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Online Safety Tips For Children





Do's

1 KEEP YOUR PERSONAL INFORMATION PRIVATE ONLINE

Only share it with people you know like friends and family. Ask a trusted adult, like your teacher or a family member, to help you change your privacy settings so that strangers can't see it.

2 SPEAK POLITELY AND BE KIND TO OTHERS WHEN YOU SPEAK TO THEM ONLINE

Treat them like you would treat them in real life and always remember your manners.

3 TELL A TRUSTED ADULT IF YOU ARE BEING BULLIED ONLINE

If other another person is sending you nasty messages, a trusted adult will be able to help you collect evidence and report the person to the relevant authorities.

4 USE PASSWORDS TO PROTECT YOUR PERSONAL INFORMATION

Ask a trusted adult to help you create a password that you can easily remember but which is hard for other people to guess.

5 ALWAYS CHECK WITH A TRUSTED ADULT FIRST BEFORE USING A DEVICE OR DOWNLOADING A NEW APP

This is so that they can check it is safe for you to use and make sure the privacy settings are right.

6 TELL A TRUSTED ADULT IF YOU SEE SOMETHING ONLINE WHICH YOU DON'T LIKE

This can include anything that upsets you, makes you feel sad or which you're unsure about.

7 USE THE INTERNET TO HAVE FUN AND TO HELP YOU FIND OUT INFORMATION ABOUT THINGS

Remember to ask your trusted adult for help and always use child friendly search engines so that the information you get back is safe.

Don'ts

1 ACCEPT FRIEND REQUESTS FROM STRANGERS OR PEOPLE YOU DON'T KNOW

Always tell a trusted adult if somebody you don't know tries to contact you online.

2 SPEND TOO MUCH TIME ON YOUR DEVICE

Instead, go out and play with your friends, get some fresh air and try to exercise more. This will help you stay fit and healthy.

3 REPLY TO MESSAGES FROM ONLINE BULLIES OR PEOPLE WHO SEND YOU NASTY MESSAGES

The most important thing to do is to tell a trusted adult and then block the person from contacting you.

4 COPY PEOPLE'S WORK ONLINE OR PRETEND IT IS YOURS



This is called plagiarism and can get you into a lot of trouble.

5 BE MEAN OR NASTY ONLINE

Behave online like you would in real life and don't post anything that can make you look like a bad person. Things that you post online can stay there for a very long time.

6 USE YOUR DEVICES CLOSE TO BEDTIME

This will allow your brain to rest so that you can get a good night's sleep, stay focused at school and perform better in class.

7 SHARE PERSONAL INFORMATION ON THE INTERNET WITH STRANGERS

Always tell a trusted adult if somebody you don't know asks you for your personal information.

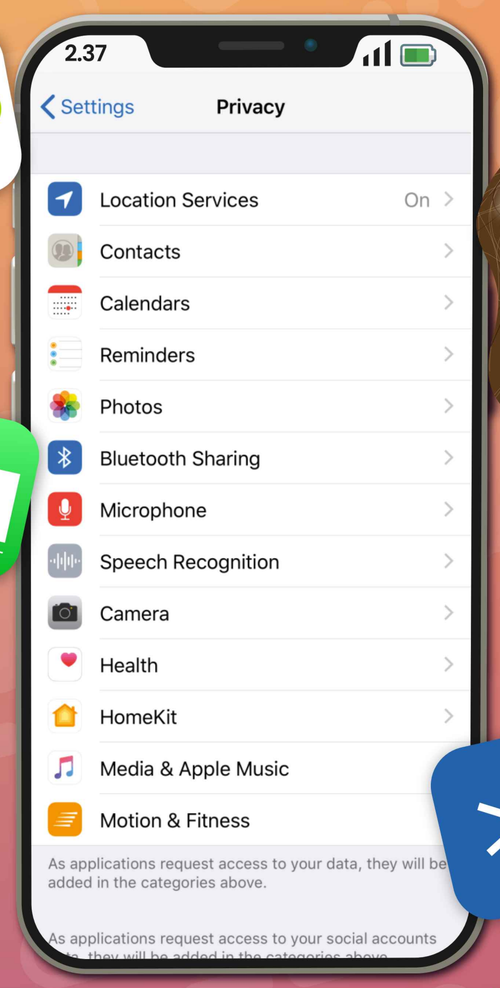
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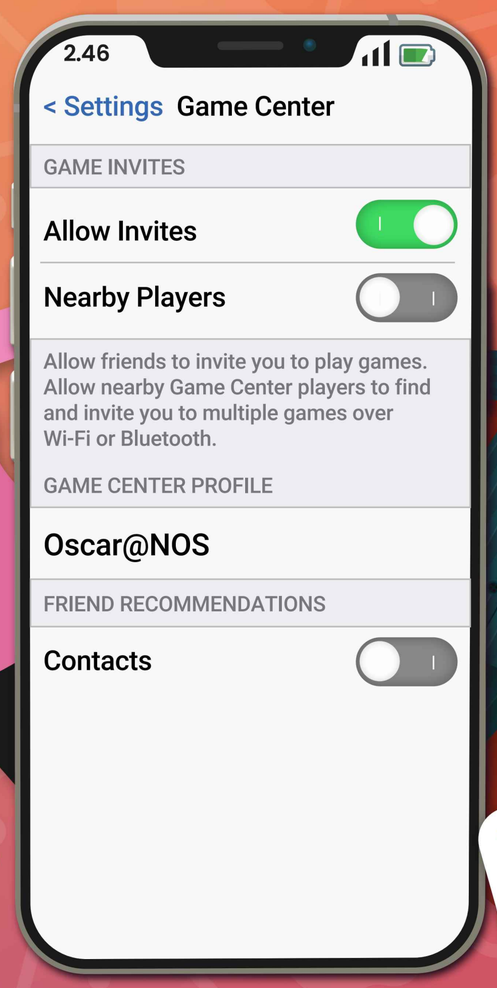
How to Set up PARENTAL CONTROLS for APPS

iPhone

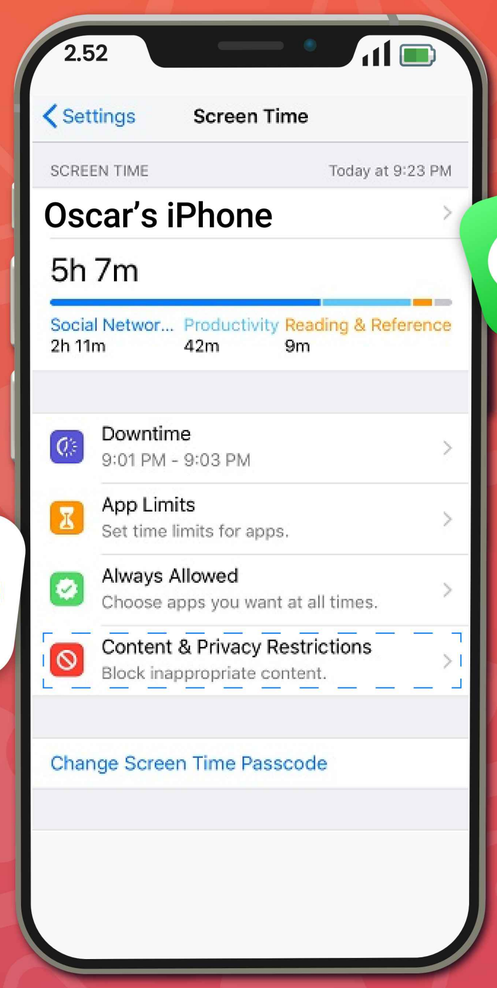
Apple devices come with built-in apps already available: Mail, FaceTime and Safari, for example. However, you can choose which apps and features appear on your child's device and which ones don't. You can also manipulate the features in Game Centre to enhance your child's safety and privacy when playing games, as well as blocking iTunes or App Store purchases if you wish.











