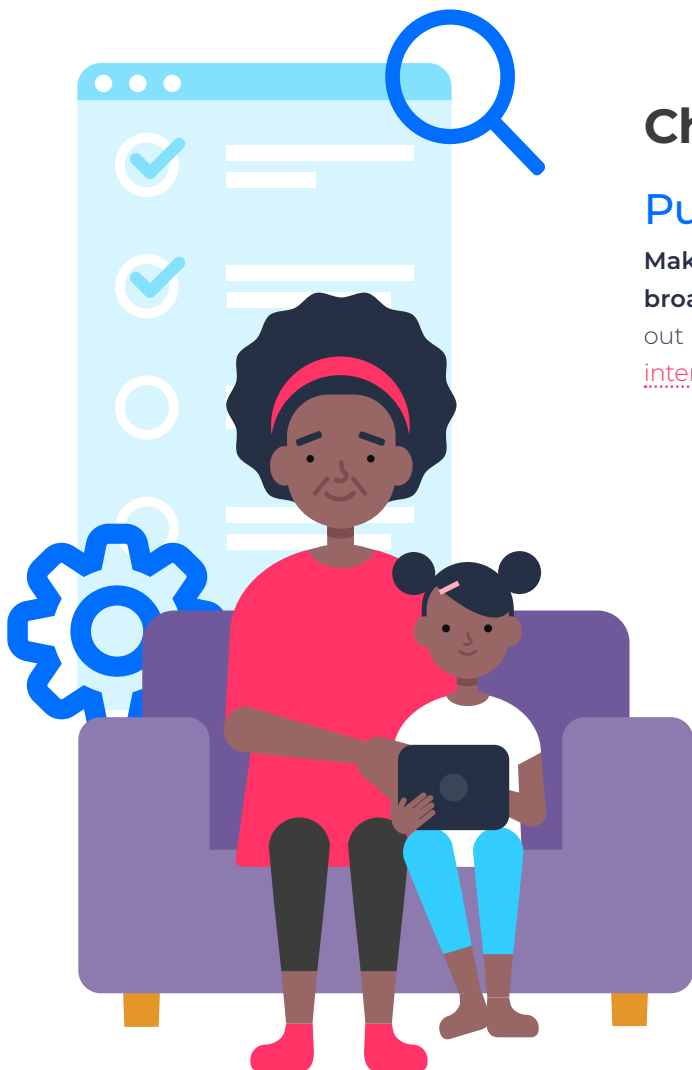
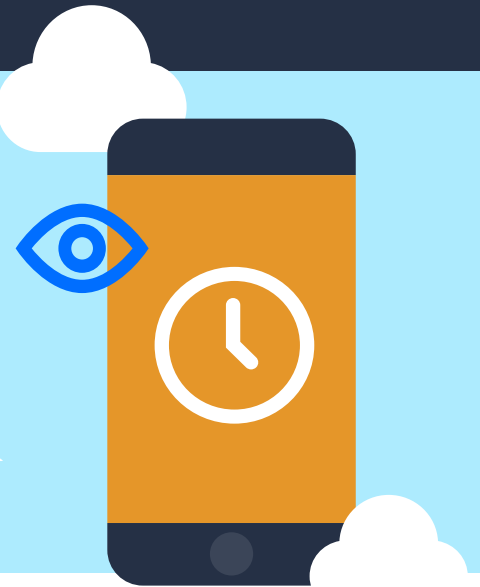


Online safety tips for parents of pre-school children 0-5 Year Olds

internet
matters.org

22% of parents of 3-4-year-olds don't think their child has a good balance between screen time and other activities

* Source: [Ofcom Children and parents: media use and attitudes report 2022](#)



Checklist:

Put yourself in control

Make use parental controls available on your home broadband and any internet-enabled devices. You can find out how at your broadband provider's website or [by visiting internetmatters.org](#).

Search safely

Use safe search engines such as [swiggle.org.uk](#) or [kids-search.com](#). **Safe search settings can also be activated on Google and other search engines** as well as YouTube and it is possible to lock these so that they can't be inadvertently removed. You can find out more by [visiting the Google Safety Centre](#). Once you've put all of these controls in place have a browse and search for a few things to see what your children might see, if they were to do the same. Remember that voice-activated search works really well now.

Set boundaries

It's never too early to start setting rules about when and for how long your child can use devices and start to introduce the subject of internet safety at the same time. Encourage children to use devices in a shared spaces like a lounge or kitchen. Make sure to keep other devices out of reach and use passwords so they can't go online without asking you first. It's also a good idea to have tech-free mealtimes and not to allow children to have devices in their bedrooms at this age.

