



A Guide For Parents and Carers



Champions for children and families

Rules and Boundaries

- If you set the rules and boundaries at the very beginning, before you give your child a phone/tablet, you can help keep your child safe online without having to invade their privacy.
- Just as you protect them from people and experiences in the real world, you can help them explore the online world in a safer environment using various controls.

Health experts follow NHS and World Health Organization (WHO) advice when setting screen time recommendations by age. These aren't just guidelines, they are backed by science and shaped by real-world parenting challenges. Each age group has its own needs:-

0 – 2 Years:	No Screen Time at All
2 – 4 Years:	No More Than One Hour Per Day
5 – 11 Years:	Limit to Two Hours Non-Educational Screen Time
12+ Years:	Continue Limits with Open Conversations

No Screens at Night

Research shows that screen use in bed affects children's sleep, their development and their mental health negatively.

- No devices at night, turn off all screens at least 60 minutes before bed.
- Engage them in non-screen activities, reading, listening to music, taking a walk.
- Keep phones and tablets downstairs (if they have them, they will use them!)
- Buy an alarm clock and let them wake up the old-fashioned way.

Keeping Your Children Safe Online

Most Social Media apps have minimum age limits of 13 such as Tiktok, Instagram and Snapchat. Tiktok has default private accounts for ages 13-15 and Family Pairing to link parents to their children's accounts for stricter, customised controls. Instagram has an automatic Teen Accounts for users aged 13-17. Snapchat provides strict default privacy settings for teens aged 13-17 and a Family Centre Feature for parental oversight. Children should not be using these apps below 13 years of age.



WhatsApp's minimum age limit is also 13. Privacy settings allow you to prevent contacts and people you don't know adding you to groups without your permission. It is advisable to keep your child's Whatsapp groups small (not whole class) and restricted to people they know in person.

New Apps will become popular as they are developed. It is important to find out about these apps and make sure they are safe for your child to use.

Sites such as Internet Matters can offer some guidance

<https://www.internetmatters.org/>

Parental Controls

Both Apple and Android phone systems allow you to control both the amount of time and what your child can access online. Both you and your child will need to have the same phone systems ie both Apple or both Android.

Apple Devices

Apple devices have a number of parental controls that you can use to keep your child safe online:-

Screen Time

Screen time for iPhone and iPad lets you keep track of what you and your children do and see online. Use Downtime to block apps and notifications for specific periods, like dinnertime. And with App Limits, you can set a time limit for websites, individual apps or categories of apps e.g. Games or Social Networking

Ask to Buy

With Ask to Buy, you get a notification every time your child tries to buy an app from the App Store, a TV programme or film on Apple TV+ or a book on Apple Books. You will then have the option to decline or accept the request.

Location Sharing

With Location Sharing, you can keep track of your family's devices, including when they're offline, so you know everyone's in a safe place. You can also track down lost devices with Precision Finding, even if they're travelling round town on the floor of a bus. Each person can decide whether to share their location and make their devices visible in the Find My app.

Notifications

Set up custom notifications to receive automatic alerts that let you know when someone arrives, leaves, or isn't at a particular location — like work, school, or a friend's house. All it takes is a couple of taps in the Find My app. And each person has the choice to opt in, so everyone's privacy is respected.

<https://www.apple.com/uk/family-sharing/>

Android Devices (all non Apple brands)

The Family Link App

This can be downloaded from The Playstore. There is one app for your phone and a different one for your child's.

Everything is controlled in one place including screen time, downtime, app approval, app time limits, app age limits and location information. You can also set notifications to inform you when your child arrives/leaves a destination such as school.

These apps allow you to control what your child can access online and the amount of time they are online. It is important to keep an open dialogue with your children as they mature.

After 13

At 13 years old, your child can decide whether they wish to continue with parental controls. If parents agree with children to keep parental controls they can slowly release more screen time, raise age limits and stop location sharing when they feel their children are ready. This is very much as you slowly allow your child to go out and explore the real world one step at a time.



It is really important to keep an open dialogue with your children as they mature in order that they can share any questions or concerns they have about content that they see.

Algorithms

Many Apps use algorithms to identify, amplify and sustain trends by focusing on user retention, audio engagement and content velocity. In simple terms, the more you watch something, the more of it you will see.

When explored safely, the internet is an amazing tool. It enables instant global communication, provides unparalleled access to information and enhances daily life through convenient services like online banking and shopping.

As parents and guardians of young people, just as you do in the real world you have a responsibility to help them navigate the online world in the safest way possible

Useful Links

NSPCC

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk>

Useful information on how to talk to your children about AI and digital safety.

NSPCC

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/quiz/>

Online Safety quiz to complete with your child.

Childline

<https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/online-mobile-safety/staying-safe-online/>

Taking control of your online safety.