How to Restrict Built-in Apps/Features

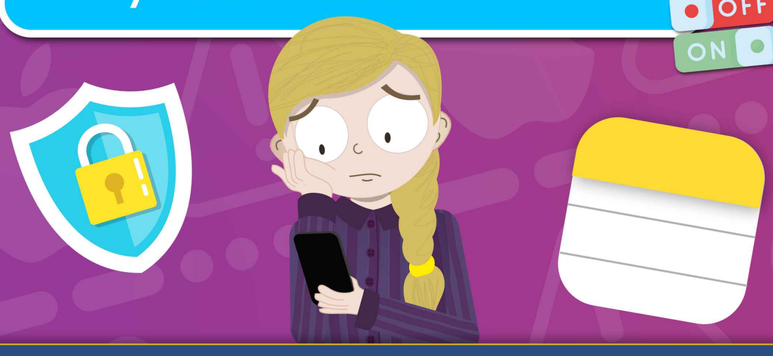
1. Open Settings
2. Tap Screen Time
3. Tap Content & Privacy Restrictions
4. Tap Allowed Apps (you may need to toggle this to 'on' at the top)
5. Enable or disable the apps you wish to appear(or disappear) on your child's device

How to Restrict Game Centre

1. Open Settings
2. Tap Screen Time
3. Tap Content & Privacy Restrictions
4. Tap Content Restrictions (you may need to switch the toggle at the top to the 'on' position)
5. Scroll down to Game Centre
6. Choose between Allow, Don't Allow, or Allow with Friends Only in the settings for each feature

How to Restrict iTunes & App Store Purchases

1. Open Settings
2. Tap Screen Time
3. Tap Content & Privacy Restrictions
4. Tap iTunes & App Store Purchases
5. Select Allow or Don't Allow for each feature (you can also lock these settings with a password)



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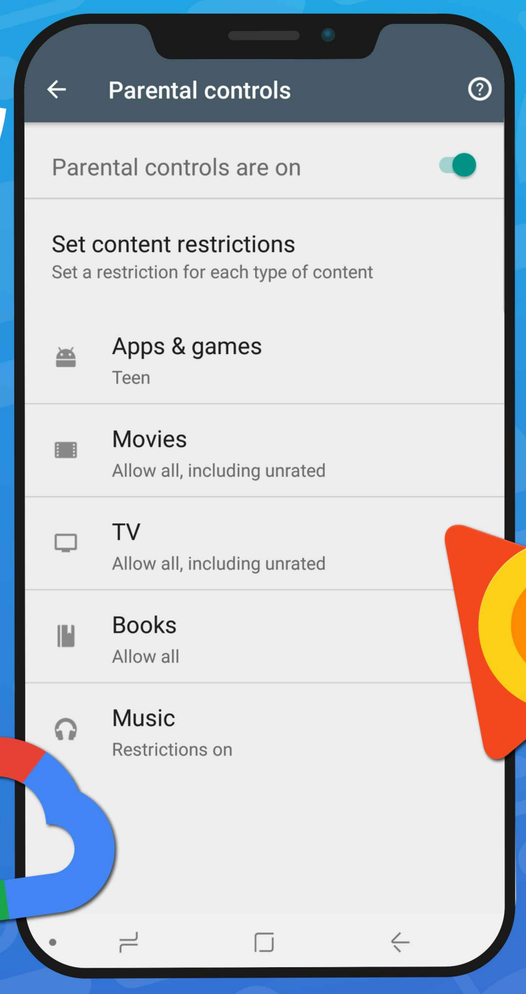
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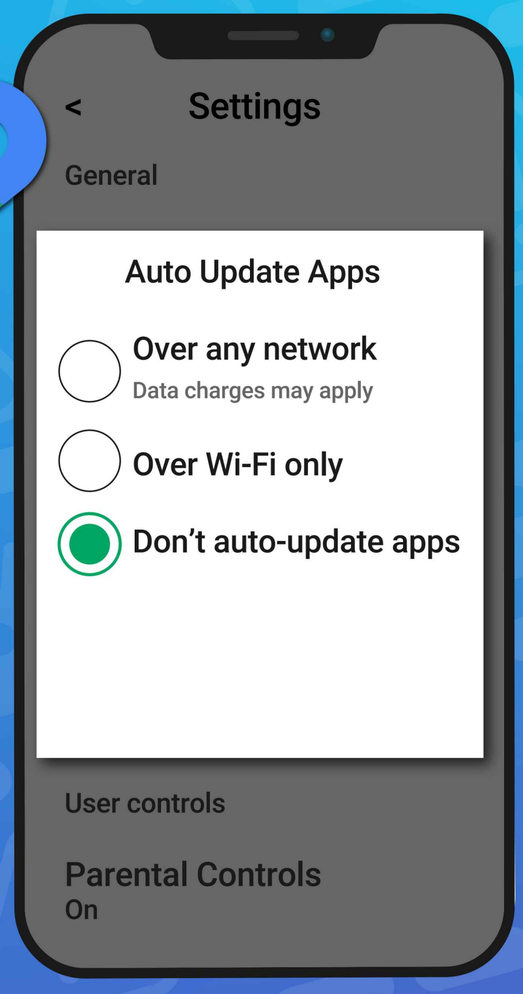
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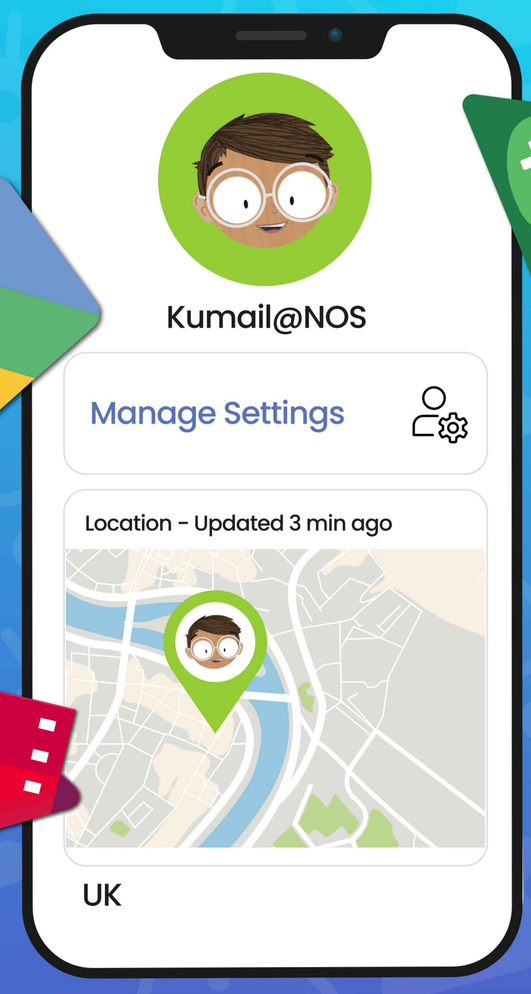
How to Set up PARENTAL CONTROLS for APPS

Android Phone

On Android phones, restricting access to particular apps usually requires going onto Google Play. From there, it's fairly easy to navigate your way through the settings to manage the parental controls and authentications relating to any apps on the device. These features can prevent your child from downloading or buying anything unsuitable for their age. Updated versions of apps or games that your child has already installed may occasionally contain something inappropriate, so we've explained how to stop those, too.





