

# Online Safety in the Early Years

*Guidance and support for parents and carers.*





*Be Safe*



*Be Kind*



*Talk Together*



*Agree Together*



*Explore Together*

# Online safety for under 5's

As parents and carers, online safety for children at this age begins with you.



Young children are accessing ever-changing technologies from increasingly younger ages.

Being online has many benefits for younger children, including opportunities to develop language skills, solve problems, interact with others, develop their curiosity and creativity, build positive relationships, explore the world around them, learn and have fun!

However, there may be risks if children are:

- being exposed to inappropriate content
- not being supervised
- spending too much time online
- sharing personal information

This guide will give you some practical tips and advice on how to support your child to be safe online.



# Be Safe



**As adults, we need to ensure children are protected from exposure to content that is not age inappropriate.**

- **Use parental controls**

Use parental controls on your home internet, phone network and online services. These will filter out inappropriate content and you can also set time limits and apply age restrictions for games.

(See **useful links section** for more info.)

- **Use safe search and safe mode**

Set your search engine (Google, Bing, Microsoft Edge etc) to a safe mode or use safe search engines such as swiggle.org.uk or kids-search.com or kiddie.co. It is also advisable that you set YouTube search to 'restricted mode'.

(See **useful links section** for more info.)

- **Use passwords**

Have strong passwords on devices and do not share them with your child. You can also turn off in-app purchases and protect them with a password.

- **Monitor age ratings of apps, games etc**

Games and apps have age ratings like films, which are determined by the content. Ensure you are aware of the age-rating for any app or game your child is using. You could set up bookmarks to age-appropriate content or a folder of apps and programs.

(See **useful links section** for more info.)



# Agree Together

Agree together as a family on the rules and boundaries around using technology in your home.



Agree on the times of day your child can use devices to be online. Remember to model good habits yourself, don't use mobile devices at mealtimes if you don't want your child doing this. It is preferable to limit screen time before bed as it may affect sleep quality.

Agree together on which devices your child can use and keep devices you don't want them to touch out of your child's reach.

Agree on where your child will use devices in your home. We would advise that young children only use devices in shared spaces such as the living-room or kitchen, as you are there to supervise and support if they stumble across something which could worry, upset or confuse them.

Agree together on how to look after the devices being used and where they are kept.

Agree together on time limits, you could use a timer to help, or give your child a 5 minute warning before "times up". It may be useful to have agreed on a different 'offline' activity you will do together when screen time is over. However, you need to clear and consistent with whatever strategies you agree on.

Agree together on which age appropriate apps, websites and programmes your child can access and for them to always ask permission first before they click on something new.

Agree together that if your child sees anything online which makes them feel sad, worried or scared they should tell you or another adult they trust.



# Be Kind

Role model the behaviour you want to see from your child...what you do is much more important than what you say!



## Promote positive online behaviour

- Encourage your child to be kind and respectful online. You can do this by modelling using positive language in online social interactions.
- Explain to your child that being kind online ensures everyone has a good time.
- Leading by example is the best way to support your child to develop their own positive digital behaviours from an early age. Showing them how to respond to others with compassion and empathy both 'offline' and 'online' is particularly important in preventing cyberbullying.
- Let your child hear you ask permission from others before sharing or tagging a photo of someone else (adults and children), your child will learn that they should ask too before sharing anything online.



# Explore Together

Young children can explore, say, share, make, do and watch online. Doing this with you is the best way for them to learn how to do this safely and build their digital resilience.



Get involved, play games with your child, watch their favourite programmes with them. This gives you an opportunity to engage with your child and ask questions, such as, Who is their favourite character and why? Why do they like it? What could happen next? How do you do that bit?



Explore any new apps, games, websites or programmes together so you can help your child find their way around, answer their questions and see if it is suitable for them.



Introduce your child to different content, there are many high-quality age-appropriate media that can support your child to create, connect and learn. (See **Useful Links – age appropriate media** for more info)



Most importantly, have fun together!



# Talk Together

It is important to start having conversations with your under 5 about staying safe online.



Fife's Early Years Digital Strategy Group have devised these questions you could use to start conversations about online safety with your young child. They could be linked to stories, activities you're doing or just used when you are online together.

## Relationships: friends/rivals

- Should you touch other people's phones, tablets, laptops without asking first?
- What should you do if you see/hear something online that upsets you?
- Who can you talk to about anything that upsets you online?
- How can friends talk to each other using technology?
- Do you hear parents/siblings speaking to people online when they are playing games?
- Can what you say to people make them feel happy/sad/excited/lonely/cared for etc.?
- Can pictures and videos you see online make you feel happy/sad/excited/lonely/cared for etc.?
- Do you play games against other people online? (rivals)  
How should you speak to rivals online?

## Boundaries: rules

- What rules do you have in the nursery when using technologies?
- What rules do you have at home for using technologies?
- How long are you allowed on a phone/tablet/laptop (device)?
- Should you touch someone's phone/tablet etc without asking first?
- Do we have different rules for using different technologies?
- Who made the rules?
- Why do we need rules for using technologies?
- Who can we ask to help us learn the rules?
- What could happen if you touch the cables at the back of a computer?

## Safety: safe/unsafe places

- What can we do to keep ourselves safe when using a phone/tablet/laptop etc.?
- What should you do if you find somebody else's phone/tablet etc.?
- Should you answer a phone?
- Should you touch/use someone else's phone/laptop etc. without asking them first (permission)?
- Is your big brothers/sister's laptop/phone etc. safe to use without permission?

## Trust: telling the truth

- Is it safe to answer a phone?
- Do people always tell the truth online?
- Are all pictures real online?
- Do parents/siblings etc. have online accounts with profile pictures?
- Do they always use their own picture?

## Behaviour: right and wrong choices

- Who looks after digital devices in the nursery?
- Who looks after digital devices at home?
- How should you look after digital devices/equipment?
- How can you share digital devices/equipment with others?
- What do you do if you have an accident with digital devices/equipment?
- How much does it cost to buy/replace digital devices/equipment?



# Useful Links



Thinkuknow - age 4-7

Internet Matters - age 0-5

Childnet - info for parents/carers

Safer Internet - parents guide to technology

Guidelines issued on activity and screen time for babies and toddlers - NHS



## Parental Controls

Internet Matters - parental controls

Parental Controls - Xbox One and Windows 10 devices

## Safe search/mode

Google Safe Search Instructions

Bing Safe Search Instructions

Youtube restricted mode

## Reporting Concerns

Child Exploitation and Online Protection

Report Harmful Content

## Age-appropriate media

Common Sense Media

NSPCC - info on Apps

PEGI age ratings



Created by Amanda Higgins,  
Peripatetic Nursery Teacher at  
Blairhall, Torryburn and Tulliallan  
Nurseries

