

OFCOM research shows that 54% of children aged 8 or older have experienced something upsetting online. Talking to your child about online safety from an early age can help them feel safe and confident navigating the digital world. Weekly check-ins make it easier to talk openly about what your child sees online and helps them build healthy habits.

### One Minute Guide

## Talking to Children and Young People about Being Online



### Why is talking about being online important?

Setting up parental controls is a useful first step in preventing children from seeing harmful content online, but it cannot completely protect them. It's normal for children to be curious and push boundaries, sometimes this means they may gain access to inappropriate content.

Talking to your child from an early age about staying safe online can help build trust and let them know they can talk to you if they see something that worries them, or if something happens online that makes them feel unsafe.

Having conversations with your child when they are young will give you the best chance at establishing trust and open communication about what they are doing online.

Talking to teenagers and young adults about what they get up to online can feel impossible, but there are small, simple things you can do to make talking about the online world part of their normal routine.

### Start small

Talking to your child about what they're doing online doesn't have to be lengthy. Starting with a quick check-in question every day can be a useful way to open the conversation.

Showing an interest in what they're doing is a good way to start learning about and understanding their online life.

You could start with questions like:

- Have you seen any good posts lately? Anything that made you laugh?
- Who's your favourite YouTuber/Streamer? What sort of videos do they post?
- How did your game go? Who do you play with?

Talking to your child about their online life may feel awkward or uncomfortable. If they don't want to talk straight away, don't push them. Try sharing some of your own experiences first and asking if they've ever come across something similar. If it doesn't work the first time, you can try on a different day.

## Knowing what to trust online

The online world can be useful and entertaining, but it's possible to come across false information, particularly with the growing use of AI technologies.

### *Asking the right questions:*

When discussing the online world with your child, talk about what you've both seen online. Explain not everything online is true and think about discussing and questioning online content together. The following questions may be helpful:

- How does this post make you feel?
- Who shared this content? Why do you think they posted it?
- Are they being fair or could they be biased?
- Could this have been made by AI?

### *Look at social media together:*

If your child feels comfortable, scroll through their social media together and discuss the content in their feed. Talk about who they follow and encourage them to follow accounts with different ideas from trusted sources, such as news or educational accounts.

### *Keep questions friendly and curious, not judgemental:*

- Which posts do you like?
- Are there any posts that make you feel uncomfortable? Which ones?
- Are there any posts you'd like to see less of? Why?

*If your child doesn't want to go through their own social media feed, you could start by going through yours together instead or having a family discussion.*

### *Spotting misleading or false content:*

Help your child understand **anyone** can post online and some posts may be misleading or made up to grab attention. Encourage your child to think for themselves and check where information comes from before believing or sharing it. Look for:

- Exaggerated or emotional language
- No sources or unverified claims
- Jumping to conclusions without proof
- Phrases like "everyone thinks this" or "you should believe this"

## Talking about limits and negative experiences

Talking about the parental controls you have in place can be a good place to start talking about your child's online life. Explaining why you have certain rules in place and discussing changing them as they get older can make them feel more included in the decision.

As your child gets older, they are likely to question restrictions and may attempt to get around them to access content you don't want them to see.

*Remember that pushing boundaries as they get older is normal.*

If your child tells you they have seen or experienced something inappropriate, harmful or upsetting online, it's important they know they can be open and honest with you and not worry about getting into trouble.

Ask them how they feel about it and let them know it's okay to be honest.

*If your child tells you about something that puts them in danger, you should act quickly to resolve or report it. Keep talking to your child and supporting them.*

*If your child is in immediate danger, call 999.*

## Key Contacts and Further Information

- [Help your child stay safe online - Kids Online Safety](#)
- [My Life Online - Conversation Guide | Childnet](#)
- [Talking to your child about online safety | NSPCC](#)
- [Keeping children safe online | NSPCC](#)
- [Conversation starters for your child's online life | Internet Matters](#)