SAFE and SMART

Keeping Children Safe Online

June 2024
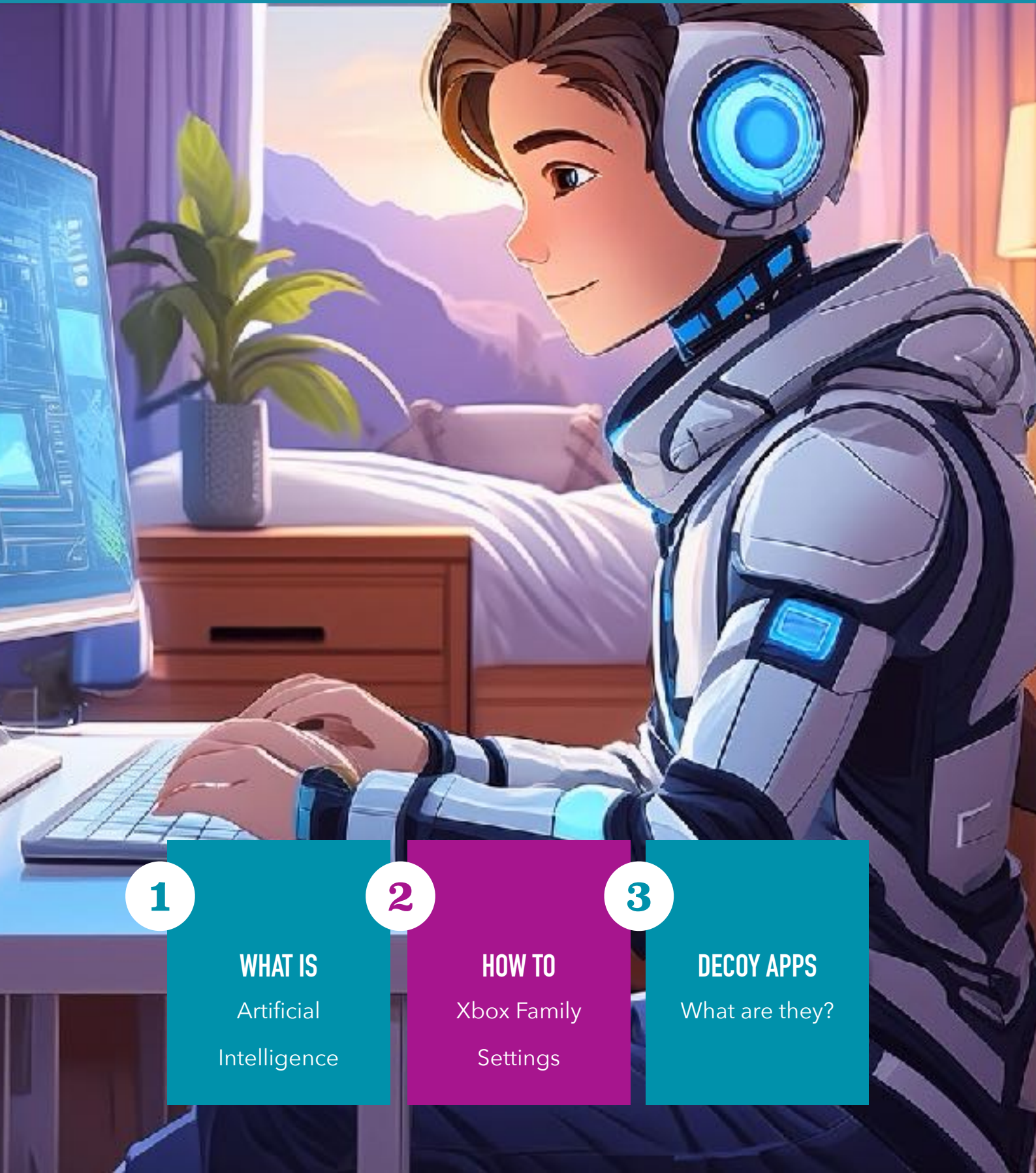
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What is

Artificial Intelligence?

