

Talking to Your Child About Online Safety

Advice on How to Start the Conversation and Get Support if You're Worried.

Online safety and coronavirus

Children and young people's lives have changed dramatically because of the coronavirus. With social distancing measures and schools closing, children will be spending more time at home and online.

Whilst the internet is a great way for children and young people to stay in touch with their friends and keep busy during lockdown, it can also bring risks. Now more than ever is important to talk to your child about staying safe online and about the apps and sites they are using. We have got advice to help.

Screen time

While many parents and carers may be worried about their children spending more time online during lockdown, it is important to understand what they are doing online rather than setting limits on their total screen time.

For example, a child may spend hours searching the internet, while another child may spend more time each day talking to people they do not know on a livestreaming or video app.

Asking them about the sites, apps and games they use regularly can be a great way to start a conversation and help you identify any risks in what your child is doing online or who they may be talking to. We have got some great tips below to help get you started.

You can also find online safety tips and information about social networks, apps and games for parents over on [Net Aware](#), in partnership with O2.

Livestreaming and video apps

Many children will find it hard not being able to see their friends or family in person, and video apps can be a great way for them to stay in touch during lockdown when used safely, but there are also risks for young people.

It's really important to help your child understand how to livestream and use video apps safely and make sure they're speaking to people they know already. [Net Aware](#), in partnership with O2, has advice on livestreaming, including how to keep children safe on popular online apps such as [Zoom](#), [HouseParty](#) and [WhatsApp](#).

Young people may also be curious or explore risky behaviours online. Take a look at our advice for parents on [sexting and sending nudes](#) to help support your child.

Social media safety

Children are also likely to be spending more time on social media during coronavirus lockdown. While social media can be a good way for children and teenagers to stay in touch with friends they are unable to see in person, it can also be unsafe. Children using social media may also be at greater risk of [online abuse](#) or [online bullying](#) during coronavirus lockdown.

A [recent NSPCC survey](#) shows that children who are turning to social media because they are feeling lonely or have poor mental health are at higher risk of being groomed online.

Talking to your child about what they are doing or sharing online can help you to understand any risks and keep them safe. Net Aware also has advice on popular apps, games and social media sites, including [TikTok](#), [Snapchat](#) and [Facebook](#).

Starting a conversation about online safety

It can be difficult to know how to start talking to your child about what they're doing online or who they might be speaking to. But talking regularly, like you would about their day at school, will help your child feel relaxed and mean that when they do have any worries, they are more likely to come and speak to you. It can help to:



- reassure them that you are interested in their life, offline and online. Recognise that they will be using the internet to research homework as well talking to their friends.
- ask your child to show you what they enjoy doing online or apps they are using so you can understand them.
- be positive but also open about anything you are worried about. You could say "I think this site's really good" or "I'm a little worried about things I've seen here."
- ask them if they are worried about anything, and let them know they can come to you.
- ask them about their friends online and how they know they are who they say they are.

- listen for the reasons why your child wants to use apps or site you do not think are suitable, so you can talk about these together.
- ask your child what they think is okay for children of different ages so they feel involved in the decision making.

Worried about a child?

You're worried about something a child or young person may have experienced online, you can contact the NSPCC helpline for free support and advice. Call us on 0808 800 5000 or [contact us online](#).

[Childline](#)

[Get support](#)

How could my child feel talking about online safety?

For children, online life is real life. It can help to think about how your child could feel sharing what they're doing online before you talk to them.

Some emotions they could be feeling are:

- uncomfortable
- worried
- annoyed
- confused
- happy.

Online safety support in partnership with O2



Let's keep kids safe online

Looking for simple, bitesize info and advice on the latest apps, games and social media sites your kids are using? [Net Aware](#) is here to help.

Get expert advice on the top apps, sites and games children are using using, how to set up parental controls, latest news and more.

Book a free online safety webinar

The NSPCC are offering free webinars for groups of parents and carers, making it easy for you to keep your family safe online.

Webinars are delivered by experienced NSPCC staff. Topics covered include:

- understanding the risks and benefits of being online for children
- practical things you can do to help your children safe online
- knowledge of the tools and resources that can help you.

If you would like to organise a webinar on behalf of a group, please contact parentworkshops@nspcc.org.uk.

Help us make a difference

Help us make a difference. Whether it's volunteering for us, challenging yourself with an event or campaigning, there are lots of ways you can help us keep more children safe. [Get involved](#).

Do you work or volunteer with children or families?

Visit NSPCC Learning to find information and resources for teaching children about online safety and social media. [Go to NSPCC Learning](#).

More online safety advice



Livestreaming and online video apps. Advice to help you understand the risks and help keep your child safe. [Learn more](#).



Inappropriate content. Get advice on how to support your child if they've seen something online that's confused or upset them. [Learn more.](#)



Online games. Learn why children like to play online games and what you can do to keep them safe. [Get advice.](#)

Every childhood is worth fighting for

[Help for adults concerned about a child](#)
[0808 800 5000](#)

[Help for children and young people](#)
[0800 1111](#)

[020 7825 2505](#)