A parent's guide to:

Moving to secondary school

Online safety tips to support children

internet matters.org

What are kids doing?

- It's a time when children are beginning to **make deeper social connections** for the first time and learning how to **interact with each other online** which can be overwhelming.

- **The smartphone becomes a status symbol** and an important tool to stay connected to their friends but it also puts them under **pressure to interact.**

- School interactions with friends **cross over into the online world** and it can be challenging to balance with school work and other activities.

Online activities

- **Socialising** on a range of social apps

- **Watching videos and series** through streaming services and video-sharing platforms like YouTube

- Building their digital footprint by **sharing details about their day-to-day life** with friends and family or people they've met online

- **Playing video games** online with friends

- **Doing homework** using school-assigned apps and over video chat with friends

- **Taking part in online challenges** with friends

Are they ready for a smartphone?

As children move to secondary school, they'll likely have a greater interest in getting a smartphone to stay in touch with friends or join the latest platform.

Whether your child is ready, depends on many things. Find guidance here: bit.ly/device-guide

More resources

- bit.ly/smartphone-safety

- bit.ly/smartphone-advice

- bit.ly/second-hand-device-tips
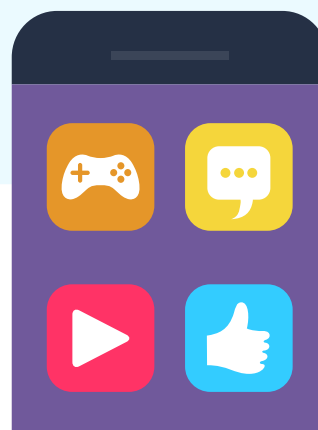
Screen time

'Everything in moderation' applies to the screen time debate when it comes to 'how much is too much screen time'.

Research tells us that children's brains, behaviour and sleep can be affected by how much time they spend on devices. However, **the way** they spend time on their devices is also important to consider.

74%
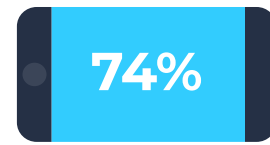
the amount of 12 - 15 year olds who **take mobiles to bed with them***

source: Ofcom 2018

What can you do to help?

Having regular conversation about children's device use will help them learn how to balance their screen time.

- **Discuss how** screen time affects their overall wellbeing.

- **Set digital boundaries** to help them stay in control of their tech. See our bit.ly/family-agreement for help.

- **Make use of the tools** that are available on smartphones, tablets and other devices. Find a step-by-step guide (bit.ly/parental-control-guide) to get started.

- **Make them aware** that most apps, games and devices are designed to keep them watching and playing.

- **Stay engaged** in what your child is doing to help them use a wide range of media from safe sources.

Support from schools

Schools will tackle online safety and screen time in different ways. Those who use Digital Matters can make use of a lesson about balancing screen time.

visit bit.ly/digital-matters-lesson

National curriculum standards across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland will cover aspect of wellbeing, which can support children online.

More screen time resources

bit.ly/screen-time-hub

bit.ly/pre-teen-screen-time-tips

internetmatters.org/digital-family-toolkit/

Peer pressure

From chasing likes on social media to taking part in risky online behaviour, at this age children are learning about peers' expectations of them and acting accordingly.

Peer pressure can change their behaviour in a positive or negative way depending on who is influencing them. According to Ofcom (2020) 66% of 8-11 year olds and 73% of 12-15 year olds say that there is pressure to be popular on social media.

Also people they've only met online or YouTubers can have the same influence on them as people they know offline.
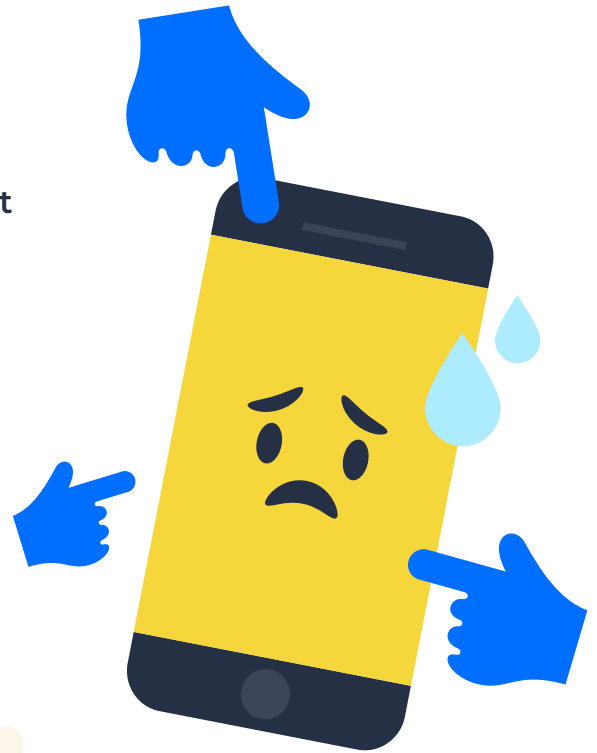
What can you do to help?