As technology continues to move forward at a staggering rate, artificial intelligence is becoming a big part of this, moving into every area of our online lives such as online reviews, shopping, image and video creation, chatbots and much more.

So what is AI, what are the positives and risks and how can we help our children?

What is AI?

Artificial Intelligence (AI) refers to the creation of computer systems (models) that can perform tasks that typically require human intelligence. These tasks include learning, problem-solving, understanding natural language, recognizing patterns, making decisions. These systems can range from simple algorithms that suggest what movie to watch next to complex networks that can drive cars autonomously or create images from a few typed words.

AI works by processing large amounts of data, identifying patterns, and making predictions or decisions based on that information.

That's a basic overview of AI, but when it comes to personal use of AI we have various models which we can all use, such as:

- **ChatGPT** - where we can ask questions (much like a search engine) or ask the AI to perform tasks, such as input lots of data and ask the AI to create a barchart, code a game, write an essay and much much more.

- **Midjourney and Leonardo AI** - using words, we can create images on anything and everything in different styles, for example photorealistic, sketch, cartoon, painting, manga, Pixar etc.

- **AI chatbots** - we can chat about anything, ask questions, get support and advice. For example Snap MyAI, which is the chatbot within Snapchat (built on ChatGPT).

DID YOU KNOW?

Whilst AI might be the buzzword of the day, the developments in AI go all the way back to the 1940's and 50's. It wasn't until the 2000's where new developments really started to take shape to what we see today, such as virtual assistants like Siri and Alexa in the 2010's through to the more advanced models in the 2020's like ChatGPT.

What are the positives?

AI can offer many benefits for children and young people such as enhancing their learning and everyday experiences. Some examples would be:

- **Personalised Learning**:
  AI can tailor educational content to the individual needs of students, helping them learn at their own pace and in their preferred style. This can make learning more effective and enjoyable.

- I**nteractive Educational Tools**:
  AI-powered applications and games can make learning more engaging, providing instant feedback and support, helping children grasp complex concepts more easily.

- **Safety and Monitoring**:
  AI is used by many companies as part of their moderation process, alerting to concerning and/or illegal activities.

- **Assistive Technologies**:
  For children with disabilities, AI can provide significant support through tools like speech-to-text applications, predictive text, and other assistive technologies that help them communicate and learn more effectively.

- **Career Preparation**:
  Exposure to AI technologies can prepare children for future careers in technology, a field that is rapidly growing and offers numerous opportunities.

What are the concerns?

While AI has many benefits, there are also potential risks that parents should be aware of, for example::

- **Privacy Concerns**:
  AI systems often collect large amounts of personal data. This can lead to privacy issues if the data is not adequately protected or if it is misused.

- **Exposure to Inappropriate Content**:
  Despite monitoring tools, children may still encounter inappropriate content online. AI systems are not infallible and do not catch everything.

- **Cyberbullying**:
  AI can be used to create fake profiles or images, leading to cyberbullying or other harmful online behaviours.

- **Dependence on Technology**:
  Over-reliance on AI and technology can limit children's ability to think critically and solve problems independently. Some children may have difficulties socialising and therefore may rely on AI chatbots, however this could also be a positive.

- **Hallucinations:**
  Contrary to popular belief, AI doesn't know everything and can get things wrong, even make things up if it doesn't know. Equally, models may have been trained on data that is incorrect.

- **Bias in AI Systems**: AI systems can sometimes reflect and amplify existing biases in society, leading to unfair treatment or reinforcing stereotypes such as body image.

How can we help our children?

As parents we play a crucial role in ensuring their children use AI and technology safely and responsibly and there's nothing better than talking, playing and learning together. Older children may already know a lot about AI, they may even be using some AI models, what can they tell you? What can you learn from them?

