There are real advantages in maintaining an open dialogue with your child about their internet use.

Not sure where to begin? These conversation starter suggestions can help.

1. Ask your children to tell you about the sites they like to visit and what they enjoy doing online.

2. Ask them about how they stay safe online. What tips do they have for you, and where did they learn them? What is OK and not OK to share?

3. Ask them if they know where to go for help, where to find the safety advice, privacy settings and how to report or block on the services they use.

4. Encourage them to help someone! Perhaps they can show you how to do something better online or they might have a friend who would benefit from their help and support.

5. Think about how you each use the internet. What more could you do to use the internet together? Are there activities that you could enjoy as a family?

Further advice and resources:

The Childnet International website provides internet safety advice and resources for children and young people, parents and carers, teachers and professionals, and other childcare settings and organisations:

www.childnet.com

For more information regarding positive and safe social networking, download our ‘Young People and Social Networking Sites’ leaflet:

www.childnet.com/sns

For more information regarding accessing and downloading legal content online, visit our ‘Music, Film, TV and the Internet’ information area:

www.childnet.com/downloading

For further information about online gaming, read our guide 'Online gaming: An introduction for parents and teachers’:

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Childnet International, the South West Grid for Learning and the Internet Watch Foundation have partnered together to form the UK Safer Internet Centre. For more information, advice and resources visit: www.saferinternet.org.uk

The Internet Watch Foundation is the UK’s hotline for reporting illegal online content. It deals specifically with child abuse images hosted worldwide and criminally obscene adult content hosted in the UK: www.iwf.org.uk

The Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre enables adults and young people to make reports of actual or attempted abuse online:

www.ceop.police.uk

ParentPort is here to the UK’s media regulators and contains details on how to report a range of online content, including advertising and games, that you feel may be unsuitable for children: www.parentport.org.uk

Useful websites:

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The internet – an inspiring and positive place

What can I do right now?

- Maintain an open dialogue with your child and encourage them to talk to you about their internet use: for example who they’re talking to, services they’ve used, and any issues they may be experiencing.
- Create a family agreement to establish your children’s boundaries, and your expectations, when on the internet.
- Give your child strategies to deal with any online content that they are not comfortable with – such as turning off the screen, telling an adult they trust and using online reporting facilities.
- Consider using filtering software to block unwanted content. In addition to filtering, there are both effective ways to educate them about the internet.
- Encourage your children to ‘think before you post.’ Online actions can impact not only yourself but the lives of others. Content posted privately online can be publicly shared by others, and remain online forever.
- Understand the law. Some online behaviour may break the law, for example when downloading or sharing content with others. Be able to recommend legal services.
- Familiarise yourself with the privacy settings and reporting features available on popular sites and services.
- If your child is being bullied online, save all available evidence and know where to report the incident, for example to the school, service provider, or the police if the law has been broken.
- Familiarise yourself with the age ratings for games and apps which also can help to indicate the level and suitability of the content. Also look if online services are available that tools and websites that may be helpful.
- Set up a family email address that your children can use when signing up to new games and websites online.
- Encourage your children to use nicknames (where possible) instead of their full name, to protect their personal information, and create strong passwords for every account.

Conduct:

- Children need to be aware of the impact that their online activity can have on both themselves and other people, and the digital footprint that they create on the internet. It’s easy to feel anonymous online, and it’s important that children are aware of who is able to view, and potentially share, the information that they may have posted. When using the internet, it’s important to keep personal information safe and not share it with strangers. Discuss with your child the importance of reporting inappropriate conversations, messages, images and behaviours and how this can be done.

Content:

- Some online content is not suitable for children and may be hurtful or harmful. This is true for content accessed and viewed via social networks, online games, and websites. It’s important for children to consider the reliability of online material and be aware that it might not be true or written with a bias. Children may need your help as they begin to assess content in this way. There can be legal consequences for using or downloading copyrighted content, without seeking the author’s permission.

Contact:

- It is important for children to realise that new friends made online may not be who they say they are and that once a friend is added to an online account, you may be sharing your personal information with them. Regularly reviewing friends lists and removing unwanted contacts is a useful step. Privacy settings online may also allow you to customise the information that each friend is able to access. If you have concerns that your child is, has been, the subject of inappropriate sexual contact or approach by another person, it’s vital that you report it to the police via the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (www.ceop.police.uk). If your child is the victim of cyberbullying, this can also be reported online and offline. Reinforce with your child the importance of telling a trusted adult straight away, or if someone is bullying them or making them feel uncomfortable, or if one of their friends is being bullied online.

Commercialism:

- Young people’s privacy and enjoyment online can sometimes be affected by advertising and marketing schemes, which can also mean inadvertently spending money online, for example within applications. Encourage your children to keep their personal information private, learn how to block both pop ups and spam emails, turn off in-app purchasing on devices where possible, and use a family email address when signing in online forms.

5 Tips for Teens:

1. Protect your online reputation: use the tools provided by online services to manage the content you post. Content posted online can last forever and could be shared publicly by anyone.
2. Know where to find help: understand how to report to service providers and use blocking and deleting tools. If something happens that upsets you online, it’s never too late to tell someone.
3. Don’t give in to pressure: if you lose your inspiration you’ve lost control: once you’ve pressed send you can’t take it back.
4. Respect the law: unreliable services and know how to legally access the music, film and TV you want.
5. Acknowledge your sources: use trustworthy content and remember to give credit when using other people’s work/ideas.