

A parent's guide to: Discovering digital at primary school

internet
matters.org

Online safety tips to support children

What are kids doing?

Before they've even learnt to read, most can navigate through devices to play games and watch cartoons.

By the time they reach the age of 8, over two in five children own their own mobile phone with **45% using it to go online.***

YouTube is the most popular destination and an alternative to TV with **37% of under-8s citing it as the only app they use.***

*Ofcom Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes Report 2022



Online activities

- Watch videos on **YouTube**
- **Play a range of online games** from Roblox and Fortnite to Toca Boca mobile games
- **Livestreaming is very popular** and can be done on most of the main social media platforms
- Some are also using platforms like **Snapchat, Instagram and TikTok** although the minimum age for these is 13
- **Use educational apps** to supplement learning

What risks and challenges do they face?

The internet can expose children to things that they may not be ready for such as violent content, extreme ideas and adult content either by accident or through an intentional search.

As they start to communicate with others through gaming or social networks there's the temptation to overshare information that could lead to incidences of cyberbullying or put them at risk of being approached by those that may wish them harm.

Seeing inappropriate content

Like looking up rude words in the dictionary back in the day, children remain curious creatures looking to push boundaries and be in the know about things they may have heard about on the school playground.

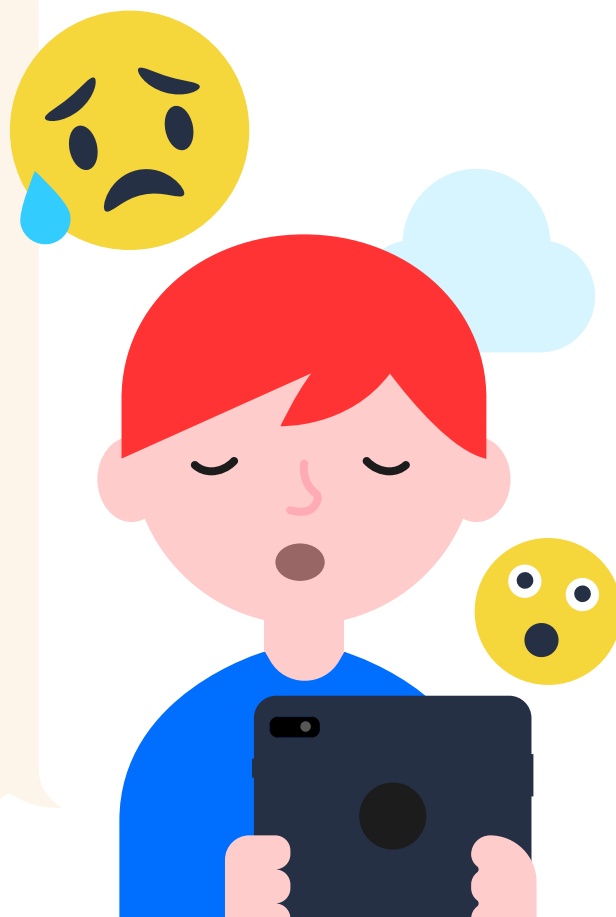
When children take part in the following activities online, the possibility and probability that they will see content that is not inappropriate increases:

- **Joining social networks, messaging apps and services** before reaching the minimum age
- Playing games and using **apps which are not age appropriate**
- Watching **live streams which may show inappropriate content**



What can you do to help?

- **Use stories to introduce the topic** to make it easier to spark a conversation with children such as [Digiduck's Big Decision](#), [The Internet is like a Puddle](#) and [#Goldilocks](#).
- **Agree together what is appropriate** for them to do online so they feel part of the decision making process
- Create a safe place for them to **talk to you or a trusted adult** if they run into issues online
- **Show them that not everything they see online is true** and tell them to always try and check other sources. Remind them that just because something has been shared by someone that they trust doesn't mean that it is true!
- **Use parental controls** to block access to adult and inappropriate sites



Support from schools

All schools are required by law to use filtering tools to block access to inappropriate content. They should also teach children the basics about online safety such as the importance of keeping things private, where to go for support if something goes wrong online and how to recognise good and bad behaviour online. Most schools will want to work in partnership with parents and will provide support when things go wrong.

Sharing too much information

With the growth of Vloggers and YouTubers, young children are also starting to aspire to be more like those they see online, sharing their world with the wider world to get likes, views and comments.

According to Ofcom's 2022 report, **60% of 8-11-year-olds** have a social media profile although the minimum age for most social platforms is 13.

Although children do learn how to share safely online, there is a clear difference between what they learn and how they apply this rule in real life.



What can you do to help?

