

# Protecting your child in the digital world

## An internet and TV safety guide for parents

Going online and watching TV are an everyday part of children's lives. Children often have their own media devices and TVs, and new websites and gadgets are appearing all the time. It's a tough job keeping up with it all and there's a fine line between both encouraging and protecting at the same time.



There may be unsuitable content on the internet and the television that you don't want your child to see. But you can take steps to protect your children from the potential dangers and this guide explains how to do that.

### The internet

The internet has lots of activities that are both educational and fun. However, although the internet offers numerous benefits, there are some risks. Most children won't run into any trouble but here are some tips on keeping your child safe online.

#### Educate yourself

**Get to know how your children use the internet.** Ask them to show you some of their favourite sites and talk about them. Make them aware that there are things on the internet which may upset them and that they can always talk to you at any time. **Be aware of any changes** in the way they use the internet, such as the amount of time they spend online or how often they access the internet through their smart phone.

There are some risks that children may encounter whilst online. People might not be who they say they are. There may also be things that you don't want your children to see. There are lots of organisations which can provide you with information and advice. For example, check out CEOP's Think You Know website (<https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/>) or the UK Safer Internet Centre ([www.saferinternet.org.uk](http://www.saferinternet.org.uk)).

**Understanding the dangers of cyber-bullying** will also help you keep your child safe online. There's help and support available at BeatBullying [www.beatbullying.org](http://www.beatbullying.org), tel: 0208 771 3377; ChildLine [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk), tel: 0800 1111; and Childnet International [www.childnet.org](http://www.childnet.org), tel: 020 7639 6967.

12-15 year olds are spending as much time on the internet (17 hours a week) as they do watching TV.

One in ten (9%) 3-4 year olds use a tablet computer at home, according to their parents.

More than a fifth of children watch television between 9 - 10pm alone.

One in five children aged 5-15 go online via a mobile phone (22%), and 44% of 12-15s do so

Four fifths of parents of 5-15 year olds who go online at home say they have rules in place about their children's internet usage – such as checking what their child is doing online or setting time.

More than two in five parents (44%) of children aged 5-15 who use the internet at home have spoken to their child about staying safe online at least once a month limits.

**Ofcom research October 2012**

## Talk to your children about the risks

Make sure your children realise **they should never give out personal details** – such as name, address, school and telephone numbers – to online friends they have not met face-to-face, and tell them never to respond to junk email or open attachments that are from people they don't know.

Work with your children to **understand how search engines work** so that they don't stumble across unsuitable content and are able to find the information they need quickly and efficiently.

## Find ways of being with your child when they are online

This will make it easier for you to see what your child is looking at online. **Sit with young children** when they are using the internet. With older children, you could agree limits on the amount of time they spend online.

## Set up parental controls

**Parental controls** are designed to help you have more control over how features of the internet are used. They will not make the internet completely safe, but they are a good way of preventing children from accessing some inappropriate and harmful content.

All of the UK's big broadband providers offer parental control software for their customers. Each package is different, but most do the following:

- Restrict access to inappropriate content.
- Limit the amount of time your children can be online, or how long they can access certain sites.
- Monitor and inform you if your children attempt to gain access to particular websites.

You can phone your broadband service provider or check their website to see what parental controls they offer.

## Adjust browser settings

Some search engines – including Google, Yahoo and Bing – offer 'safe search' settings which enable you to filter out the sites you don't want your children to see.

If your children watch programmes or films online, many providers offer tools you can use to prevent them seeing unsuitable content.

For example, the BBC iPlayer has a **Parental Guidance Lock** which enables you to control which BBC programmes may be accessed on your computer. You can find out more here <http://www.bbc.co.uk/guidance/>

## TV

With so many TV channels and programmes, it can be difficult to monitor what children are watching all the time. There will be things you don't want your child to see but there are ways to ensure your child enjoys a safe TV experience.

## Set up parental controls

Many digital TV providers allow you to set controls which restrict specific channels or programmes.

If you are unsure how to activate your parental control features – or if you want to see whether your TV system has such a facility – check the TV system instructions booklet. You can also phone your service provider, check their website or check with the original retailer.

## Further help and advice

Make sure your child knows the **SMART** rules...

**S – Safe.** Do not give out personal information when chatting or posting online. Personal information includes your email address, phone number and password.

**M – Meeting.** Meeting someone you have only been in touch with online can be dangerous.

**A – Accepting.** Accepting emails, IM messages, or opening files, pictures or texts from people you don't know or trust can lead to problems – they may contain viruses or nasty messages.

**R – Reliable.** Someone online might lie about who they are and information on the internet may not be true. Always check information with other websites, books or someone who knows. If you like chatting online it's best to only chat to real world friends and family.

**T – Tell.** Tell your parent, carer or a trusted adult if someone or something makes you feel uncomfortable or worried, or if you or someone you know is being bullied online.

There are lots of organisations that can provide you with information and advice. Take a look at the websites below.

<http://www.getsafeonline.co.uk>

<http://www.childnet.com>

<http://www.childline.org.uk>

<http://www.thinkyouknow.co.uk/>

<http://www.saferinternet.org.uk>

<http://www.iwf.org.uk>

<http://www.beatbullying.org>

<http://www.sky.com/shop/freesat/home/>

<http://www.freesat.co.uk>

<http://www.topuptv.com>

<http://www.sky.com>

<http://www.virginmedia.com>

<http://www.bt.com/vision>

<http://www.freeview.co.uk>