- **Engage with your children**:
  Understanding AI and its implications can help you guide children in using technology such as AI wisely. Discussing the benefits and risks openly can empower children to make better choices.
  One great way is to use AI with them which allows you to discuss the benefits and risks whilst learning and having fun.

- **Discuss images:**
  For example, most of the images in this newsletter have been created in AI, all of them took less than 10 seconds to create. How could people use this technology for good and bad such as creating deepfakes, manipulating an image etc.?

- **Encourage Critical Thinking**:
  Use a large language model such as ChatGPT (it's free). Ask the AI questions, give it maths problems, create a story or a poem in the style of Shakespeare or ask it to tell you a joke.
  Ensure your children know that important information (such as school work) needs to be checked with other sources, AI can, and does, make mistakes (hallucinations).

How to:
Xbox Family Settings

Gaming is hugely popular for entertainment and socialising. As concerns have grown over the years many companies have introduced and improved safety settings which can assist parents and their children to have a fun, positive experience.

Microsoft are one such company, and given the popularity of the Xbox console there are some good parental features which can all be managed via an app on Apple and Android phones for free which allow you to:

- Set up a **family account** and add family members.

- Set **screen time** and enable **content restrictions**.

- Manage your **child's spending** by viewing your child's balance, view their spending history and adding money to their account.

- Respond to incoming requests, such as **adding screen time.**

- **Manage friends** by setting 'Ask a Parent' or remove friends your child is following.

What about PC's?

Can the Xbox Family Settings app be used to manage PC gaming?

Yes, all you need to do is sign into your Microsoft family account, select the family member, select Screen Time and turn on "Use one schedule for all devices."

How do I set up Xbox devices?

It's easier to see it being done rather than reading about it, so here's some quick, simple guides on YouTube:

Xbox 360 - click here
https://youtu.be/8zLGuLkBpG0?si=P9mYRi4Dg3ya3p7s

Xbox One/One S - click here
https://youtu.be/H5ViYPLTs3I?si=JTePbC04XoYJYgII

Decoy Apps

What are they?

Decoy apps, sometimes known as vault apps, are apps that look like something (like a calculator), but it's actually something else and used to hide content within the app such as images, videos or even other apps.

On some devices there can also be a built-in feature. For example on the right you can see the 'Hidden Album' feature on an iPhone (which is also available on iPad and MacOS). You can hide images and videos within this album in the Photos app, then turn the feature off in settings so that the Hidden folder doesn't appear within the Photos app.

Why are decoy apps used?

For a variety of legitimate and maybe not so legitimate purposes, for example:

- To protect personal/private information.

- To hide content, such as images, videos, messages and other apps from prying eyes.

What are the concerns?

These are probably obvious, such as hiding content from parents/carers that may be inappropriate, even illegal.

Where do you find decoy apps?