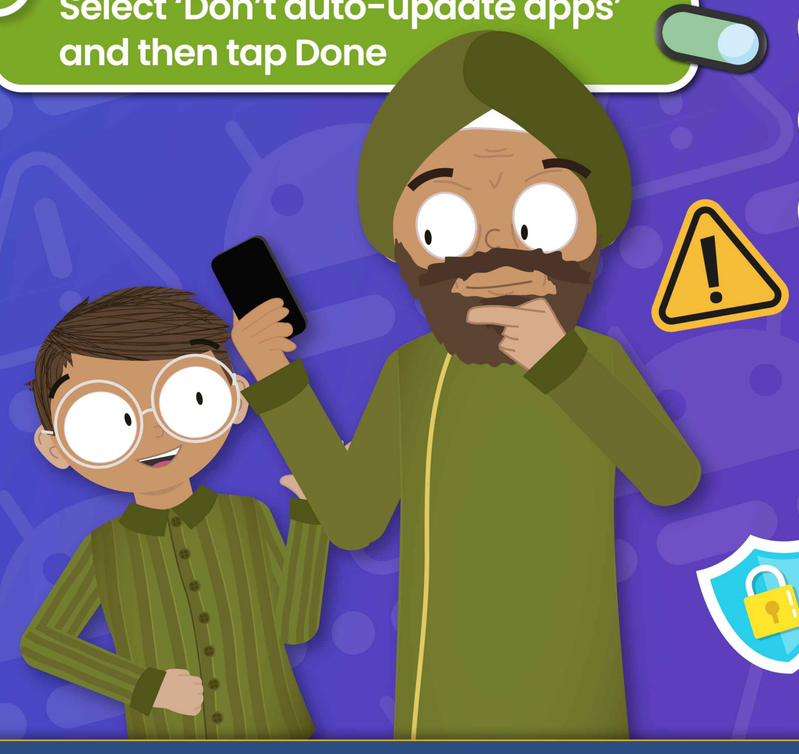


How to Block App Downloads (This Also Disables In-app Purchases):

1. Open Google Play Store
2. Tap the profile icon in the top right
3. Tap Settings
4. Scroll down to the Family section and tap Parental controls
5. Toggle 'Parental controls are off' to 'Parental controls are on'
6. Create a PIN and tap OK
7. Confirm your PIN and tap OK again
8. Tap Apps & Games
9. Set the age limit you wish to set
10. Tap Save to apply your changes

How to Stop Auto-updates

1. Open Google Play Store
2. Tap the profile icon in the top right
3. Tap Settings
4. Tap Auto-Update Apps
5. Select 'Don't auto-update apps' and then tap Done



Restricting Apps Through Google Family Link

1. Open Google Play Family Link for parents
2. Tap the three horizontal lines in the top left
3. Select your child's account
4. Tap Manage
5. Tap Controls on Google Play
6. Tap Apps & Games
7. Select the age limit you wish to set

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10 Ways You Can SHARE KINDNESS ONLINE

Last year, around one in five young people aged 10–15 in England and Wales admitted experiencing online bullying: most commonly being insulted or sworn at, or having hurtful messages sent about them. To someone who's being bullied, the world can seem like a bleak, negative place – but just one kind word can be a ray of hope: a turning point that brightens their day and refreshes their perspective. That's why 'One Kind Word' is the theme of Anti-Bullying Week 2021. We're supporting this year's event by bringing you ten top tips for beating online bullying by replacing it with kindness.



1 PRAISE WHERE IT'S DUE

Sometimes a friend or relative might post online about something they're proud to have achieved: maybe an exam they've passed, a new skill they've learned or a task they've completed. Celebrate their hard work and determination by being kind enough to praise them for it publicly.

2 REACH OUT

It's not always easy to tell what kind of mood someone is in just from what they post online. Simply dropping somebody a message to say 'hi', to ask if they're OK or to tell them that you're thinking of them could totally make their day.

3 RECOMMEND FUN THINGS

If there's something you enjoy doing online – perhaps you play a particular game, or you've found a really cool site – share it with someone you think will enjoy it. Even recommending a film or TV show you think they'll like can bring a little happiness to someone who really needs it.

4 OFFER TO HELP

Sometimes you might see a friend or family member posting a question online or asking for help with something they can't do themselves. Don't just ignore it – if you can help, get in touch. Something that's difficult for them might be no trouble for you!

5 POST POSITIVELY

Lots of people seem to go online purely to complain about things or be negative. Just because you're communicating online (and not face to face) doesn't mean you can't be positive, though! Post about things that make you happy and that you're thankful for. It could brighten someone else's day.

6 SHOW YOUR APPRECIATION

If somebody that you know has done something positive or shown kindness themselves, go online and thank them with a message or a post. Expressing your gratitude costs nothing and showing someone that you appreciate them will really make them feel good.

7 BE UNDERSTANDING

Showing empathy towards others is an act of online kindness which often gets overlooked. If you notice that someone you know is upset, drop them a message. Sometimes people just need someone else to listen to them and understand their situation.

8 SHARE INSPIRATIONAL POSTS

When you see something online that inspires you or makes you feel happy, share it with people you know. A spot-on quotation, a beautiful photo or an uplifting video can lift someone's spirits and help them to feel better about life.

9 THINK BEFORE COMMENTING

Thinking before we act can be just as important as acting in the first place. Taking a second to consider what you're saying in advance could stop you from posting something negative, hurtful or offensive – even if you don't mean to. It's better to post positively or not post at all.

10 LIKE, LOVE AND ENGAGE

If somebody posts something that you like on social media, don't just scroll past – take the time to like it, love it or leave an appreciative comment! Reacting positively to other people's posts might seem like a small gesture but could mean a lot to them.

Meet Our Expert

Carly Page is an experienced technology journalist with more than 10 years of experience in the industry. Previously the editor of tech tabloid The Inquirer, Carly is now a freelance technology journalist, editor and consultant.

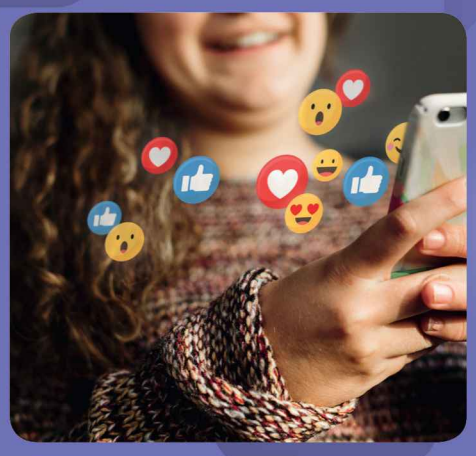
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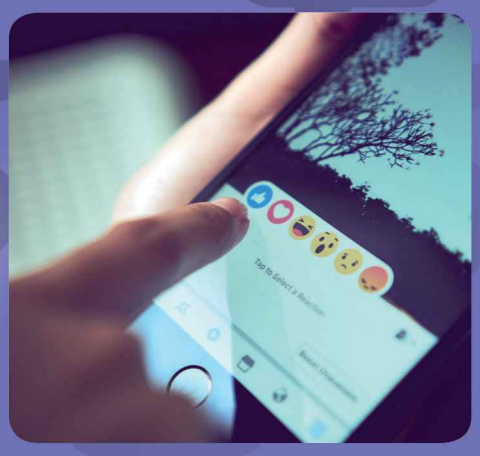
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'Likes' are a simple way for users to show that they like a post on social media. This could be anything from photos and videos to status updates and comments. The feature is widely used on several social media platforms and is extremely popular on Instagram and Facebook. It is often used by children to measure the success of their social media post and gauge opinion. However, it can also bring a number of social pressures, particularly if users start to question their own levels of popularity.