- **Have a chat about personal information** and what they understand this to be and why it's important
- Discuss the fact that **anything you put online** has the potential to be there for a long time
- As most children will at one time or another be speaking to strangers online, it's important to **teach them how to recognise when a person's intentions might not be what they seem** and steps to take if they run into trouble through sharing too much information
- Talk about the pressure to **post things just to get likes** and comments and how to challenge this
- **Review the privacy settings** available on the platform they use to ensure they are set to the right level
- **Work together** on a family agreement to create digital boundaries so they are more aware of your values on what is safe to share online

Support from schools

Issues around who to trust, what to share and when and how to protect personal data forms part of the [Education for a Connected World \(EfCW\) framework](#) which schools are encouraged to use when considering what children should be taught about online safety.

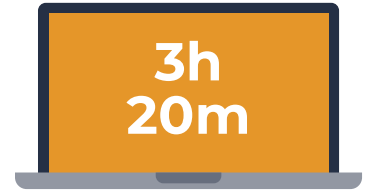
The [Digital Matters learning platform](#) follows the EfCW framework to help children in key stage 2 learn about keeping personal information private.

Screen time

The average time spent on mobiles by 7-16 year olds is 3h 20m per day according to Childwise.

Although most parents and children believe that they have a good balance of time on and offline, research from [UKSIC](#) found that there was a clear link between the amount of time children spend online and their exposure to upset, risk and issues related to well-being.

Although the amount of time that children are spending on a screen matters - it is perhaps more important to think about what they are actually doing when they are online. Assessing children's online activities to minimise risks and maximise the opportunities they bring is key at this stage.



Ages 7-16 **average**
hours spent online



What can you do to help?

- Give them opportunities to **think about how what they do online** can affect their well-being, i.e. sleep, feelings, learning
- Talk about ways to combine what they love online, offline, i.e. using apps that **encourage you to move and play outdoors**
- **Put in place a family agreement** and agree an appropriate length of time that they can use their devices for
- **Use tech tools and parental controls** to help them to manage the time they spend online and the apps they use
- For younger children find ways to **combine touch screen use with creative and active play**
- **Get the whole family to unplug** and create 'screen free' zones at home

Support from schools

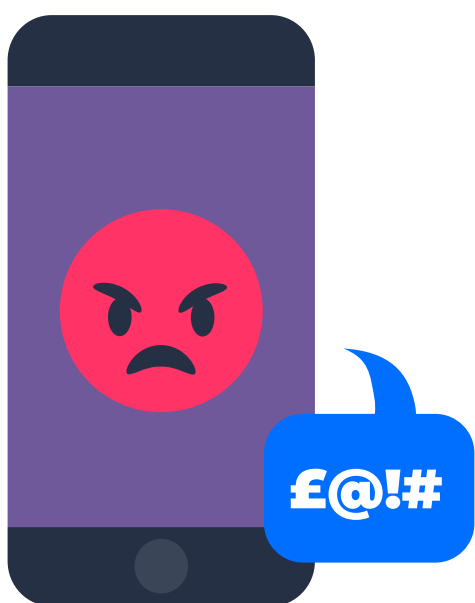
As well as other topics, children should learn about how to manage and self-regulate their screen time as part of the curriculum. More and more schools are also making use of tech in the classroom by giving children access to virtual learning environments to introduce children to the online world.

Cyberbullying

As with friendships in real life, the internet can become a place where children play out disagreements or express issues they have with each other without a full grasp of the potential consequences of what they say.

Research shows that it's normally towards the end of primary school that issues of cyberbullying occur as children start using more messaging apps to talk to friends outside of school.

Although it may not affect younger children as much as those in secondary school, teaching them about netiquette and how to be kind online early on can give them a good foundation to build on when they start to interact with others online. Setting a good example in our own online interactions is important too.



What can you do to help?

- **Highlight the need to be 'kind online'** and support those who may be being picked on online
- **Talk about reasons why** people may bully others and how it makes people feel
- Encourage them to **speak out if they experience cyberbullying themselves or if they see it happening to others.**
- **Discuss the power they have** to do the right thing when it comes to supporting others online and share the 'Stop. Speak. Support' online code
- **Teach them how** to report or block people on the apps they use
- **Be aware of what the school policy** is just in case you need support

Support from schools

The government Internet Safety Strategy states that where bullying outside of school is reported to teachers, it should be investigated and acted upon. Parents should feel that they can approach the school for help and support if they feel that their child is being bullied.

The Digital Matters learning platform follows the EfCW framework to help children in key stage 2 learn about tackling online bullying.

Scan below or visit internetmatters.org for more advice



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