



Parents Guide to a Safer Internet

Discovery Schools Trust is celebrating Safer Internet Day on Tuesday 9th February 2021.



The internet is an amazing resource which enables children to connect, communicate and be creative in a number of different ways, on a range of devices.

The internet is always changing and being able to keep up to date with your children's use of technology can be a challenge. You may sometimes feel that your children have better technical skills than you do, however children still need advice and protection when it comes to managing their lives online.

As a parent/carers you play a key role in helping your child to stay safe online. You don't need to be an expert on the internet to help keep your child stay safe online.

What is Important?

This newsletter outlines advice and resources to help support your child to use the internet safely, responsibly, and positively and will focus on:

- Importance of Talking to your Children about the Internet
- SMART rules
- Filters and Parent Controls
- Age Restrictions
- Online Abuse



Importance of Talking to your Children about the Internet

Talking to your children, encouraging responsible behaviour, and building their digital resilience so they know what to do if bad things happen are all essential. Your child may be less likely to let you know they're distressed by something they've seen online. Be aware of this when talking to them and let them know they can talk to you or a trusted adult whenever they need to.

Taking an active interest in your child's online life and engaging with what they are accessing, who they are communicating with and what they are sharing with others is so important. There are several ways you can do this:

- Invite your child to teach you how to play their favourite online game
- Download the app they spend most time on to familiarise yourself with the content
- Ensure your child knows you are safe and approachable to talk to
- Remind your child that if they are worried or have concerns about something online, you are there to talk

Starting a conversation with your child about a sensitive issue or something you don't usually talk about isn't always easy, especially if this means you will be talking about things, they prefer to keep private, these conversation starters may help:



- 1** Ask your children to tell you about the sites they like to visit and what they enjoy doing online.
- 2** Ask them about how they stay safe online. What tips do they have for you, and where did they learn them? What is OK and not OK to share?
- 3** Ask them if they know where to go for help, where to find the safety advice, privacy settings and how to report or block on the services they use.
- 4** Encourage them to help someone! Perhaps they can show you how to do something better online or they might have a friend who would benefit from their help and support.
- 5** Think about how you each use the internet. What more could you do to use the internet together? Are there activities that you could enjoy as a family?

For more ways to support starting a conversation with your child visit:

- [Having a conversation with your child](#)
- [Have a conversation](#)

SMART Rules

At Discovery pupils are taught to be SMART with a heart and follow the top tips for using the internet safely and positively:



S is for safe

Keep your personal information safe. When chatting or posting online don't give away things like your full name, password or home address. Remember personal information can be seen in images and videos you share too. Keep them safe to keep yourself safe.



M is for meet

Meeting up with someone you only know online, even a friend of a friend, can be dangerous as this person is still a stranger. If someone you only know online ever asks you to meet up, for personal information or for photos/videos of you then tell an adult straight away and report them together on www.thinkuknow.co.uk



A is for accepting

Think carefully before you click on or open something online (e.g. links, adverts, friend requests, photos) as you never know where they may lead to or they may contain viruses. Do not accept something if you are unsure of who the person is or what they've sent you.



R is for reliable

You cannot trust everything you see online as some things can be out of date, inaccurate or not entirely true. To find reliable information compare at least three different websites, check in books and talk to someone about what you have found.



T is for tell

Tell a trusted adult if something or someone ever makes you feel upset, worried or confused. This could be if you or someone you know is being bullied online. There are lots of people who will be able to help you like your teachers, parents, carers or contact Childline – 0800 11 11 or www.childline.org.uk



Be SMART with a heart

Remember to always be smart with a heart by being kind and respectful to others online. Make the internet a better place by helping your friends if they are worried or upset by anything that happens online.

Ask your child if they know the SMART rules. For follow up information, quizzes and videos, visit the [Childnet website](http://Childnetwebsite)

Filters and Parent Controls

Parental controls can help to protect and prevent your child from seeing something online that they shouldn't. While there is no system which is guaranteed to block all inappropriate content, it is important we do what we can.

Here are 7 simple things you can do;

1. Set up home broadband parental controls

2. Set controls on your search engine: encourage your child always to use child-friendly search engines and activate and lock the safe search settings on the browsers and platforms they use
3. Make sure every device is protected: controls should be installed on every device your child uses: mobile phone, tablet and games consoles
4. Privacy settings: activate the safety measures offered by different sites; social networking sites have privacy settings that will help prevent your child seeing unsuitable advertising
5. Block pop-ups
6. Find good sites and agree on them as a family
7. Manage your child's use and access



The 4 big internet providers in the UK:

- [BT](#)
- [Sky](#)
- [TalkTalk](#)
- [Virgin Media](#)

Provide their customers with free parental controls which can be activated at any time. Click on the link to access the video guides which will help you to download and set-up the controls offered by your provider.

If you would like more information on Parent Controls and Filters please read this article:

[What are parental controls and how can they help children stay safe online?](#)

Age Restrictions

What is the minimum age for account holders on social media sites and apps?





To find out more about the most popular apps, games and social media sites your children are using click [here](#).

It is understandable to have concerns about the films and TV shows they watch, as well as the games they play. But what are BBFC and PEGI ratings?

WHAT ARE THE BBFC RATINGS?

BBFC ratings are broken down into seven age categories:



Universal, suitable for all ages



Parental Guidance required



Suitable for people aged 12 and over



Suitable for people aged 12 and over; anyone younger must be accompanied by an adult



Suitable for people aged 15 and over



Suitable for people aged 18 and over



Adult content only available in specially licenced cinemas and specialist retailers

WHAT ELSE CAN BBFC REVEAL?