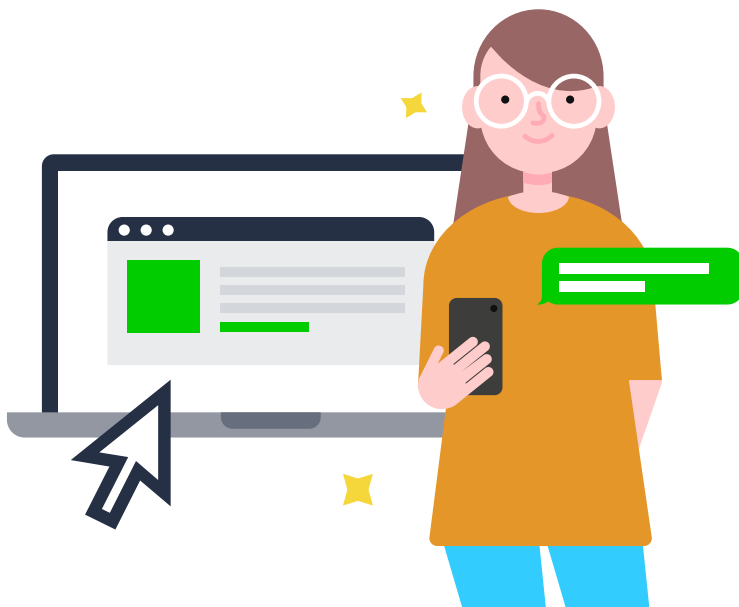
Explore together

Set your homepage to a child-friendly site such as CBeebies and give them a user account which only allows access to sites and apps you've chosen.

Help them learn through games

Games are a great way for young children to explore the internet and learn about the world around them.

Choose a variety of safe and educational online games and apps to play with your child so that you'll feel more comfortable with them exploring. Make use of websites and platforms designed specifically for pre-schoolers like CBeebies, YouTube Kids, Nick Jr, and use [age ratings](#) and reviews in the app store to check app suitability.




Know this stuff matters, but don't know where to turn?


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Scan below or visit [internetmatters.org](https://www.internetmatters.org) for more advice





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Online safety tips for parents of primary school children 6-10 Year Olds

internet matters.org



Checklist:

Agree on boundaries

Be clear about what your child can and can't do online – where and when they can use the internet, how much time they can spend online, the sites they can visit and the type of information they can share. Agree with your child when they can have a mobile phone or tablet.

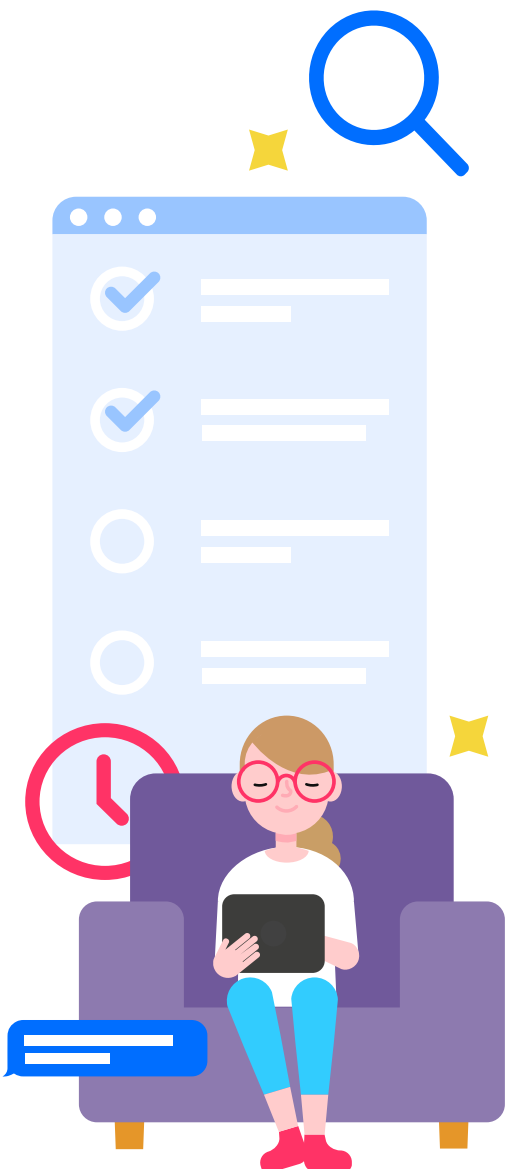
When you do give them their first device make sure that it is set up appropriately for them with the right parental controls in place. It's a good idea to **introduce tech-free meal times** and encourage them to **keep phones out of the bedroom at night** to help them build a healthy screen time balance.