What parents need to know about SOCIAL PRESSURES LINKED TO 'LIKES'



DAMAGING TO SELF-ESTEEM

Your child may use likes to measure their own self-worth, with more likes instilling a greater level of confidence and acceptance amongst their friends and peers. However, children who only receive a small number may in turn feel a sense of rejection or isolation and could potentially suffer from low self-esteem issues, impacting them in other aspects of their life such as at school or in social settings.



AN ADDICTIVE FEATURE

Like features encourage children to stay online for longer. In doing so, your child is likely to engage with app's for longer periods than they otherwise would have wanted, checking their phone more frequently, including at night when they should be asleep. This could contribute towards screen addiction which can cause sleep deprivation and consequently a lack of focus during the next day at school.



UNREAL VIEW OF THE WORLD

Your child may follow celebrities or other popular individuals on social media who receive millions of likes. Not everything on social media is a true reflection of the world and your child may feel pressured into behaving in a similar way in real life or posting similar material in order to feel popular and achieve a similar level of self-worth.

COMPETITIVE CULTURE

Children will often compare the number of likes they receive for their post against their friends or followers, possibly evoking emotions of jealously or resentment. In a bid to increase their own status and receive more likes, this could lead to a competitive culture in which children try to better one another, potentially leading to them engaging in more and more riskier activities.



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Safety Tips For Parents



FOLLOW OR BEFRIEND YOUR CHILD ONLINE

Using the same social media sites as your child and connecting with them online will allow you to keep an eye on what their interests are and who may be influencing them. Following their likes will help you build a picture of what your child is being exposed to and what they find interesting.

MONITOR MENTAL HEALTH

If your child does post on social media, it is important to monitor their feelings and emotions, supporting them and encouraging them to talk to you about what they may be experiencing. Explain to them that not everything online is real and that life is not dictated by how many likes a post may or may not get.

ENCOURAGE HOBBIES OR OTHER ACTIVITIES

Try to help reduce your child's screen time and need for social media through encouraging them do other things such as a sport or hobby or simply playing with friends outdoors. Supporting them to take up other activities that they enjoy can also help build self-esteem and increase their own confidence.

DISCUSS THE REAL WORLD

Talk to your child about online perceptions and about what they feel is and isn't important in their life. Try to establish an open and honest conversation and speak about what they feel is acceptable to post online and if they feel pressure to conform.

HELP TO BUILD YOUR CHILD'S SELF-ESTEEM

Try to help build your child's self-esteem through positivity and praise and listening to them if they are struggling with the way they look or feel. Talk to them about the positive aspect of their personality and help them understand that looks aren't everything. Try not to criticise or blame your child which could compound any negative thoughts they are already feeling.

Meet our expert



Pete Badh is a writer with over 10+ years in research and analysis. Working within a specialist area for West Yorkshire Police, Pete has contributed work which has been pivotal in successfully winning high profile cases in court as well as writing as a subject matter expert for industry handbooks.

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What Parents & Carers Need to Know about

BEREAL

BeReal is the latest trending social media app. The concept is that people see others in their authentic day-to-day lives, sharing candid photos without editing or applying filters. Each day at a random time, users are simultaneously notified to take a picture of what they're doing at that exact moment. The two-minute window to submit an image means there's no time to select a particularly glamorous or exciting activity. BeReal shares two pictures: a selfie, and an image of the immediate surroundings. Users can only view and react to their friends' photos once they upload their own.

AGE RATING 13+ from the App Store & Google Play

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

CONTINUOUS NOTIFICATIONS

Like any social media app, BeReal's developers want users to be on it regularly and scrolling for long periods. BeReal only sends one notification to post a picture each day, but there are other alerts for events such as mentions, comments, friend requests and reactions to your photo. This can cause young users to feel pressure to open the app and respond, distracting them from other activities.

EASY LOCATION

BeReal's default setting is to share the exact location of where a post was sent from. Given that images are usually shared within the two-minute window, anyone your child is friends with on the app will know exactly where they are (or at least, where they *were* two minutes earlier). As we've noted, this could include strangers who are intending to use this geographical information for malicious purposes.

CONNECTING WITH STRANGERS

When someone signs up to BeReal, it highlights anyone in their phone's contacts list who already has the app – so users can connect with friends, or invite others from their contacts. The 'Discovery' feed, meanwhile, shows posts from strangers and gives users the option to add them as friends, too. This means your child could potentially connect with – and communicate with – a stranger.

VISIBLE PERSONAL DATA

As with any other form of social media, it's important that your child doesn't share too much personal information on their profile. BeReal allows for a photo, full name, approximate location and a short bio. It's safest to make sure that your child's profile doesn't display anything which could identify where they go to school or exactly where they live.

PUBLIC SHARING

As well as sharing posts with friends in the moment, the app also allows posts to be shared publicly and public content to be viewed. Before a user can see this public content, they must post their own photo first. Unfortunately, there currently seems to be a lack of moderation on the content that's being uploaded, so a young user could be exposed to posts which aren't suitable for their age.

REPUTATIONAL DAMAGE

What your child says and does online – their digital footprint – shapes the way that other people see them. It's essential that young people understand that when they post something online, they are giving the app in question the right to do whatever they wish with that image or content, including sharing it elsewhere. This form of permission is explicitly referenced in BeReal's terms of use.

Advice for Parents & Carers

LIMIT NOTIFICATIONS

BeReal offers the option to turn off individual types of notification. Doing this will significantly reduce the number of times your child is tempted to open the app by incoming comments, uploads, friend requests and so on. Ironically, it will allow them to actually 'be real' by being present in the moment and their current environment as opposed to being engrossed on social media.

KEEP IT AMONG FRIENDS

Remind your child why adding strangers to their contacts isn't a good idea, and advise them to decline any friend requests from people they don't know in real life. If something your child sees on BeReal makes them feel uncomfortable, they can report it by clicking on the three dots in the top right. The reporting tool allows them to state the reason that they're flagging up the post.

STOP AND THINK

BeReal's goal is for users to be authentic with friends, removing the pressure of that flawless photo or perfectly worded post. It's still vital, though, that children stop and think rather than uploading something risky just to meet the two-minute deadline. Point out to them what kind of information strangers could extract from an image: school crests, street names or local landmarks, for example.

CREATE A SAFE PROFILE

Remind your child to use an avatar as their profile pic (as opposed to a photo of themselves) and use a nickname or just their first name, not their full name. Any information they add to their bio (which is optional) should be kept vague, and personal details should remain private. It's also worth turning off the geolocation feature either through the device's settings or in BeReal itself.

Meet Our Expert



Dr Claire Sutherland is an online safety consultant, educator and researcher who has developed and implemented anti-bullying and cyber safety policies for schools. She has written various academic papers and carried out research for the Australian government comparing internet use and sexting behaviour of young people in the UK, USA and Australia.

Sources: https://bere.al/en/privacy | https://bere.al/en/terms
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What Parents & Carers Need to Know about DISCORD

AGE RATING 13+

Servers and channels marked as 'NSFW' require users to be 18 or older to join.