- **Talk regularly about their online lives** and the pressures they feel. This will give them more confidence to come to you if something goes wrong.

- **Stand your ground** & apply rules to counter any negative peer pressure.

- **Use a news story or a real-world example of peer pressure to** discuss potential risks of peer pressure.

- Give them the tools to say no if they're pressured to do something that puts them or others at risk:

  - show them blocking and reporting tools.

  - encouraging them to talk to you if they're concerned.

  - signposting resources like Childline or The Mix to get advice from others.
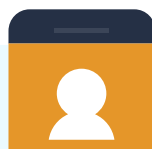
Support from schools

Many schools promote an inclusive school culture and take the time to celebrate diversity to help form positive social norms. In addition to online safety, schools will often cover topics around peer pressure under lessons related to wellbeing, relationships and health.
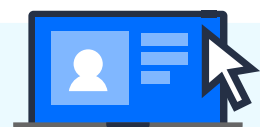
More peer pressure resources

bit.ly/online-challenges-tips

bit.ly/online-identity-tips

bit.ly/online-reputation-hub

Sexting

Exploring sexuality has always been a part of a child's development, so it's important to have age appropriate discussions.

Children take part in sexting for a range of reasons: to fit in, as a joke, to express feelings in a relationship, to flirt, for validation due to poor body image or as a result of peer pressure or coercion.

Research from Internet Matters and Youthworks found that 4% of 13 year olds had shared nudes rising to 17% of 15-17 year olds.

When sexting goes wrong, it can affect a child's emotional wellbeing, reputation and can lead to blackmail (bit.ly/sextortion-guide) or have legal consequences.

What can you do to help?

- **Discuss the risks of sexting** such as the image being shared further without their consent.

- **Encourage them** to think carefully about people's intentions or motivations.

- **Talk about resisting pressure** from others who ask them to share photos they receive.

- **Make sure they feel comfortable coming to you or a trusted adult** if they need support. Or signpost other resources like bit.ly/report-remove and takeitdown.ncmec.org.'

Support from schools

England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland all have curriculum guidance on teaching children about safe and healthy relationships. RSHE/RSE (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) and RHSP (Scotland) help children explore and discuss subjects such as relationships, respect, consent, risk taking, exchange of sexual messages and images between peers and bullying.

Individual schools may have guidance on sexting under their bullying or child-on-child/peer-on-peer abuse policies. These policies explain how they will deal with abusive incidents and when external agencies such as the police should be involved.

More sexting resources

internetmatters.org/issues/sexting

internetmatters.org/resources/what-is-sextortion/

bit.ly/sexting-teen-support

Cyberbullying

Research shows that 84% of children aged 8-17 who have been bullied were victimised through their devices or online, 56% through text or messaging apps, 43% via social media.*

As children move from primary to secondary school, they might start talking to new people and using new social platforms. They can sometimes struggle to see how their words and online actions impact others. Cyberbullying can affect children's mental health and learning, and can lead to legal consequences in some extreme cases.

*Ofcom Children and parents: media use and attitudes 2022 report

What can you do to help?

- **Explain that the way they behave online** should be the same way they behave offline.

- **Talk about what is and isn't appropriate** to post online.

- **Work together** to find coping strategies if they are bullied online or pressured to bully others. Explore bit.ly/digital-resilience-toolkit to learn more.

- **Discuss the difference** between banter and bullying.

- Discuss the **influence of school culture** in how friends relate to each other.

- **Teach them** how to report or block people.

Support from schools

All schools have policies around bullying, child protection and safeguarding that guides their response to incidents that happen online or offline. They may also have mentors who can help, or they might have full school events to promote positive behaviour. Anti-Bullying Week is a popular time for schools; it takes place every November.

More cyberbullying resources

bit.ly/cyberbullying-conversation-guide
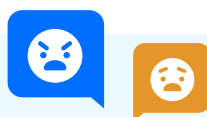
bit.ly/cyberbullying-advice

bit.ly/online-abuse-support

In-game spending

One of the most common online harms named by both parents and children is over-spending in games and apps.

Many apps and video games are free to download but encourage microtransactions or in-game purchases to enhance the game.
This could include virtual items, skins or event access. In some cases, children can spend a lot quite easily without knowing they're doing so.

£5.00
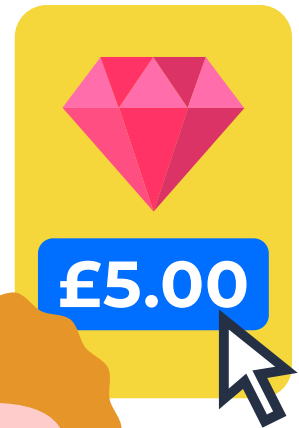
What can you do to help?