Put yourself in control

Set parental controls on your home broadband and any internet-enabled devices. Set up a user account for your child on the main device they use and make sure other accounts in the household are password-protected so that younger children can't access them by accident.

Explore together

The best way to support your child online is to **talk to them about what they do online** and what sites and apps they like to use. Be inquisitive and ask them to show you their favourites to check they're suitable.



Search safely

If you let your child search independently, **make sure safe search is activated on Google and other search engines**, as well as restricted mode on YouTube. You can set your default search to one designed specifically for children, such as Swiggle, and can save time by adding these to your Favourites.

Check if it's suitable

The age ratings that come with games, apps, films and social networks are a good guide to whether they're suitable for your child. **For example, the minimum age limit is 13 for several social networking sites**, including Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat and TikTok.

Make use of platforms and services designed with children in mind like CBBC, YouTube Kids, Sky Kids, BBC iPlayerKids. Although sites aimed at under-10s like Spotlite (Formerly Kudos) also have social networking elements. See other similar social networking sites built for kids in our ['Social networks made for kids' guide](#).

Stay involved

Encourage them to use their tech devices in a shared space like the lounge or kitchen so you can keep an eye on how they're using the internet and also share in their enjoyment.

Talk to siblings

It's a good idea to talk to any older children about what they're doing online and what they show to younger children. **Encourage them to be responsible and help keep their younger siblings safe.**



