**Advice for parents on internet safety for their children**

**How do I speak to my teenager about spending too much time on the internet?**

Spending time online is a key part of many young people’s lives so talk to them about the kinds of things they like to do online, and find out where they are spending their time online.

If you are concerned about the amount of time that your child is spending online it’s important to try to develop an understanding of what they are doing online. Simply telling them they’re spending too much time online or to turn off their phone can lead to arguments. Instead you could **[ask them about the things they like to do both online and offline](https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-centre/parents-and-carers/have-conversation)**, and have a conversation with them about how to develop strategies for managing their time online.

You can also talk to them about how to recognise the signs telling them they may need a break from being online. These can range from their body telling them e.g. that they are feeling tired or have a headache, or from their devices, e.g. their device runs out of charge or feels hot, or maybe they have just reached a point where it’s no longer enjoyable.

By introducing a **[family agreement](https://www.childnet.com/resources/family-agreement)** in your household, you can have an open and honest conversation about the ways in which you all use technology, and come to a mutual agreement about the amount of time that you each spend online.

**My child knows more about the internet than me, what can I do?**

It is becoming increasingly normal that parents feel that their child knows more about technology than they do. It may be the case that young people know more about technology than their parents, but parents and carers have life experience and understand how to navigate risks and manage different life situations. A lot of the rules that adults apply in the offline world also apply online, such as keeping personal information safe from strangers or reminding your child to always come to you or a trusted adult if anything worries them.

Parents and carers are always encouraged to get involved in their child’s online life and to be open and honest with their children, letting them know that they can always come to them with a problem.

Other key things you can do are:

* Take time to explore the sites, apps and games your children like to use
* Acknowledge your children as experts, ask them to show you how to use the sites they use most often.
* Ask what them if they [know how to block or report](https://www.childnet.com/resources/how-to-make-a-report)people or things they see when they are online.
* Ask them if they [know what personal information is](https://www.childnet.com/blog/what-is-the-big-deal-about-your-personal-information-) and why they shouldn't give it away online.

**My child wants to join a social networking site but they’re not 13 years old.**

Many of the social networking sites that exist (Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, Twitter) carry terms and conditions stating that users must be over the age of 13 to register for an account. Children may not be aware of this when they sign up for a service, as not all services will ask for a date of birth or confirmation that they are over 13. Some children may also find a way around these checks by providing a fake date of birth.

Do encourage them to wait until they are the correct age to register for these sites, and to be truthful about their age. One key reason for this is that there are more safety features applied to accounts of users up to the age of 18, which will not apply if they have lied to say they are older than this. Also, if anyone reports them as an underage user, their account will be deleted and any of their content on the service such as videos or photos will also be removed.

**Should I let my child play a game that is age rated for older than them?**

It is important to remember that just because everyone at your child’s school is talking about a game, it doesn’t necessarily mean that they are playing it. Try talking to or messaging other parents and asking if their children are playing it. It’s easy for these kind of things to get exaggerated and you may find that far fewer of your children’s classmates are actually playing the game than they may have you believe.

In order for you to make a decision about what kinds of games you allow your child to play, it is important that you do three key things; research, discuss, and explain.

* Research – look at the age and content ratings in the game. Know if there is the capacity for people to contact your child through the game, and if there are warnings for language, gore or any other unsuitable content. A quick way to find out what other people are saying about a game or app is to check out the parent reviews on [Common Sense Media](https://www.commonsensemedia.org/).
* Discuss – speak to your child about why they want to play the game, is it the style, the graphics, the social aspect or something else? If you decide that the particular game is unsuitable from your discussion you could offer some more age appropriate alternatives. You could also look at some games the whole family can enjoy as recommended by families on [the Ask About Games site.](http://www.askaboutgames.com/family-games/family-games-advocates/)
* Explain - if you’ve decided the game isn’t suitable, then it’s important to explain to your child why. It may be useful to show them what you found in your research to help them understand your concerns. This way they know that you’re not just saying no, but that it’s part of your job as a parent to protect them.