

Spotlight on Safeguarding

Working Together to Keep Our Young People Safe



Setting Boundaries for New Devices

Many parents and carers will be considering getting their children new devices this month. Whether it's an upgraded mobile phone or a new console, putting boundaries in place from the beginning is important. Asking yourself how your child uses technology now, and how you would like them to use the new device, is a really great place to start.

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- This month's App focus: Discord

3 WAYS DEVICE USAGE CAN NEGATIVELY IMPACT CHILDREN

EFFECTS ON BEHAVIOUR

Just like any addiction, the use of devices can easily become a habit for children. This may lead them to neglect spending time with friends and family, and might cause them to become upset if they are asked to put away their devices to participate in other activities.

EFFECTS ON SLEEP

Electronic devices emit blue light that can deceive the brain into believing it's daytime. As a result, using these devices before bed or during the late hours of the night can significantly impact sleep quality, which can have a negative impact on a child's behaviour, both at home and at school.

EFFECTS ON THE BRAIN

Spending too much time looking at screens can negatively impact a child's ability to engage with traditional learning experiences. This may lead to difficulties focusing on non-electronic activities, such as those found in school. Additionally, children may avoid activities that promote the use of their imagination and social skills.

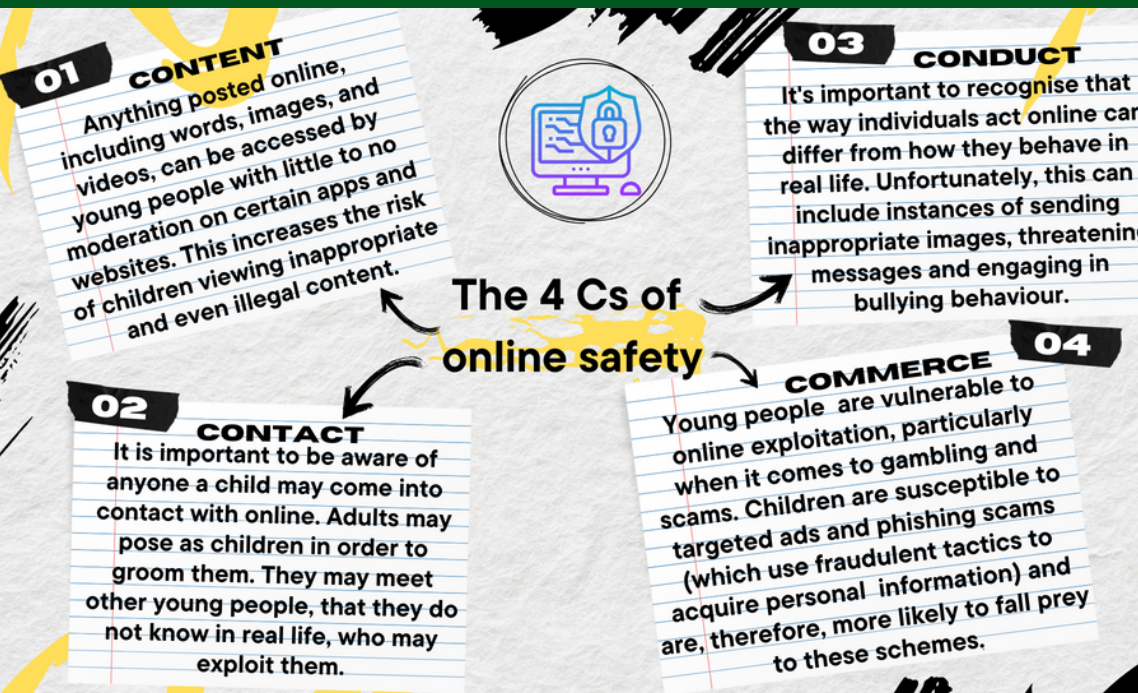
THE ENLIGHTENED PARENT

Establishing New Tech Boundaries for Children

Before you give your child a new piece of technology or device, there are five boundaries that can be very useful to set up:

1. Establish clear expectations beforehand: It's important to help your child understand that the boundaries you are putting in place are for their own benefit. You care about the time they spend on their devices and the content they access.
2. Set parental controls before handing over the device: Research the device you have so you are aware of the safety features. Have these in place before your child gets the new device.
3. Agree on a level of monitoring: Your child should agree to you monitoring their device regularly, having access to their passwords and controlling which apps they download.
4. Schedule screen-free time and limit usage: This could include setting aside time before bedtime, during family meals and during specific family activities.
5. Model healthy device behaviours: This could include setting aside your own screen-free time and putting your phone down when interacting with your child.

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The Online World

As parents, it's natural to want to know where our children are and what they're doing when they're not with us. However, it's equally important to be aware of their online activities, including the content they're viewing and who they're communicating with.

How to Discuss Your Child's Online Activities with Them

Talking to your child about their internet use is crucial in understanding what they view online. But broaching the subject can be challenging, especially if it's out of the blue. To ease into the conversation, use a current event or media story as an example. These discussions should be ongoing rather than a one-time "big talk." Start with shorter, more frequent chats while doing an activity together, such as driving or shopping. Sharing your own online experiences can also help establish trust and open communication.

Exploring Discord

Discord is a popular app that offers voice, video and text chat options. It operates via servers, which are chat groups centred around a mutual interest, such as video games, books or TV shows. These servers are organised into text and voice channels, and users can also create private group with up to nine other users.

However, with the perks of this app comes risks. Due to the private nature of Discord's groups, there is a high potential for sharing inappropriate content. Additionally, as the interactions on Discord are in real-time, there is no moderation in place. This can make children vulnerable to online predators, as strangers can easily contact them through the app.

Discord

Age restrictions:
13 years old



Keeping Your Child Safe on Discord: Tips and Tricks

Discord has limited safety features, with the exception of a blocking feature. It is possible to disable direct messaging for servers; however, the user must do this for each new server they join. To ensure your child's safety, encourage them to use their real age when signing up and agree that they will consult with you before joining a new server. This will enable you to verify that the content is appropriate for your child.