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44%

of 5-10 year olds
have their own
mobile phone*

81%

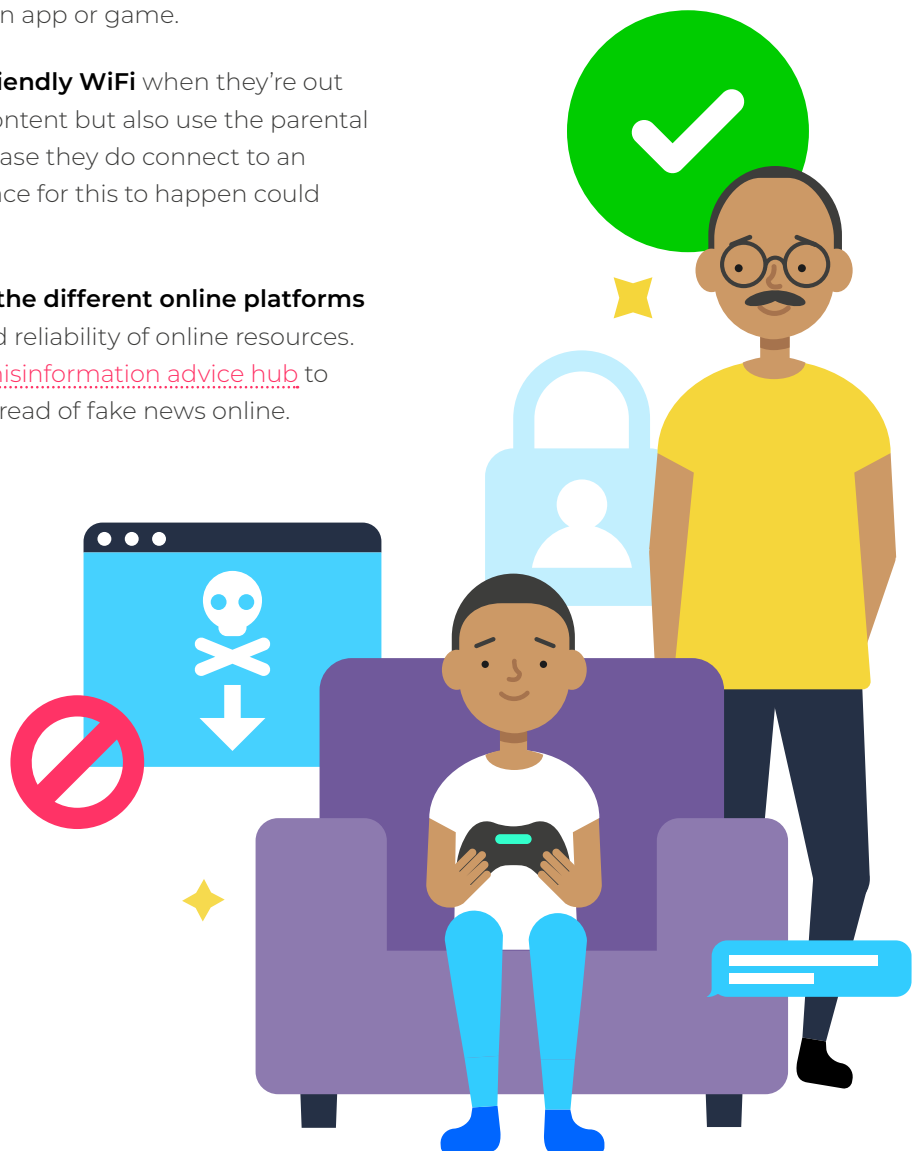
use a tablet
to go online*

*Source: Ofcom Children and parents: Media use and attitudes report 2022

Learn about it:

Teach your child some simple rules

- Make sure your child knows **not to share personal information** like their phone number or email address online.
- Encourage them to **only talk to real-life friends or family** if they are on sites with a social media or chat element like Roblox.
- **Use privacy settings** wherever they exist to keep their information private - help your child to set these up. Remember that the default on many sites is public.
- **Be a good online friend** and don't say nasty things even if it's just a joke.
- Direct them to use **secure and legal sites to download** music and games to avoid experiencing the risks associated with streaming content from unauthorised sites. Visit our ['Dangers of digital piracy' advice hub](#) more advice.
- Advise them to **Check attachments and pop-ups for viruses** before they click or download anything and ask if they aren't sure. You can set up their phone/tablet so you need to grant permission before they are able to download an app or game.
- **Encourage them to use Public Friendly WiFi** when they're out and about to filter inappropriate content but also use the parental control tools on the device just in case they do connect to an unfiltered WiFi - the most likely place for this to happen could be at a friend's house.
- **Help them to better understand the different online platforms they use** and judge the quality and reliability of online resources. Take a look at our [fake news and misinformation advice hub](#) to help children spot, and stop the spread of fake news online.



Talk about it:

Tips for a meaningful conversation

- Start conversations when your children won't be embarrassed, for example in the car going home from school. **Try to de-personalise it by asking their opinion on a current news story** that relates to an online issue.
- **Be proactive - don't wait until something has already gone wrong** - discuss issues ahead of time - knowing what children of a similar age are doing will help you know more about the environment that your child is living in.
- **Ask them for advice on how to do something online** and use this as a conversation starter.
- Make sure they know they can come to you if they're upset by something they've seen online - **listen to them when they do and try not to overreact** - the important thing is that they have come and told you!
- **Be sensitive and praise them** when they share their online experiences with you.
- If your child comes to you with an issue, **stay calm and listen without judging them.**
- **Talk about online grooming as you would stranger danger** and explain that people they meet online might not be who they say they are.
- Ask them about things online which **might make them (or others) uncomfortable.**



Deal with it

You can find out where to get help and advice on the [Report issue](#) resource page of internetmatters.org, where we include information on how to report problems – and which relevant organisations and agencies to turn to.

On this page, we also provide information on how to deal with any specific issues you may encounter with your child; such as finding inappropriate content and cyberbullying.

Stay safe at secondary school


Exposure to some of these issues increases when children move up to secondary school so make sure your child is prepared – find out more with our pre-teens age guide at [internetmatters.org/advice/11-13](#)

Scan below or visit [internetmatters.org](#) for more advice





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Online safety tips for parents of teenagers 14+ Year Olds

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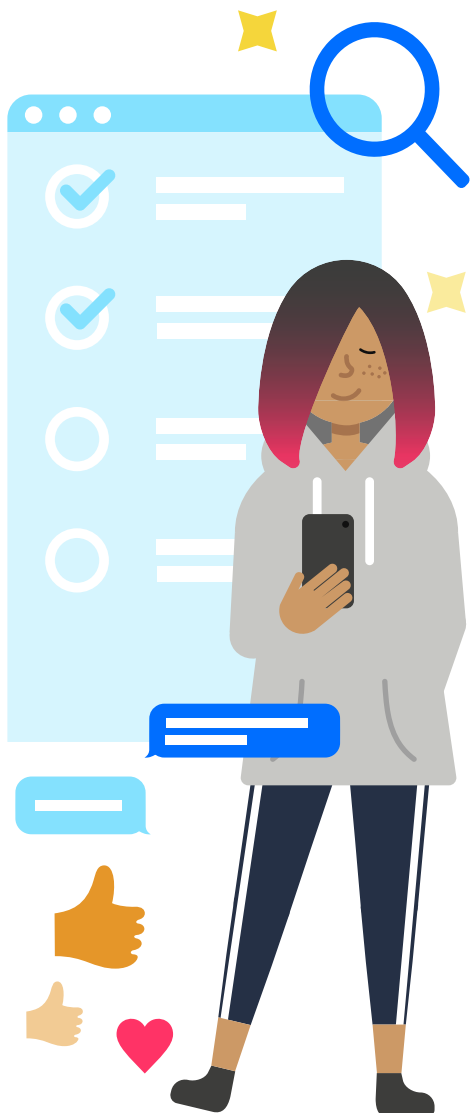
99% of 12-17-year-olds have their own mobile phone