They're easy to find as they're available on the common app stores such as the Apple store and the Google Play store. Have a look for yourself, just search 'decoy app' or 'vault app'.
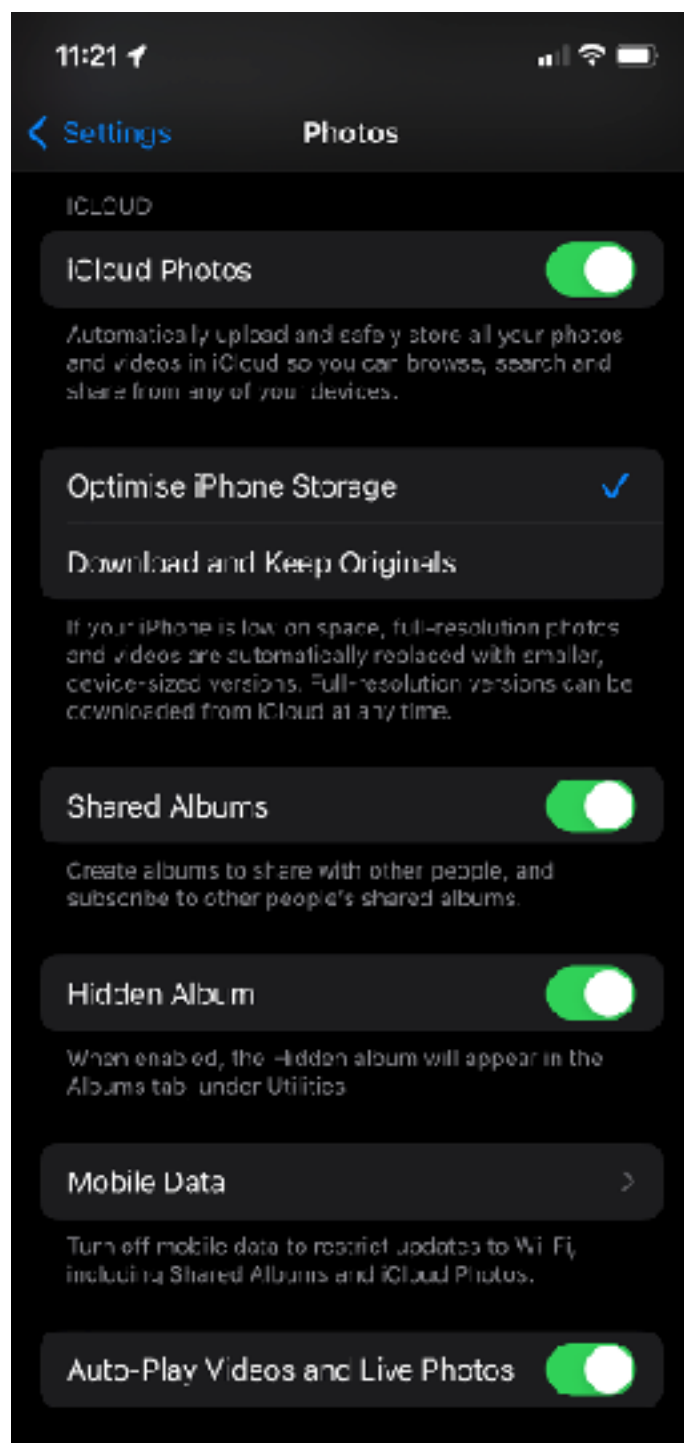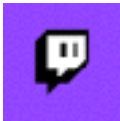
I've found a vault app, what do I do?

As with anything like this, don't jump to conclusions. Give your child the benefit of the doubt as they could be using a decoy app for legitimate reasons. Talk about it, what is in the app and why do they feel the need to hide it? Are they hiding photos, videos or even messages from others that could be a concern or are they just privacy aware and security conscious?

Common Apps

This is not an exhaustive list, but tends to be the more popular apps used by children and young people.

Age requirements are set within the terms and conditions of the app provider, don't be confused by ratings in the app store which can sometimes be different.

App	Age	Comments
	13 and over	**Discord** - is a voice, video and text chat app that's used by tens of millions of people aged 13+ to tap and hang out with communities or their friends. Parental settings can be found **HERE**.
	13 and over	**Instagram** - is a photo and video sharing app where people can upload photos, videos and messages to share with others. Parental settings can be found **HERE**.
	13 and over	**Snapchat** - is a very popular app that lets users swop pictures and videos (Snaps) with others which are meant to disappear after they are viewed. There is also a messaging feature. Parental settings can be found **HERE**.
	13 and over	**TikTok** - is a social media app that allows users to create, watch and share short videos shot on mobile devices or webcams. Parental settings can be found **HERE**.
	13 and over	**Twitch -** is where people come together to chat and interact live. Think YouTube, but it is live rather then pre-recorded. Parental settings can be found **HERE**.
	13 and over	**WhatsApp -** is a messaging app which uses text, images, video and voice record features to connect with others. Parental settings can be found **HERE**
	18 and over	**Reddit** - is a network of communities (called subreddits) where people can share information, their interests and hobbies. Reddit is an 18+ app, there are no parental controls.