



# Online safety at home: parents and carers newsletter



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With the Christmas break approaching the majority of young people may be given new technology to use, have more time to spend online playing games or socialising. Technology is part of day to day life, for education, as well as a way to keep in touch with friends and family. However it's important we all continue to consider how we can help keep young people safe online and in the community.

## Steps you can take to help keep your child safer online

**Have an ongoing conversation:** Continue to talk about the apps, games and sites they like to use, and what they like and don't like and any concerns about being online. Discuss with them when to unfollow, block or report. For help starting this conversation, read [having a conversation with your child](#).

**Make sure they know where to go for support:** Remind your child they can always speak to you or an adult they trust if anything happens online that makes them feel worried or upset. For a breakdown of report services, visit: [Supporting your child with reporting unwanted content online](#)

**Make sure they know about NCA CEOP:** Young people can report a concern about grooming or sexual abuse to NCA CEOP at <https://www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre/> and get support from a specialist Child Protection Advisor.

**Parental controls:** Parental controls have been designed to help you manage your child's online activities. There are various types, some of which are free but others which can be bought. However, nothing is totally fool proof so they shouldn't replace the need for you to support and advise your child using the internet. For more information and step by step instructions on setting up parental controls, visit [Parental Controls & Privacy Settings Guides - Internet Matters](#).

**Direct your child to age appropriate information about relationships and sex:** It's natural for young people to start exploring their sexual feelings online and adolescents are more inclined to take risks. It's important to understand this and to talk to your child in a positive, encouraging and safe way. [Thinkuknow](#), [Brook](#), [The Mix](#) and [Childline](#) all provide age appropriate information about relationships and sex that you can signpost your child to.

**Talk about how their online actions can affect others:** If your child is engaging with peers online, remind them to consider how someone else might feel before they post or share something. If they are considering sharing a photo/video of somebody else, they should always ask permission first.



## **Sexting, sharing information, images and videos**

Young people often share images or 'selfies' and there is potential for some of those to be nude or nearly nude images. Young people share 'nudes' for a number of different reasons, and some situations are more risky than others.

For information about the contexts in which images are shared and how best to respond, take a look at [nude selfies: a parents guide](#).

If your child enjoys being online and uses social media apps, games and more, it's important you know how to protect their personal information and support them to make safe choices about what they share online.

Read this [parents guide to personal information](#) and [how to protect it](#) for more information to support your child.

Some of the most popular apps, sites and games are designed to make it easy to share information online. But once information is shared, you can never be sure who has seen it, saved it or shared it.

If your child has shared something online they wish they hadn't – don't panic. Read [my child has shared too much online](#) for advice on how to support your child.

## **Social media**

You may be wondering when is the best age to let your child have a social media account, or have some concerns if they're already using them. For advice and guidance, read [Is your child ready for social media?](#)

Remember, most social media services require users to be at least 13 years of age before they can register.

Most young people have positive experiences socialising online, but it can be easy for young people to share things or post things they wish they hadn't.

The simplest way to have information about your child removed from a website, or app is to contact the site itself. Read [reporting to social media sites](#) for more information.

Social media can offer young people opportunities to express themselves and have fun, but they could be exposed to harmful content which might include sexual images or videos which could impact on their understanding of sex and relationships.

For information, read [Teens and the sexual content on social media](#).



## Cyberbullying

What is bullying?

There are many different forms of online bullying, some people may experience more than one type.

Bullying can include:

Harassment and trolling – this is where a person may call someone names, or tease or humiliate them. For example, they might post nasty sexual comments posted on their social media or within an online game.

Gossip, rumours or lies – this is where someone may share information about a person which is damaging to their reputation. It might be true, or made up. For example, they may share gossip about a person's sexual behaviour.

Impersonation – this is where a person pretends to be someone else online, to share nasty or embarrassing things such as images and videos.

'Outing' – this is when someone may share personal information about another. For example, this might be publicly announcing someone's sexuality or gender identity online. They may also share someone's private images and videos without consent.

Excluding people – this is when a person, or people, leave someone out of a group on purpose – for example, in group chats, apps and games.

Is bullying a crime?