- **Review the spending settings** available in apps/games/stores and on consoles/devices. See our step-by-step guide to help visit bit.ly/gaming-parental-controls.

- **Consider removing debit and credit cards** and instead adding gift cards that you can reload each month to support budgeting.

- Work with them to **create routines when it comes to spending.** Rules like they must ask permission first will help limit accidental overspending.
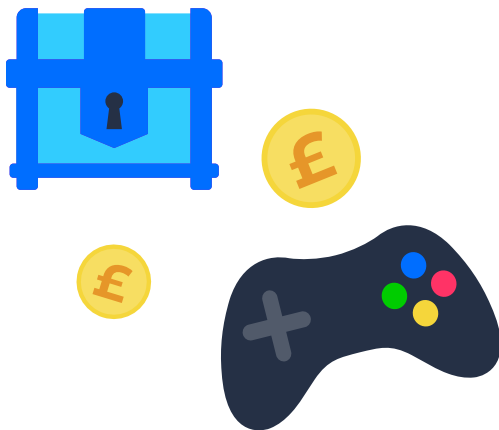
Support from schools

While most schools are unlikely to specifically cover in-game spending, schools will teach about money and, in older years, might cover aspects of financial literacy. Subjects like PSHE in England will offer teachers different opportunities to talk about budgeting, finance and in-game spending.

More spending and finance resources

bit.ly/in-game-spending-advice

bit.ly/online-money-tips

bit.ly/kids-and-money-online

Scams

Scams come in many shapes and often target young people who are more trusting or who do not yet have key critical thinking skills.

Cyber criminals target people in popular places like social media and video games; they go where the most people are. Examples of scams include:

- false promises (e.g. uncommonly cheap items, competitions, scholarships, etc.)
- remote access (e.g. through webcams or phishing emails)
- sexual coercion (i.e. sextortion and blackmail)

Learn more about scams that target teens, visit bit.ly/scams-expert-article
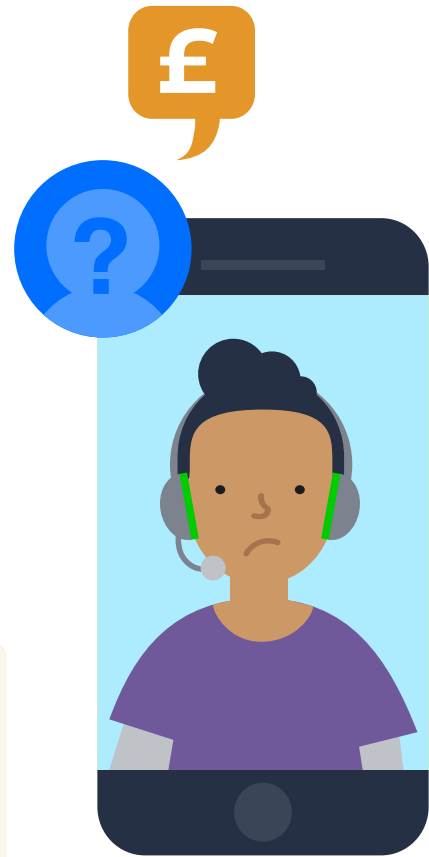
What can you do to help?

- **Talk about what scams are.** You can use news stories or personal experiences to do this.

- **Discuss signs that something might be a scam** (e.g. a friend messaging from an unusual number, someone you don't recognise contacting you, a text from a government agency asking you to click a link). Visit bit.ly/online-scams-guide for more support.

- **Give them the tools to take action** such as knowing how to block and report users, asking you for a second opinion or reporting scams to Action Fraud (bit.ly/report-scams-online) or the police.

Support from schools

As a part of digital safety or media literacy curriculum areas across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, schools will encourage critical thinking. They might not speak specifically about scams, but they will encourage children to be mindful when faced with potential misinformation or harm online.

More online scams resources
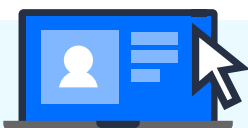
bit.ly/online-ID-theft

bit.ly/social-scams-guide

bit.ly/tackle-scams

More resources to support your child's move to secondary school

bit.ly/digital-safety-for-11-13s

bit.ly/safety-guides-by-age

bit.ly/parental-control-guide

bit.ly/screen-time-lesson

bit.ly/online-challenges-hub

bit.ly/interactive-quiz

Get personalised advice straight to your inbox

Want support to stay on top of your kids' digital lives? Together, we've got this, with our free personalised family digital toolkit. By completing the form you'll get:

- Age-specific checklists and guides
- Safety information on the latest apps and platforms
- Resources to tackle online concerns by age
- Interactive tools to encourage discussions on key topics

Scan the QR code or go to **internetmatters.org/toolkit**

Scan below or visit **internetmatters.org** for more advice

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