

Knowing how and when to introduce your child to the online world and digital devices is a personal and important decision for all families. Getting started may feel daunting but breaking it down into small steps will help you and your child build confidence navigating the online world together.

One Minute Guide Getting Started Online

Setting up their first device

Goals & Purpose:

Before introducing your child to their first digital device, try considering what you want your child to get out of the online world. Talk together about what your child wants to use their device for, this could include playing games, reading e-books, or getting creative. There are many ways your child can engage with educational games online.

Exploring together:

Explore the different age-appropriate apps and games available, play them together and talk about what your child enjoys about them. Exploring their favourite apps and websites with them can be a great way of learning what your child likes doing online.

Parental controls:

Using parental controls on your child's device can help protect your child from inappropriate content, so they can still do the things they enjoy on digital devices, without encountering things that may upset them.

You can also set screen-time limits, helping your child to develop a balanced diet of online and offline activities.

Setting up parental controls may feel overwhelming and confusing. Why not take a look at [Internet Matters'](#) helpful guides on setting up parental controls for different apps, games and platforms.

Where should I start?

Managing screen time

Children form digital habits during early development. Encouraging them to adopt positive screen-time habits from an early age will help them develop positive, lasting digital routines.

Did you know, the Government recommends no screen time for children under 2 years old and no more than 1 hour a day for those aged 2-5 years.

Setting boundaries:

Setting screen-time boundaries for the whole family can help manage a child's screen-time and encourage healthy communication within the family, without distractions. You may choose to do some of the following:

- No screens during mealtimes
- Keeping devices in communal areas
- No screens at bedtime

Leading by example:

Reflect on your own online behaviours. Demonstrating the digital habits you expect from your child is an effective way of supporting them to develop positive digital behaviours.

A balanced digital diet:

Using the '[Digital 5-a-Day](#)' framework can help your child find a healthy balance of online and offline activities.

Switching up screen use and what children use their devices for can help them develop a balanced digital diet. Doing group activities such as watching something together on TV rather than playing a single-player game can help your child connect and communicate using digital devices.

Remember: screens should not displace sleep, face-to-face friendships or physical exercise.

Where to report when things go wrong

Occasionally, things can happen online that may upset your child or put them in danger. It's not your or your child's fault if something happens, but it's important to act.

If you feel your child is in immediate danger, call 999.

Understand what's happened:

Understanding what has happened to your child or what they have seen and the impact it has had on them will help you decide what action to take. When something goes wrong online, your child may feel frightened or upset, so it's important to remember to:

- Stay calm, do not blame your child
- Reassure your child you can solve the problem together
- Ask non-accusatory questions to understand what has happened

What can I report?

Anyone can make a report, it doesn't have to be an adult. The following content can be reported:

- Child sexual abuse
- Terrorism
- Bullying, threats, harassment, hate speech and content promoting self-harm or suicide
- Accounts that pretend to be someone else (impersonation)
- Online abuse, unwanted sexual advances and violence
- Pornographic material that appears on non-adult websites

Where can I report something?

[Report Remove Tool](#) – confidentially report sexual images/videos and remove them from the internet.

[Child Exploitation & Online Protection](#) – report sexual abuse or exploitation concerns to CEOP.

[ACT Campaign](#) – report something related to terrorism.

[Report child abuse](#) to your local council.

If you or your child come across harmful photos, videos or message on a specific app, such as Snapchat, Instagram, YouTube or other popular social media platforms, you can use the built-in reporting tool on the relevant platform. [Internet Matters](#) has helpful step-by-step guides on how to report harmful content across several popular social media platforms and video games.

Speaking to an expert

With so many apps, websites, games and platforms in the online world, it can easily feel overwhelming at times. If you feel you need more support and have questions about staying safe online, speak to an expert.

Helplines:

There are helplines available to you and your child to support parents and children to stay safe online, or to talk to if something upsetting has happened.

[NSPCC](#) – free, confidential helpline for adults worried about a child. Open Monday – Friday, 10am – 4pm: **0808 800 5000**

[Young Minds](#) – mental health support for children and young people. Free parents' helpline. Open Monday – Friday, 9.30am – 4pm: **0808 802 5544**

[Childline](#) – free, confidential service for children & young people up to age 19. Open 24/7: **0800 1111**

[Shore](#) – free service for young people worried about their own or someone else's sexual behaviour. Open Monday – Thursday, 5pm – 8pm: support@theshore.co.uk

Non-emergency advice:

If your child is worried about something, they should speak to you or another trusted adult, such as a teacher or family member.

You can get advice from your local Family Hub or speak to the Designated Safeguarding Lead and your child's school or nursery, to share any online safety concerns about your child.

Key Contacts and Further Information

- [Help your child stay safe online - Kids Online Safety](#)
- [Keep Children Safe Online: Information, advice, support - Internet Matters](#)
- [Parents and carers | CEOP Education](#)
- [Keeping children safe online | NSPCC](#)
- [Find out if there's a family hub in your local area - GOV.UK](#)