Discord is a free app which allows users to communicate in real time via text, video or voice chat. Available on desktop and mobile devices, it was originally designed to help gamers cooperate – but has evolved into a more general networking platform for a range of online communities, discussing topics like TV series, music, Web3 and more. Discord is organised around closed groups, referred to as 'servers'. To join a server, users must be invited or provided with a unique link. It's a space for users to interact with friends, meet others with shared interests and collaborate privately online — but it's also a place where young people can be exposed to risks if the right precautions aren't taken.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

CYBERBULLYING

Discord's easy accessibility and connectivity, unfortunately, makes it an ideal place for cyberbullying to occur – especially as audio and video streams disappear once they've ended, meaning that bullying could take place without leaving any evidence. Closed groups can also be created, giving young people the opportunity to exclude their peers or send cruel messages without adult oversight.

DIFFICULT TO MODERATE

Like many private communication apps, Discord's real-time messaging can be difficult to control. The system enables content moderation through each individual server – so different groups can set their own rules for what's acceptable, and some groups may not monitor for unsuitable content. Anything that happens in an audio or video stream is also virtually untraceable once the stream has concluded.

INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

Discord mainly hosts private groups, making it easier for unsuitable or explicit content to be shared on channels. Pornography, racism and inappropriate language can be found in some groups. Server owners are required to add an age-restriction gate to channels where 18+ content is being shared – but this solution isn't foolproof, as the platform doesn't always verify users' ages when they sign up.

ACCESSIBLE TO PREDATORS

On many chat platforms, users can lie about their age or true identity – and Discord is no exception. Predators have attempted to abuse the platform by using it to contact and communicate with underage users – by initially chatting with a child on an age-appropriate channel, for example. While Discord *has* improved its safety settings, some users will still try to bypass them for malicious reasons.

CRIMINAL ACTIVITY

Discord *does* have strict Terms of Service and Community Guidelines to protect its users – but, sadly, not everyone adheres to them. Criminal activity including grooming, hate speech, harassment, exploitative content, doxxing and extremist or violent material have all been found on Discord servers over the last two years. In 2020, Discord received almost 27,000 reports of illegal activity on the platform.

Advice for Parents & Carers

REVIEW SAFETY SETTINGS

Discord has a series of safety settings, enabling users to choose who can direct message them or send them friend requests. Your child's experience on Discord will be much safer if the app's privacy and safety settings are configured to only allow messages or friend requests from server members. This will minimise the chances of potential predators from outside the group contacting them.

EXPLAIN AGE FILTERING

While Discord requires users to be at least 13 to sign up, many servers geared towards older users are flagged as NSFW (not safe for work), which indicates they probably contain material that's inappropriate for children. It can be easy to click through settings without properly reviewing them, so ensure your child understands why age filtering is important and that it's there to protect them.

SCREEN OUT EXPLICIT CONTENT

In the privacy and safety settings, Discord users are offered the ability to filter direct messages for inappropriate content: a setting that should be enabled if your child uses the platform. Discord automatically tries to flag *images* that are explicit, but the setting must be manually enabled for text. If a young user is sent explicit content in a direct message, Discord will scan and (if necessary) delete it.

MONITOR ONLINE ACTIVITY

It's wise to regularly review your child's activity on Discord. This can include checking their safety settings to ensure they're correctly enabled, talking about which servers they've joined and reviewing some of their friends and direct messages. Ask if anything has made them feel uncomfortable or unsafe. Things can change quickly online, so plan routine check-ins and follow up frequently.

DISCUSS GOOD ONLINE BEHAVIOUR

The anonymity offered by the internet often leads people to communicate more openly online and behave differently than they would at school or home. It's crucial to bear in mind, though, that every internet user is still a real person. Talk to your child about the severe and lasting consequences that cyberbullying or exchanging inappropriate material online can have in the real world.

HAVE CANDID CONVERSATIONS

It can sometimes be awkward to discuss topics like grooming, pornography, racism or explicit content with your child – but it's important to ensure they're aware of the harms these things can pose. Talking openly about these subjects is a great way to help your child feel more comfortable about coming to you if they experience an unwanted encounter on Discord (or anywhere else online).

Meet Our Expert



Coral Cripps is a Canadian-born, London-based tech journalist at gmw3.com: a website specialising in all things Web3, gaming and XR (extended reality). With a focus on brands and culture, she researches and writes about the ways that our current innovations — including the metaverse and Web3 — are impacting people, places and things.

Sources: https://www.defendyoungminds.com/post/dangers-of-discord-6-steps-safeguarding-teens-on-popular-chat-app | https://support.discord.com
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At National Online Safety we believe in empowering parents, carers and trusted adults with the information they need to hold an informed conversation about online safety with their children, should they feel it is needed. This guide focuses on one platform of many which we believe trusted adults should be aware of. Please visit www.nationalonlinesafety.com for further guides, hints and tips for adults.

What parents need to know about INSTAGRAM

AGE RESTRICTION 13+ Anyone over the age of 13 can create an account

Instagram is a hugely popular social networking app with over 1 billion users worldwide. The app, which is accessible on iOS and Android devices, allows users to upload images and videos to their feed, create interactive 'stories', exchange private messages or search, explore and follow other accounts they like. Images and videos can be transformed with an array of filters to edit the shot before sharing and anyone with an account can see others' online 'galleries' if their account is not private. To make posts easier to find, users can include searchable hashtags and captions to their uploads. That's why we've created this guide to help parents and carers understand exactly what Instagram is about.

HOOKED ON SCROLLING

Many social media platforms, Instagram included, have been designed in a way to keep us engaged on them for as long as possible. Behavioural economist, Nir Eyal, calls this the 'Hook Model' and the Instagram feed is a great example of this. Children and adults may find themselves scrolling to try and get a 'dopamine release'. Scrolling may become addictive and it can be difficult to stop until children find that 'something' they are looking for, quickly losing track of time as they get deeper into their Instagram feed.

SLIDING INTO DMS

Direct messages (or DMs) on Instagram allow users to share posts, images, videos, voice messages and calls between each other privately (or in a private group). Even if your child's account is set to private, anybody has the option to message them and send them content. If the person is not on your child's friends list, the message will still be sent to their inbox but the user has to accept their request to see the message.

INFLUENCER CULTURE

Influencers are sometimes paid thousands of pounds to promote a product, service, app and much more on social media. When celebrities or influencers post such an advert, they should add a disclaimer somewhere in the post which states that they have been paid for it. Commonly, this is well-hidden in the hashtags or in the comments of their post, making it unclear that their photo/video is actually an advert. This can be very misleading to young people who may be influenced into buying/wanting something promoted by somebody they admire, creating a false sense of reality and potentially affecting their mental health and wellbeing.

IMPACT ON WELLBEING

In a report by the RSPH, Instagram was ranked the worst for young people's mental health. Using filters on photos on Instagram can set unrealistic expectations and create feelings of inadequacy. Children may strive for more 'likes' by using realistically edited photos. Judging themselves against other users on the app might threaten their confidence or self-worth. In early 2019, Instagram banned images of self-harm and suicide, following the suicide of 14-year-old Molly Russell, who had reportedly been looking at such material on the platform. They since extended the ban to include drawings, cartoons and memes.

LIVE STREAMING TO STRANGERS

Live streaming on Instagram allows users to connect with friends and followers in real-time and comment on videos during broadcast. If your child's account is private, only their approved followers can see their story. It's important to note they may have accepted a friend request from someone they don't know, which means they could be live streaming to strangers. Children also risk sharing content they later regret, which could be re-shared online for years to come. Public accounts allow anybody to view, so we suggest your child blocks followers they don't know. In early 2019, data gathered by the NSPCC found that sex offenders were grooming children on Instagram more than on any other online platform.

