NSPCC and Net Aware

8 tips for keeping your kids safe online

Follow our 8 top tips to help keep your kids safe online during lockdown and beyond.

With the new lockdown restrictions in place, it's likely that kids (and adults!) will continue to spend more time online over the next few weeks. Whether it's for school work, connecting with friends or playing games, Net Aware has everything you need to know to help keep them safe.

The best way to help keep your children safe online during lockdown is to continue having conversations around online safety, regularly check phone and app settings together, and manage time online.

But it's also a challenging time. If you're usual rules and routines around online safety have stopped or changed, then be kind to yourself and think why. It might be that they just don't work during lockdown. Remember that it's ok to adapt and make the right changes for you family.

1. Keep being a TEAM

It's important to work together as a family to help keep your kids safe online. That's why we've created four simple steps so you Talk, Explore, Agree and Manage online safety.

Talk to your child regularly about what they're doing online and how to stay safe. Let them know they can come to you, another trusted adult or **Childline** if they're feeling worried or upset by anything they've seen. Why not play our Parents vs Kids game to help get the conversation started?

Explore your child's online activities together. Understand why they like using certain apps or games and make sure they know what they can do to keep themselves safe.

Agree your own online rules as a family. Use our **family agreement template** to help you get started.

Manage your technology and use the settings available to keep your child safe.

We know starting a conversation isn't always easy.

2. It's ok to be flexible

At the moment, the internet is playing a really important role for children and families, whether it's for chatting, gaming, schooling, or even exercising. And because we're all using it more and in different ways, you might need to be flexible with the normal rules, such as how long your child is spending online.

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It's ok to be flexible, but make sure you talk to your child about any new rules and remind them they can talk to you about anything they see or do online. Create a **family agreement** together and agree which rules might change during lockdown. Family agreements are designed to be flexible to your family's needs so it's important to update them when situations change.

3. Talk to them about who they're talking to

The online world has helped us keep in touch with family and friends we haven't been able to see this year. But sometimes kids might talk to people they don't know online, like on games or social media sites.

Make sure you're chatting regularly to your child about who they're talking to online and what apps they're using. Remind them that they shouldn't share any personal information, like names, locations or links to other social media sites. Tell them if someone starts asking them questions or suggests using another app like **Snapchat** or **Instagram** they should come and tell you.

Explore safety settings together like block and report so your child knows how to stop unwanted contact or end an online chat if it's not about the game.

You should also check out our advice article on **Talking to people online: When should I worry?** to help you understand why kids might make friends online and how you can keep them safe.

It can be helpful to supervise children when they're online but it can also be time consuming! If your child is chatting or playing with friends online, you could always talk to other parents and see if you can take it in turns to supervise and support them, just like you would if they were at each other's houses.

4. Get familiar with video chatting and livestreaming

Do you know the difference between video chatting, video sharing and livestreaming? Don't worry if the answer is no, it can be confusing (especially when some apps do more than one!) Right now, it's likely that a lot of children are spending more time doing all three, so read our advice article on what they all mean, why kids use them and how to keep them safe.

Video chat, video sharing and livestreaming

5. Take online safety offline

To help you keep your kids safe, we've created some activity sheets to make it even easier for you to have conversations about staying safe online. Print off our **word search** and use the words as prompts for an online safety chat. Or use our **countryside** and **city** colouring in sheets to talk about what your child likes doing online and ways to stay safe.

Explore all our activity sheets and resources

6) Get to know gaming

Playing games online can be a great way for kids to be creative, learn new skills and stay connected with friends over lockdown. But with so many different games available, and new ones popping up all the time, it can be difficult to stay on top of what your child is doing.

Familiarise yourself with your child's favourite game and use our reviews to help you decide whether it's appropriate for them to use. Look out for things like the age rating and whether it has any chat features.

Before you let your child use a new game, agree some rules around who they can play with and when. Check out our advice on gaming for other tips to help keep your kids safe playing games online.

Explore gaming advice

7. Think about age and content ratings

If your child is using new apps or playing popular games, it can be hard to know if they're age-appropriate or not. To make it more confusing, there's often an official, app store and PEGI rating, which is sometimes based on age and other times on content. But don't worry, we are here to help with age and content ratings in our advice article.

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8. Add Net Aware to your smartphone or tablet

We've built Net Aware so you can add it to your smartphone or tablet just like an app, making it easy to come back and find the latest online safety information and advice.

It's easy to do, simply visit Net Aware on your device and follow these steps:

- **Android** - click in the top right hand corner (usually on the three lines or three dots) and select 'add to home screen' or 'add to apps screen'
- **iOS** – click on the share icon at the bottom of the screen (it looks like a square with an arrow) and select 'add to home screen'