PARENT GUIDE – JANUARY 2025

Your child's screen time

Know the risks, and what you can do to help keep your child safe.

What's the problem?

Spending time online and on devices can be a positive thing, especially for educational use.

However, high levels of screen time can put your child at greater risk of:

- Being bullied online
- Abuse and grooming (when someone builds a relationship with a child to exploit or abuse them)
- Seeing inappropriate content
- Not getting enough sleep and exercise
- Disruption to learning and studying
- Negative effects on mental wellbeing

While it may be tempting to ban devices altogether, this also has some risks, as it can:

- Cause children to keep any screen time a secret, making it more difficult for them to seek help with bullying, harmful content or potential grooming
- Make children more prone to grooming, as abusers could offer them a 'secret' device
- Slow technology skill development. Technology is part of everyday life, and teaching children how to benefit from it can help prepare them for the future and develop online safety skills
- Block access to resources that could be beneficial, such as educational apps or websites

4 steps you can take to protect your child

1) Set parental controls on devices

Use parental controls to restrict access to in-app purchases and explicit or age-rated content, and, on some devices, how long your child can spend on the device or certain apps.

You'll likely need to set a password for parental controls. Make sure it's different from the password used to access the device, and that your child doesn't know it.

Parental controls can be different for each device. See below for instructions for some popular devices.

2) Agree rules on screen time

There are mixed views on 'safe' screen time, but you could agree some limits to stop screen time interfering with your child's sleep or family activities:

- Make a plan together, and stick to it. You could set media-free times and zones, like during meals or in bedrooms
- Try to avoid screens an hour before bedtime

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- Model the behaviour you want to see – this may mean no screen time for you at the times agreed with your child. Children are more likely to learn from example
- Try to minimise snacking during screen time
- Turn not using screens into a game, using apps like **Forest**, where not using devices is rewarded (https://www.forestapp.cc/)

3) Talk to your child about staying safe online

Discuss the restrictions and why they're needed. Teach them:

- That anyone can pretend to be a child online
- That if they talk to people they don't know, not to give away personal information – like what street they live on or where they go to school – or to share their location with them. To say no if they are asked for images or videos of themselves, and to stop talking to the other person if they are asked for these things
- To set their profiles to private, to limit what others can see
- To be 'share aware' – think carefully about what they share and with whom. Once it's out there, they have no control over what the other person does with it. Remember, it's illegal to take, share or possess sexual images of under-18s, full stop
- If they see something that upsets them, or someone bullies them, to tell an adult they trust. Bullying and upsetting content is not their fault.

Talk about what apps or sites they use and how they use them so that you can check and set the necessary privacy settings.

If you don't feel confident starting a conversation with your child about what they're doing online, take a look at this advice from the NSPCC: https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/talking-child-online-safety/

4) Encourage off-screen activities

Help your child get physically active for the recommended 60 minutes a day:

- See www.nhs.uk/change4life/activities for free ideas for activities and games
- Consider local sports or activity clubs. Your local authority or council should have details on youth clubs and activity groups near you. Find your local authority here: https://www.gov.uk/find-local-council
- Try an app that's designed to get children active – see examples at: www.internetmatters.org/resources/apps-guide/apps-to-help-kids-get-active/
- Try out some of these child-friendly recipes to get your child involved in cooking – https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/collection/kids-baking

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How to set parental controls

Microsoft devices (Windows computers and Xbox)

- Getting started with Microsoft Family Safety: https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/account-billing/getting-started-with-microsoft-family-safety-b6280c9d-38d7-82ff-0e4f-a6cb7e659344
- Family-friendly gaming for everyone, Xbox: https://www.xbox.com/en-GB/family-hub

iPads and iPhones

- Use parental controls on your child's iPhone or iPad: https://support.apple.com/en-gb/105121

Android phones

- Manage devices, apps and screen time: https://support.google.com/families/topic/7336331
- Get started with Family Link: https://support.google.com/families/answer/7101025?hl=en

Fire Tablet

- Set up parental controls on your Fire Tablet: https://www.amazon.co.uk/gp/help/customer/display.html?nodeId=GG2LBLF5V2T8XUX8

PlayStation

- How to set up family accounts on PSN: https://www.playstation.com/en-gb/support/account/playstation-family-account-set-up/
- How to set up parental controls on PlayStation consoles: https://www.playstation.com/en-gb/support/account/ps5-parental-controls-spending-limits/

Nintendo Switch

- Nintendo Switch parental controls: https://www.nintendo.com/en-gb/Hardware/Nintendo-Switch-Parental-Controls/Nintendo-Switch-Parental-Controls-1183145.html
- Nintendo Switch support pages: https://www.nintendo.com/en-gb/Search/Search-299117.html?f=147397-3958-143-42
- How to set Nintendo eShop restrictions: https://www.nintendo.com/en-gb/Support/Nintendo-Switch/How-to-Set-Nintendo-eShop-Restrictions-1406403.html

Sources used in this guide

This guide was produced by **The Key Safeguarding: https://safeguarding.thekeysupport.com/**

- Physical activity guidelines for children and young people, NHS
  https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/physical-activity-guidelines-children-and-young-people/
- Covid-19: Lockdown measures and children's screen time, House of Lords library, UK Parliament
  https://lordslibrary.parliament.uk/covid-19-lockdown-measures-and-childrens-screen-time/
- Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people, GOV.UK – Department for Science, Innovation and Technology and UK Council for Internet Safety
  https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sharing-nudes-and-semi-nudes-advice-for-education-settings-working-with-children-and-young-people
- Screen time: impacts on education and wellbeing – report summary, UK Parliament
  https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5804/cmselect/cmeduc/118/summary.html

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