IN-APP PAYMENTS

Instagram allows payments for products directly through the app. It operates under the same rules as Facebook Payments, which state that if you are under the age of 18, you can only use this feature with the involvement of a parent or guardian.

EXPOSING LOCATION

Public locations can be added to a user's photos/videos and also to their stories. While this may seem like a good idea at the time, it can expose the location of your child. This is particularly more of a risk if it is on their story, as it is real time. A photo which includes landmarks in the area, their school uniform, street name, house and even tagging in the location of the photo uploaded to Instagram can expose the child's location, making it easy to locate them. If their account is public, anyone can access their account and see their location.

HIJACKED HASHTAGS

Hashtags are an integral part of how Instagram works, but they can come with risks. One person may use a seemingly innocent hashtag with one particular thing in mind, and before you know it hundreds of people could be using the same hashtag for something inappropriate or dangerous that your child shouldn't be exposed to.

IGTV

Instagram TV (IGTV) works similar to YouTube. Users can watch videos from favourite accounts on the platform or create their own channel and post their own videos. It's important to note anyone can create an Instagram TV channel and doesn't have to be friends with a person to follow an account and watch their videos. In 2018 Instagram apologised and removed some of its TV content which featured sexually suggestive imagery of children. As the feature may encourage spending more time using the app, it's important to set time limits to avoid children's sleep or education being disturbed.

Top Tips for Parents & Carers

RESTRICT DIRECT MESSAGES

If your child receives a message from somebody they do not know, encourage them not to accept their message request and 'block' this person; this is the only way to stop them messaging your child again. Children can also 'tap and hold' the individual message to report it directly to Instagram as well as reporting the account itself.

LOOK OUT FOR #ADS

In 2019, the UK's Competition and Markets Authority launched an investigation into celebrities who were posting adverts on social media and not declaring that they were paid for. Influencers must clearly state that they have been paid for their posts, for example using a hashtag like #ad or #sponsored. Teach your child to look out for the signs of a paid post/advert and discuss with them that not everything they see from celebrities is their personal choice and opinion.

MANAGE NEGATIVE INTERACTIONS

If your child is receiving unwanted or negative comments, they can block that account so that they can't interact with them. This stops them seeing and commenting on their posts, stories and live broadcasts. In addition, your child can instantly delete unwanted comments from their posts, turn them off completely and control who can tag and mention them in comments, captions or stories, from everyone, only people they follow, or no one at all.

MANAGE DIGITAL WELLBEING

Instagram now has an in-built activity dashboard that allows users to monitor and control how much time they spend on the app. Users can add a 'daily reminder' to set a limit on how much time they want to spend on Instagram, prompting them to consider if its been too long. In addition, once users have caught up with all the previous posts since they last logged on, they'll receive a 'You've completely caught up' message. Both features can help you have a conversation with your child about how much time they are spending on the app and to set healthy time limits.

PROTECT PERSONAL INFORMATION

Your child may unknowingly give away personal information on their profile or in their live streams. Talk to them about what their personal information is and make sure that they do not disclose anything, including their location, to anyone during a livestream, comment, direct message or any other tool for communication on the platform, even to their friends.

USE A PRIVATE ACCOUNT

By default, any image or video your child uploads to Instagram is visible to anyone. A private account means that you have to approve a request if somebody wants to follow you and only people you approve will see your posts and videos. Children should also use a secure password and enable a two-factor authentication to add an extra layer of security to their account.

FILTER INAPPROPRIATE COMMENTS

Instagram has an 'anti-bullying' filter, which hides comments relating to a person's appearance or character, as well as threats to a person's wellbeing or health. The filter will also alert Instagram to repeated problems so that they can take action against the user if necessary. This is an automatic filter, which should always be enabled. Children can also report abusive behaviour or inappropriate/offensive material directly to Instagram from the app. This includes posts, comments and accounts.

TURN OFF SHARING

Even though this feature will not stop people from taking screenshots, it will stop others being able to directly share photos and videos from a story as a message to another user. This feature can be turned off in the settings. We also recommend turning off the feature which automatically shares photos and videos from a story to a Facebook account.

REMOVE PAYMENT METHODS

If you are happy for your child to have a card associated with their Instagram account, we suggest adding a PIN which needs to be entered before making a payment; this will also help prevent unauthorised purchases. This can be added in the payment settings tab.

DON'T FORGET TO BE VIGILANT & TALK TO YOUR CHILD ABOUT THEIR ONLINE ACTIVITIES!

Meet our expert



Parven Kaur is a social media expert and digital media consultant who is passionate about improving digital literacy for parents and children. She has extensive experience of working in the social media arena and is the founder of Kids N Clicks, a web resource helping parents and children thrive in a digital world.

NEW FOR 2020 INSTAGRAM REELS

Instagram Reels is the latest update from Instagram that gives users the ability to record and edit 15-second multi-clip videos with audio, effects, and new creative tools. It is the apps answer to TikTok and can be accessed via the Stories feature. Reels can be shared with friends and family, however, if your child has a public account, it could be shared wider via 'Explore' and viewed by millions of strangers online.

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SOURCES:
https://about.instagram.com/about-us | https://about.instagram.com/community/safety | https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-47410520

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What Parents & Carers Need to Know about SNAPCHAT

AGE RESTRICTION 13+

Snapchat is a photo- and video-sharing app which also allows users to chat with friends via text or audio. Users can share images and videos with specific friends, or through a 'story' (documenting the previous 24 hours) visible to their entire friend list. Snapchat usage rose during the pandemic, with many young people utilising it to connect with their peers. The app continues to develop features to engage an even larger audience and emulate current trends, rivalling platforms such as TikTok and Instagram.

CONNECTING WITH STRANGERS

Even if your child only connects on the app with people they know, they may still receive friend requests from strangers. Snapchat's links with apps such as Wink and Hoop have increased this possibility. Accepting a request means that children are then disclosing personal information through the Story, SnapMap and Spotlight features. This could allow predators to gain their trust for sinister purposes.

EXCESSIVE USE

There are many features that are attractive to users and keep them excited about the app. Snap streaks encourage users to send snaps daily, Spotlight Challenges give users to the chance to obtain money and online fame, and the Spotlight feature's scroll of videos makes it easy for children to spend hours watching content.

INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

Some videos and posts on Snapchat are not suitable for children. The hashtags used to group content are determined by the poster, so an innocent search term could still yield age-inappropriate results. The app's Discover function lets users swipe through snippets of news stories and trending articles that often include adult content. There is currently no way to turn off this feature.

CAUTION



SEXTING

Sexting continues to be a risk associated with Snapchat. The app's 'disappearing messages' feature makes it easy for young people (teens in particular) to share explicit images on impulse. While these pictures *do* disappear – and the sender is notified if it has been screenshotted first – users have found alternative methods to save images, such as taking pictures with a separate device.

DAMAGE TO CONFIDENCE

Snapchat's filters and lenses are a popular way for users to enhance their 'selfie game'. Although many are designed to entertain or amuse, the 'beautify' filters on photos can set unrealistic body image expectations and create feelings of inadequacy. Comparing themselves unfavourably against other Snapchat users could threaten a child's confidence or sense of self-worth.

VISIBLE LOCATION

My Places lets users check in and search for popular spots nearby – such as restaurants, parks or shopping centres – and recommend them to their friends. The potential issue with a young person consistently checking into locations on Snapchat is that it allows other users in their friends list (even people they have only ever met online) to see where they currently are and where they regularly go.