Accompanied with the age suitability rating, BBFC also provide an additional warning regarding the content and what to expect, such as swearing, sexual content, violence and anything you may consider to be inappropriate for your child. In addition to this, the content is also rated in three levels: frequent, mild or strong.

LIMITATIONS OF BBFC RATINGS

It's important to note that there is no obligation on streaming video services to use or display BBFC ratings. Due to this, we advise that you check the rating online before your child streams the content. It may also be a good idea to watch the content first yourself or discuss it with other parents to help you decide whether or not it is suitable for your child.

WHAT ARE THE PEGI RATINGS?

PEGI ratings are split into age restriction and content descriptors.

Additional 'content descriptors' help parents and children to understand the type of content featured within a particular game, including sex, fear, bad language, discrimination, gambling, drugs, violence, and in-game purchases. In combination, the two different ratings can provide a good level of information to help make informed decisions regarding the suitability for your child.

PEGI age ratings are broken down into five categories:



PEGI content descriptors are broken down into eight categories:



LIMITATIONS OF PEGI RATINGS

It's possible for young people to buy games online without a required proof of age, opening them up to age-inappropriate content without you knowing. We advise that you regularly monitor your child's gaming activities and maintain a honest and healthy dialogue with them about the online world.

PARENTAL CONTROLS

It is a good idea to put in place parental controls for all online accounts which your child may use to purchase or download online games e.g. The App Store, Google Play Store, PlayStation Store and Microsoft Xbox Store etc.

Both the [BBFC](#) and [PEGI](#) have search facilities on their websites that can be used to look up individual titles so you can check their ratings.



TikTok - How safe is it?

TikTok is a social media platform that lets you create, share and watch 60 second videos but how safe this social media platform is for the millions of young people who are using it every day.

Watch this 30 minute programme to help you understand [the potential risks and dangers of TikTok](#).

Online Abuse

The internet can be a great place for children and young people to play, learn and connect. But it can also put them at risk of online abuse. Any child who uses the internet can be at risk of online abuse. It's important parents are aware of the risks and talk to their child about [staying safe online](#).

Online abuse can feel even more frightening than forms of bullying which happen offline as it can feel like there is no escape

Studies show that boys are more likely to give out personal information or meet someone who they have spoken to online

What is Online Abuse?

Online abuse is any type of abuse that happens on the internet. It can happen across any device that's connected to the web, like computers, tablets and mobile phones. And it can happen anywhere online, including social media, messaging apps, emails, online chats, online games and live streaming sites.

Children can be at risk of online abuse from people they know or from strangers.

Types of Online Abuse

Children may experience different types of online abuse, such as:

- [Cyberbullying](#) - online bullying
- [Emotional abuse](#)
- [Grooming](#)
- [Sexting](#)
- [Sexual abuse](#)
- [Sexual exploitation](#)

Instagram was the most
recorded platform used in child
grooming crimes during
lockdown 2020

Signs of Online Abuse

A child experiencing abuse online might:

- Spend a lot more or a lot less time than usual online, texting, gaming or using social media
- Seem distant, upset or angry after using the internet or texting
- Be secretive about who they're talking to and what they're doing online or on their mobile phone
- Have lots of new phone numbers, texts or email addresses on their mobile phone, laptop or tablet

Girls are more likely to
chat online to people
they do not know

If a child reveals online abuse

It can be difficult to know what to say and do if a child tells you they're being abused online. They might not realise what's happening is wrong. And they might even blame themselves. If a child talks to you about online abuse it's important to:

- Listen carefully to what they're saying
- Let them know they've done the right thing by telling you
- Say you'll take them seriously
- Don't confront the alleged abuser
- Explain what you'll do next
- Report what the child has told you as soon as possible.

According to research from the
London School of Economics,
around one in seven children
reported seeing sexual images
online in the past year



How to report online abuse:

- You can report child abuse or any concerns you have about a child, anonymously if you wish, to the [NSPCC Helpline](#).

- If you're worried a child is being groomed online you should [report it online to CEOP](#).
- Any criminal images of children online, for example sexual/naked photos, should be reported to the [Internet Watch Foundation](#).
- You can report directly to social media platforms if you come across harmful content. They will remove content if it violates their terms or standards, for example hateful content. [Thinkuknow provides further advice on reporting to social media sites](#).
- You can also make a report via [Report Harmful Content](#) – provided by UK Safer Internet Centre and Operated by South West Grid for Learning. This has been designed to assist everyone in reporting harmful content online.

OWN IT - DOWNLOAD IT



The BBC Own It app is a new, free app designed to support, help and advise children, in the moment, when they use their phones to chat and explore the online world. As parents it allows you to look at the expert's view on the challenges facing kids online and how the app can help children to stay safe and make smart choices.

Challenge: Do you know what 'LAG', 'V-BUCKS', 'BAE', 'ON FLEEK', 'BEEF' and 'VLOG' mean? Ask your children to explain them to you in your own version of ['Kids Explain'](#).

For more information visit [BBC OWNTIT](#) and download the app.

Further Support for Parents/Carers



- [Net Aware](#) - Your guide to the latest apps, games and social media sites kids are using.
- [Online safety advice](#) - Tools and advice will help you keep your child safe.
- [Parent Info](#) - website about life online.
- [ThinkUKnow](#) - National Crime Agency's CEOP Command about keeping children and young people safe on the internet.
- [UK Safer Internet Centre](#) - Promoting the safe and responsible use of technology for young people.
- [Internet Matters](#) - keep children safe in a digital world.

Contact us

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