Most bullying is not against the law, but it is never OK. Most social media apps and games, like schools, have rules which ban bullying behaviour.

Some bullying behaviour is illegal. It is a crime if someone: However, it is a crime if someone is:

Forces someone else to do something sexual or share a nude/semi-nude image

Shares, or threatens to share, an under 18 year old's nude or semi-nude images

Bullies someone because of their race, gender, sexual identity, or if you have a disability

If someone is threatening or harassing you, this can also be a crime.

If you suspect your child is being bullied, explain to them what bullying is, and ask if anything like that has happened to them. Keep calm, and listen carefully to what they say.

Not sure how to start the conversation? [Click here for ideas](#)

Sometimes bullies will try to pass off these actions as 'banter' to make it seem okay. It is not 'banter', it is bullying.



## Online gaming

Online games are social activities, and most have features that allow young people to chat with others whilst they play.

For information about the positives of gaming, the risks of 'in-game chat' and measures you can take to help protect them, watch this short video: [In-game chat: a guide for parents and carers](#) .

The PEGI (Pan European Game Information) rating system can be a useful tool to help you decide what online games are appropriate for your child.

For more information on the PEGI system and other factors to consider before deciding what's suitable, read [Gaming: what's appropriate for your child](#)

Gaming is popular with both children and adults and can help to cure that lockdown boredom! If your child is gaming, you may have some questions about how to keep them safer. If so, check out - [gaming: what parents need to know](#).

For a guide on the apps, sites and games your child might enjoy, visit: [Net Aware](#).

GAM Parent Hub Information and support for Secondary Ages 11-14. Children are growing up in a digital world and are able to navigate the internet with ease. Explore online gaming, microtransactions and the links to gambling activities, and find out how to identify gaming and gambling related harm.

<https://parents.ygam.org/about-ygam-parent-hub/>

Ask About Games answer parents and players have about video game age ratings, provide advice on how to play games safely and responsibly, and offer families helpful tips to ensure they get the most out of the games they enjoy together.

AskAboutGames is a joint venture between the VSC Rating Board and games trade body Ukie, run with input and advice from across the games industry <https://www.askaboutgames.com/>

## Inform the school if any of your details change.

Please ensure you contact the office or the appropriate Head of Year if any of your details have changed e.g. your address, phone number or email, so that we can update our records and contact you in case of an emergency.

# Age Ratings

## Parent Guide

## A quick guide to what parents need to know

### What are age ratings?

Age ratings tell us which online platforms, such as apps and websites, are **suitable for different age ranges**. These protect children from inappropriate content and data collection.

Most platforms have an official age rating – but these can **differ from place to place**. For example, Instagram is officially rated 13+, but is rated 12+ in app stores. **PEGI's ratings** for games can also differ. It can be confusing, but **most age ratings will guide you** in deciding which platforms are appropriate.

### Why are some platforms rated under-13?

These have **content suitable for children**. Additionally, laws regulate the collection of personal information for under-13s.

Many under-13 platforms still need parental consent – for instance YouTube Kids (4+), PopJam (7+) and Minecraft (9+).

### Why are some platforms rated 13+?

These may feature stuff that's **not suitable for younger children**, such as graphic violence or sexualised content. Most popular social media platforms – including Instagram, YouTube and TikTok – are rated 13+.

But it's not hard for younger children to join 13+ platforms. Many ask a new user for their date of birth, but do not require proof.

### Why are some platforms rated 18+?

These contain **age-restricted content** – like gaming, alcohol or porn. **But many 18+ platforms are accessible to children and young people**. Usually this is because they do not verify a user's age, or have a process that can be bypassed.

### What should I do?

**Familiarise yourself with age ratings** and the platforms your child uses. They may be desperate to sign-up to TikTok – but **explore the app together first** to decide if it's suitable.

If your child does use a 13+ platform, **take a look at the privacy settings** with them and make sure they **know how to block or report a problem**.

And never just assume your child isn't visiting 13+ or 18+ platforms. Children are naturally curious, and may be tempted to explore – especially if a platform doesn't verify their age.

### More Info

[Listen to Parent Zone's Tech Shock podcast – discussing age-gating online](#)

[Read Parent Zone's guides to popular apps and services](#)