Advice for Parents & Carers

TURN OFF QUICK ADD

The Quick Add function helps people find each other on the app. This function works based on mutual friends or whether someone's number is in your child's contacts list. Explain to your child that this feature could potentially make their profile visible to strangers. We recommend that your child turns off Quick Add, which can be done in the settings (accessed via the cog icon).

CHOOSE GOOD CONNECTIONS

Snapchat has recently announced that it is rolling out a new safety feature: users will receive notifications reminding them of the importance of maintaining connections with people they actually know well, as opposed to strangers. This 'Friend Check Up' encourages users to delete connections with users they rarely communicate with, to maintain their online safety and privacy.

TALK ABOUT SEXTING

It may feel like an awkward conversation (and one that young people can be reluctant to have) but it is important to talk openly and non-judgementally about sexting. Discuss the legal implications of sending, receiving or sharing explicit images, as well as the possible emotional impact. Emphasise that your child should never feel pressured into sexting – and that if they receive unwanted explicit images, they should tell a trusted adult straight away.

CHAT ABOUT CONTENT

Talk to your child about what is and isn't wise to share on Snapchat (e.g. don't post explicit images or videos, or display identifiable details like their school uniform). Remind them that once something is online, the creator loses control over where it might end up – and who with. Additionally, Snapchat's 'Spotlight' feature has a #challenge like TikTok's: it's vital that your child understands the potentially harmful consequences of taking part in these challenges.

KEEP ACCOUNTS PRIVATE

Profiles are private by default, but children may make them public to gain more followers. Your child can send Snaps directly to friends, but Stories are visible to everyone they have added, unless they change the settings. If they use SnapMaps, their location is visible unless 'Ghost Mode' is enabled (again via settings). It's prudent to emphasise the importance of not adding people they don't know in real life. This is particularly important with the addition of My Places, which allows other Snapchatters to see the places your child regularly visits and checks in. Additionally, it's important to be cautious about Shared Stories as this allows people who are not on your contact list access to the post.

BE READY TO BLOCK AND REPORT

If a stranger *does* connect with your child on Snapchat and begins to make them feel uncomfortable through bullying, pressure to send explicit images or by sending explicit images to them, your child can select the three dots on that person's profile and choose report or block. There are options to state why they are reporting that user (annoying or malicious messages, spam, or masquerading as someone else, for example).

Meet Our Expert



Dr Claire Sutherland is an online safety consultant, educator and researcher who has developed and implemented anti-bullying and cyber safety policies for schools. She has written various academic papers and carried out research for the Australian government comparing internet use and sexting behaviour of young people in the UK, USA and Australia.

Sources: Status of Mind: Social media and young people's mental health | Life in Likes - Children's Commissioners Report | https://support.snapchat.com/en-US https://netsanity.net/snapchat-parent-review/ | BT.com | Independent.co.uk, https://mashable.com/article/snapchat-status-snap-maps/?europe=true, eSafety Commissioner, (2017), Young People and Sexting – Attitudes and Behaviours: Research Findings from the United Kingdom, New Zealand and Australia.

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What Parents & Carers Need to Know about TIKTOK

AGE RESTRICTION 13+

TikTok is a video-sharing social media app which lets people create, view and download looping 15-second clips. Typically, these are videos of users lip-syncing and dancing to popular songs or soundbites (often for comic purposes), enhanced with filters, effects and text. Designed with young people in mind, TikTok skyrocketed in popularity in 2019 and has featured near the top of download charts ever since. It now has around a billion users worldwide.

AGE-INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

Most videos appearing on a child's feed are light-hearted and amusing. However, some clips have been reported for featuring drug and alcohol abuse, themes of suicide and self-harm, or young teens acting in a sexually suggestive way. The sheer volume of uploads is impossible to moderate entirely – and since TikTok Jump's introduction in mid-2021, users can view third-party content outside the app.

EXPLICIT SONGS

TikTok primarily revolves around videos of users lip-syncing and dancing to music. Inevitably, some featured songs will contain explicit or suggestive lyrics. Given the app's young user-base, there is a risk that children may view older users' videos and then be inclined to imitate any explicit language or suggestive actions.

TIKTOK FAME

The app has created its own celebrities: Charli D'Amelio and Lil Nas X, for example, were catapulted to fame by exposure on TikTok – leading to many more teens attempting to go viral and become "TikTok famous". While most aspiring stars hoping to be 'the next big thing' will find it difficult, setbacks may in turn prompt them to go to even more drastic lengths to get noticed.

HAZARDOUS VISIBILITY

Connecting with others is simple on TikTok – including commenting on and reacting to users' videos, following their profile and downloading their content. The majority of these interactions are harmless, but – because of its abundance of teen users – TikTok *has* experienced problems with predators contacting young people.

ADDICTIVE NATURE

Like all social media, TikTok is designed to be addictive. It can be hugely entertaining – but that also makes it hard to put down. As well as the punchy nature of the short video format, the app's ability to keep users intrigued about what's coming next mean it's easy for a 5-minute visit to turn into a 45-minute stay.

IN-APP SPENDING

There's an in-app option to purchase 'TikTok coins', which are then converted into digital rewards for sending to content creators that a user likes. Prices range from 99p to an eye-watering £99 bundle. TikTok is also connected with Shopify, which allows users to buy products through the app.

Advice for Parents & Carers

TALK ABOUT ONLINE CONTENT

Assuming your child is above TikTok's age limit, talk to them about what they've viewed on the app. Ask their opinion on what's appropriate and what isn't. Explain why they shouldn't give out personal details or upload videos which reveal information like their school or home address. In the long run, teaching them to think critically about what they see on TikTok could help them to become social-media savvy.

MAINTAIN PRIVACY SETTINGS

The default setting for all under 16s' accounts to 'private'. Keeping it that way is the safest solution: it means only users who your child approves can watch their videos. The 'Stitch' (which lets users splice clips from other people's videos into their own) and 'Duet' (where you build on another user's content by recording your own video alongside their original) features are now only available to over 16s. This might clash with your child's ambitions of social media stardom, but it will fortify their account against predators.

LEARN ABOUT REPORTING AND BLOCKING

With the correct privacy settings applied, TikTok is a relatively safe space. However, in case something *does* slip through, make sure your child knows how to recognise and report inappropriate content and get them to come to you about anything upsetting that they've seen. TikTok allows users to report anyone breaching its guidelines, while you can also block individual users through their profile.

ENABLE FAMILY PAIRING

'Family Pairing' lets parents and carers link their own TikTok account to their child's. Through your mobile, you can control your child's safety settings remotely – including limiting screen time, managing their ability to exchange messages (and with whom) and blocking a lot of age-inappropriate content. TikTok's Safety Centre also provides resources for parents and carers to support online safety among families. These resources can be found on their website.

USE RESTRICTED MODE

In the app's 'Digital Wellbeing' section, you can filter out inappropriate content (specific content creators or hashtags, for instance) using 'Restricted Mode'. This can then be locked with a PIN. You should note, though, that the algorithm moderating content isn't totally dependable – so it's wise to stay aware of what your child is watching.

MODERATE SCREEN TIME

As entertaining as TikTok is, you can help your child to manage their time on it in the 'Digital Wellbeing' section. Under 'Screen Time Management', you can limit the daily permitted time on the app (in increments ranging from 40 minutes to two hours). This preference can also be locked behind a PIN. That way, your child can get their regular dose of TikTok without wasting the whole day.

Meet Our Expert



Parven Kaur is a social media expert and digital media consultant who is passionate about improving digital literacy for parents and children. She has extensive experience in the social media arena and is the founder of Kids N Clicks: a web resource that helps parents and children thrive in a digital world.

