

ONLINE SAFETY NEWSLETTER.



SMARTPHONES VS FEATURE PHONES?

Smartphones vs dumb phones guide for parents | Internet Matters

The debate around smartphone use in childhood is growing, with some schools, including some Hertfordshire, starting to ban phones. There is also increased discussion about feature phones as safer alternatives. Internet Matters has created a helpful guide to compare options.



EE launches age guidance for smartphone usage in drive to improve children's digital wellbeing

In August 2024 it was announced that EE were launching new age guidance for smartphone usage, addressing growing concerns about children's online safety and the effects of device usage on their overall wellbeing.

The age guidance suggests:

Under 11: Use non-smart devices like feature phones with texting and calling capabilities, restricting access to social media and inappropriate content.

Aged 11-13: Smartphones can be used with parental controls and a family-sharing app (e.g., Google Family Link or Apple Family Sharing), while limiting social media access.

Aged 13-16: Smartphones are appropriate with parental controls to manage access to content and platforms; social media is allowed but should be linked to a parent or guardian's account.

THE ABC ONLINE SAFETY CHECKLIST



Internet Matters have created an age-related ABC checklist for online safety:

A= Activate parental controls

B= Balance screen time

C= Check and chat

'We've broken down the ABCs by age to help you manage your individual child's online safety.'

Use the ABC online safety checklist for parents | Internet Matters

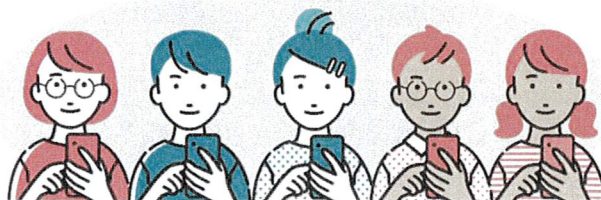
GAMING TIPS FOR PARENTS OF NEURODIVERGENT CHILDREN.

Internet Matters has published a helpful guide – focussing on online gaming safety tips for parents and carers of neurodivergent children. The simple 5-page guide covers research, examples of suitable games, some of the challenges parents face, and the key benefits.

The guide can be accessed [here](#)

DISCORD CHATROOM

There are growing concerns around content and conduct in the Discord chatrooms. Discord is a platform that hosts chat rooms dedicated to individual games including Fortnite. In a recent investigative report **'Why gaming still has a woman problem'** by Sky News, it was reported that *'There's no way to report Discord users for comments they make in voice chat.*



There is for text-based conversations, but that is not how many gamers use Discord.'

<https://www.internetmatters.org/resources/abc-online-safety-checklist/>

If your child is using chatrooms whilst gaming, Kids Online World has created a brief overview for parents and carers

[Discord - KIDSONLINEWORLD.COM](#)

The information in the newsletter is given to help promote the safety of children and young people online.

Every care has been taken to ensure the information and any recommendations in the newsletter are accurate at the time of publishing. Schools must make their own judgements when sharing our recommendations with parents and carers and, where appropriate, always risk assess with their pupils and whole school community in mind.

This newsletter is brought to you by the HFL Education Wellbeing team as part of their online safety support for schools and settings in Hertfordshire. Contact the team at wellbeing@hfleducation.org or call 01438 544464.

HFL Education is a leading national provider of school improvement and business support services, training, and resources, which enable schools, educational settings and multi-academy trusts to deliver a great education.

We support those we work with to achieve successful long-term outcomes for their children.

We believe that every young person, through access to a great education, should be able to realise their potential, regardless of where they live, their background or circumstances.



01438 544 464
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Online Safety

Children and young people are growing up in a continually growing digital world. There can be lots of advantages to this. They're able to source information and support at the click of a button, connect with friends and family all around the world, express their creativity and access entertainment in an instant.

But sometimes the online world can be a scary place, especially for children and young people. Being online can sometimes lead to cyberbullying, misinformation, scams and disturbing content. In a stem4survey of 1,025 young people, 9 out of 10 (93%) said they had been scared by online content. They were most worried about disinformation, misinformation and fake news (59%).

How can we make sure our children have a positive and safe online experience?

There are many ways we can help protect children and young people from potential harm online. We can explain the importance of not sharing personal information with strangers or posting it on social media. This includes information like phone number, address, live location, name of school. Encourage your child to come and talk to you or another trusted adult if they have any concerns, especially if they're being asked to share information or photos with people they don't know.

A lot of Apps have a minimum age requirement to join, especially most social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Tik Tok and Snapchat. If your child does set up an account on an App, there are generally privacy settings like the option to hide location, not allow friend requests, limit those who can see content and set their accounts to private.

Cyber bullying & how to support young people

Cyber bullying is bullying that takes place online and can have a negative impact on our mental health. Cyberbullying can include:

- Sending mean texts or instant messages to someone
- Pranking someone's mobile phone
- Being rude or mean to someone in an online game
- Hacking into someone's gaming or social network profile
- Spreading secrets or rumours about people online
- Pretending to be someone else to spread hurtful messages

If your child is experiencing any form of cyberbullying, there are some things you can do or encourage your child to do straight away.

- They can block the person. Many sites and social media platforms have the option to block, mute or freeze communication and can even do so without the person knowing
- Encourage your child to tell you or another trusted adult, rather than try to deal with it themselves.
- Report the cyberbullying to the site or App.
- Don't respond to the bullying, especially when feeling angry, upset or frustrated.

How can too much time online affect our children's behaviour?

Spending too much time online can affect the way children behave and interact with others. You may find they're having fewer face-to-face conversations with family and friends, or they become more withdrawn. They may also find it hard to enjoy being in the moment and hard to focus on offline activities and tasks.

The impact of spending too much time on social media may affect the way young people think about themselves. They could constantly compare themselves to others, which can negatively impact their self-esteem. They could also become anxious, stressed or depressed if they're feeling the pressure to respond to messages.

Encouraging children to switch off

It can be hard to persuade children and young people to leave the online world and turn off their screens, and it can often end in tears and frustration. To help cut back screen time without a fight, you can:

- Set clear rules and boundaries for screen time. Discuss with your child how long they can spend online. It'll be easier for them to switch off if they know when and how they'll next be able to go online.
- Enjoy screen free meals. You could all agree to put your phones in a box, away from temptation.
- Plan something to do after they turn their screens off. If children and young people don't think they have anything else to do, they're more likely to want to fill their time online. Let them have a say in what they do so that ending screen time isn't seen as something negative.
- Limit your own time online. It's hard to reduce your child's time online if they see you spending time scrolling on social media too.
- Stay engaged in what your child's doing online. By checking in with them about what they're interested in and any challenges they face, the more likely they are to come to you when they're worried about something.
- Talk to them about the impact of spending too much time online. As they get older and more digitally savvy it's important to encourage them to be more responsible and aware of how their screen use can impact them and those around them.

Extra support

There are lots of useful resources and websites for online safety for children and young people. Here are a few of them:

Get Safe Online

For information and advice on online safety

getsafeonline.org

NSPCC

Advice to help you learn about online safety as a family

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

Young Minds

A guide which aims to support adults to talk to young people about their online interactions and friendships

<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/professional/resources/how-to-better-understand-young-people-and-their-online-communities/>