98% use video-sharing platforms

92% have their own social media profiles

75% play games online

*Source: [Ofcom Children and parents: media use and attitudes 2022 report](#)



Checklist:

Keep talking

Stay interested in what they're doing online and discuss what they might have come across. **Don't be afraid to tackle difficult subjects like cyberbullying, and sexting and pornography.** Help them to be critical of things they see online and judge the quality and reliability of online sources. Acknowledge that this is difficult considering how content can be manipulated online to persuade even the most savvy people. Talk together about how to manage some of these challenges and why it is important.

Manage their online reputation

Let them know that anything they upload, email or message could stay online forever. **Remind them that they should only post things online that they wouldn't mind you, their teacher or a future employer seeing.** There are lots of stories in the media that highlight the importance of online reputation and clearly demonstrate how things that happened years ago can resurface in the future. See our [online reputation advice hub](#) to get tips to support young people on this issue

Adjust controls

Adjust the [parental controls](#) on your broadband and internet-enabled devices, depending on your child's age. Your broadband provider can tell you how. Find out how to set up safe search in Google by going to the [Google Safety Centre](#). Remember that at this age they are likely to have friends with unfiltered devices and whilst parental controls and filtering is important this needs to be done alongside dialogue and discussion.

Privacy matters

Make sure they set high privacy settings on social networks. Encourage them to regularly change their passwords and never to share or put online any of their personal details like phone number, address or their school. [Use our social media privacy how-to guides](#) to support them.



Stay safe on the move

Make sure safety and privacy settings are activated on their mobile devices and they aren't sharing private information. Be aware that using public WiFi might not filter inappropriate content, so look for friendly WiFi symbols when you're out and about. **Also, encourage them to use the parental control tools on their device** just in case they do connect to an unfiltered WiFi - such as at a friend's house.

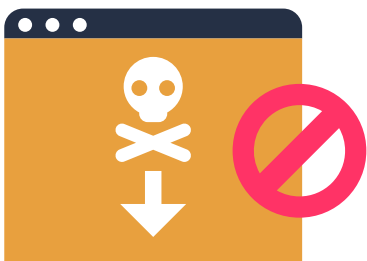


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Learn about it: Teach your child some simple rules

- Make sure your child knows how to **block abusive comments and report content** that worries them.
- Teach them to **respect others online and think about comments before they post them** and discuss how easily comments made online can be misinterpreted.
- Don't arrange to meet people in real life that they've only talked to online and **remind them that some people may not be who they say they are.**
- **Advise them to use secure and legal sites to download music and games** to avoid experiencing the risks associated with streaming content from unauthorised sites. [Visit our 'Dangers of digital piracy' advice hub](#) more advice.
- **Check attachments and pop-ups for viruses** before they click or download anything.
- When using the internet for homework, **make sure they use information appropriately** and explain things in their own words rather than copying.



Talk about it:

Tips for a meaningful conversation

- Make sure your child knows **they can come to you if they're upset by something they've seen online** and make sure that you listen and don't overreact - the important thing is that they have come to you for help and support.
- **Tell them you trust them to do the right thing** rather than over monitoring their internet use.
- If your child comes to you with an issue, **stay calm and listen without judging them** and don't threaten to take away their devices.
- **Tackle peer pressure** by explaining that if they're talked into bullying someone online or sending inappropriate images it may get reported to their school or even the police. [Learn how online actions can affect young people's reputation with our advice hub](#)
- **Talk to them about how much time they spend online** and make sure this is balanced against other activities. [See our 'Screen time guide for 14+' for age-specific advice.](#)
- Discuss how they can **report any harmful or inappropriate content or behaviour** that they encounter online - empower them to take control themselves.



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Learn more about apps

It can be difficult to stay on top of what apps your child is using and who they are talking to online – [find out more about the latest apps at internetmatters.org/apps.](#)

Scan below or visit [internetmatters.org](https://www.internetmatters.org) for more advice





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