SOURCES TikTok.com

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What parents & carers need to know about...

XBOX SERIES X|S



The Xbox Series X and Series S are the next-generation video game consoles from Microsoft. They offer improved graphics, sounds and much quicker loading times. Parents should note that the two versions available are quite different.

Safely Setting up Your Xbox Series X / S

Xbox Series X

Xbox Series X is a larger device, with a disc drive, twice as much storage and higher performance chips. It can play the new Xbox games at the highest resolution and with the best visuals. It enables you to run games from disc or digitally.

Xbox Series S

Xbox Series S is a smaller, disc-less version of the console which plays all the new games but with reduced visuals or possibly frame-rates. Because it doesn't support discs you can't play old games from discs and must purchase new games digitally. It also has smaller storage, offering 500GB which is about half that of the Xbox Series X.



Apply Family Settings

Both Xbox models offer important family controls that should be set-up before your family starts using the system. Although this can take a little time, it ensures that children have their own accounts and sets limits on spending, interactions and age ratings. If done correctly, children cannot circumvent these controls that require the parent's password to alter.

Setting Age-Ratings

You can set a limit that stops any older rated games being played without a password being entered. This is not only a good way to ensure children are playing appropriate content but is a good chance to talk about the games they are playing.

Managing Spending

You can set a limit on spending via the family settings. This means that any additional purchase requires your password. Another alternative is not to put credit card details into your account and instead add credit as they need it using the book-token-like cards in-store or online.

Managing Online Interactions

Another important area of the Family Settings is specifying how and who your child can interact with online. Modern consoles enable players to share text, voice, images and video with each other. You can set whether they can do this, and also apply a password before they can add new friends.

Setting Limits on Play-Time

You can specify the time of day and how long the console can be used to play without needing a password. Talk to you children and agree how long is appropriate, then set this together so it's something they understand and accept. On the Xbox Series X|S you can also limit time on a particular game, which is a good way to encourage children to play a wide range of experiences.

Creating Guest Account Password

An important step on the Xbox Series X|S set-up is specifying a passcode for your own account and a password to access the Guest account. This ensures that all users need to access the system with their own account and related limits and settings.

Game Subscriptions

In addition to buying individual games digitally or in-store, you can also subscribe to services that offer access to 100's of games for a monthly fee. Xbox Game Pass is often bundled with the Xbox Gold subscription you need for playing online. Most of the bigger Xbox games are provided as part of the service, as well as a wide range of independent games that often offer educational and wellbeing based experiences.

Types of Accounts

Set-Up Parent Accounts

Setting up a parents account is important so you can manage the console for your family. After downloading the Xbox app to aid set-up, connect to the internet and while the console updates, use the app to start specifying settings. Once updated, create a parent user account with an email address you regularly check and password specified.

Set-Up Child Accounts

Setting up child accounts are important to be able to limit play-time, spending and apply age ratings automatically. Separate accounts for each child user can be set-up. It's a good idea to specify a password for the guest account so children cannot access this also. You can also download the Xbox Family Settings app to help you adjust these settings in the future without having to access the console directly.

Meet our expert

Freelance family technology expert for the BBC. Andy runs the Family Gamer TV YouTube channel and contributes to a range of national media on the topic of video-games and family.





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What Parents & Carers Need to Know about YOUTUBE

YouTube is a video-sharing social media platform that allows billions of people around the world to watch, share and upload their own videos with a vast range of content – including sport, entertainment, education and lots more. It's a superb space for people to consume content that they're interested in. As a result, this astronomically popular platform has had a huge social impact: influencing online culture on a global scale and creating new celebrities.

INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

YouTube is free and can be accessed via numerous devices, even without creating a YouTube account. Some content is flagged as 'age-restricted' (requiring the user to be logged into an account with a verified age of 18), but children can still view some mildly inappropriate material. This can include profanity and violence, which some young users may find upsetting.

HIGH VISIBILITY

Content creators can also be put at risk – especially young ones who try to make their online presence as visible as possible. Creating and uploading content exposes children to potential harassment and toxicity from the comments section, along with the possibility of direct messaging from strangers. Videos posted publicly can be watched by anyone in the world.

CONNECT WITH STRANGERS

YouTube is a social media platform which allows people to interact with other (usually unknown) users. Account holders can leave comments on any video they have access to, as well as messaging other users directly. Connecting with strangers online, of course, can potentially lead to children being exposed to adult language, to cyberbullying and even to encountering online predators.

TRENDS AND CHALLENGES

YouTube is teeming with trends, challenges and memes that are fun to watch and join in with. Children often find these immensely entertaining and might want to try them out. Most challenges tend to be safe, but many others may harm children through either watching or copying. The painful 'salt and ice challenge', which can cause injuries very quickly, is just one of many such examples.

SUGGESTED CONTENT

YouTube recommends videos related to what the user has previously watched on their account, aiming to provide content that will interest them. This is intended to be helpful but can also lead to binge-watching and the risk of screen addiction, especially if 'auto-play' is activated. Users without an account are shown popular videos from the last 24 hours, which might not always be suitable for children.

SNEAKY SCAMMERS

Popular YouTube channels regularly have scammers posing as a well-known influencer in the comments section, attempting to lure users into clicking on their phishing links. Scammers impersonate YouTubers by adopting their names and profile images, and sometimes offer cash gifts or 'get rich quick' schemes. Children may not realise that these users are not who they claim to be.

Advice for Parents & Carers

APPLY RESTRICTED MODE

Restricted Mode is an optional setting that prevents YouTube from showing inappropriate content (such as drug and alcohol abuse, graphic violence and sexual situations) to underage viewers. To prevent your child from chancing across age-inappropriate content on the platform, we would recommend enabling Restricted Mode on each device that your child uses to access YouTube.

TRY GOOGLE FAMILY

Creating a Google Family account allows you to monitor what your child is watching, uploading and sharing with other users. It will also display their recently watched videos, searches and recommended videos. In general, a Google Family account gives you an oversight of how your child is using sites like YouTube and helps you ensure they are only accessing appropriate content.

CHECK PRIVACY SETTINGS

YouTube gives users the option of uploading videos as 'private' or 'unlisted' – so they could be shared exclusively with family and friends, for example. Comments on videos can also be disabled and channels that your child is subscribed to can be hidden. If your child is only uploading videos that are protected as 'private', they are far less likely to receive direct messages from strangers.

CHECK OTHER PLATFORMS

Influential content creators usually have other social media accounts which they encourage their fans to follow. Having an open discussion about this with your child makes it easier to find out how else they might be following a particular creator online. It also opens up avenues for you to check out that creator's other channels to see what type of content your child is being exposed to.

MONITOR ENGAGEMENT

YouTube is the online viewing platform of choice for billions of people, many of them children. Younger children will watch different content to older ones, of course, and react to content differently. You may want to keep an eye on how your child interacts with content on YouTube – and, if applicable, with content creators – to understand the types of videos they are interested in.

LIMIT SPENDING

Although YouTube is free, it *does* offer some in-app purchases: users can rent and buy TV shows and movies to watch, for example. If you're not comfortable with your child purchasing content online, limit their access to your bank cards and online payment methods. Many parents have discovered to their cost that a child happily devouring a paid-for series quickly leads to an unexpected bill!

Meet Our Expert

Clare Godwin (a.k.a. Lunawolf) has worked as an editor and journalist in the gaming industry since 2015, providing websites with event coverage, reviews and gaming guides. She is the owner of Lunawolf Gaming and is currently working on various gaming-related projects including game development and writing non-fiction books.

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