Mobile Phones/Smartphones

If you have older children, the focus will probably be shifting from tablets to smaller and more portable mobile devices: phones. The old online safety messages about having your home computer in a communal place become defunct, because phones are literally mobile computers and can do pretty much the same stuff that traditional desktop PCs can.

You can use tools like [Google Family Link](#) for Android devices, or [Screen Time](#) for Apple iOS devices, to set up controls around usage, but it's just as important, if not more so, to talk to kids about what they should and shouldn't be doing (see 'Setting Boundaries' below).

4. Social Media Platforms

Ofcom's research also shows that YouTube remains a firm favourite. Children between five and 15 are more likely to use YouTube than other on-demand services such as Netflix, or TV channels including the BBC and ITV.

WhatsApp has also grown to join Facebook, Snapchat and Instagram as one of the top social media platforms used by children.

We've produced checklists for Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, Roblox and TikTok that you can download from our [social media checklists page](#). The checklists will help parents to understand more about each platform, what information they use, and how to set privacy settings: they're a parent's social media survival guide!

Staying Safe Online - Setting Boundaries

Internet safety isn't just about setting up technology in the right way. It's just as important, if not more so, to get the 'offline' setup right: expectations, behaviours, discussions about use. Our advice is to set some ground rules, and ensure children understand them. Here are some areas to look at.

5. Screen Time

Agree a time limit or number of games beforehand, to avoid repeated disagreements around how long they can spend online.

We've also got the '[Young People and Screentime – A Good Start](#)' guide available, which provides some tips and checklists to help parents and carers get kids off to a good start using digital devices.

6. Sleep Comes First

It is advisable that the phone stays out of the bedroom to avoid night time interruptions, and having a period of time before bed without phone or tablet use is beneficial too.

The blue light emitted from LCD screens has been shown to disrupt sleep by interfering with our natural body rhythms, blocking our bodies from creating a sleep hormone called melatonin.

7. Request Access

You care more about your kid's health and wellbeing than anyone else. That means you need to guide them in the virtual world as well as the real world. If you're genuinely concerned about them, ask them to allow you access to the phone.

8. Monitoring vs Having a Conversation

It is possible to install software onto devices that monitors online activity, alerts you to inappropriate behaviour, and can block access to certain content. This kind of software is becoming increasingly popular, but while this might sound tempting, it might pose a number of issues around your child's right to privacy, and could have an impact upon your relationship with them.

Our ['Parenting through technology'](#) article – part of our 'Parenting in a digital age' series - covers this subject and raises some interesting points.

The best advice we can give is to talk to your child regularly and openly about behaviour and risk, so that they know they can come to you if something goes wrong.

We covered this in our 'Parenting in a Digital Age' series, in the ['It's good to talk'](#) article.

9. Whole Home Approach

Consider setting parental controls on your Wi-Fi. You can block access to inappropriate or adult content, and set time limits which may help rein in those excessive Minecraft sessions.

The UK Safer Internet Centre ['Parental controls offered by your home internet provider'](#) page is a good place to start.

10. Gaming

Finally a word about games. There are so many exciting games out there, and so many consoles to choose from there is a good chance you might have one in your home. Whether it's Microsoft Xbox, Nintendo Switch or Sony PlayStation, there is something for everyone, and every age.



Consider whether your child is mature enough to join an online community, and whether the games they are playing are appropriate. For more advice on this visit www.pegi.info or www.askaboutgames.com.