



How to talk about online safety

How to start the conversation with your child about staying safe online, and what to do if you're worried about online safety.

I'm worried my child is taking and sharing inappropriate pictures

Talk to them about what they're sharing and if they know who has seen the pictures. Ask them if they'd be happy for someone – like a grandparent – to see the picture? Or if they think someone they admire, maybe their favourite celebrity, would share an image like that?

Explain that they should always think carefully about what they share. Once it's been sent, they can't control what happens to it. Discuss what sort of pictures are appropriate for them to share and not to share, and make sure they understand why.

Recognise that sometimes children share pictures for a dare, or as part of a joke. Remind them that once something's shared online, they can't manage who sees it or what happens next – even if it began as a joke.

Agree a safe way forward, such as checking what they're sharing for a while. Or ask an older sibling to check the photos before they're shared.

Suggest they [download the Ziplt app](#) to help them deal with requests for inappropriate photos.

I'm worried my child is sharing personal information

Talk to your child about the things that they can safely share, like their interests and hobbies. And explain what counts as personal information, for example:

- their full name
- address
- mobile number
- email address
- passwords.

Remind them they wouldn't share this information with people they didn't know in the real world.

They might be happy to share thoughts and feelings online with friends, but explain that they should be wary of doing this with strangers. Not everyone is who they say they are online, and sometimes things like your hopes and fears can be used against you by people you don't know.

If your child is worried they've shared too much, make sure you're able to help them if needed.

I'm worried my child is looking at porn online

Ask open questions about what they have been looking at. But be prepared for the fact that they may not want to talk about it and might feel embarrassed.

If you're really worried about what they've been viewing, tell them why and make it clear that you don't want them to view it again.

You can also block the content by using [parental controls](#) and explain why you've done this. Suggest other age-appropriate sites where they can find out about sex and relationships. [ChildLine](#) has information that's suitable for children aged 9+, and the [BBC has some clear, straightforward advice for young people](#).

If you're less worried and think they may be 'experimenting', talk to them about the differences between online porn and real sex, love and relationships.

I'm worried my child is being bullied online

Recognise that online bullying might be just one part of bullying that's happening in their day-to-day lives, and there might be a lot of underlying issues.

- Reassure them that you can help to remove the content that's upsetting them and block the person who made the comments.
- Look at the negative comments with them and contact the provider to get them removed.
- Save the evidence by taking screen shots.

Contact their school to let them know about the incident, if you think it's appropriate.



I'm worried my child is being bullied others online

If your child has been bullying others online, find out whether other children were involved and what part your child played.

They may not have realised that what happened was bullying. Tell them explicitly that this behaviour isn't acceptable and the fact it's online doesn't mean it's not upsetting.

Help them understand how what they've done feels. You could ask them how they think the other child felt, or how they feel when someone says unkind things to them.

Explain that leaving someone out of an online discussion or group can be just as bad as attacking them directly. Encourage them to apologise to the person involved and help them to remove the content.

I'm worried my child is spending too much time online

Agree what times your child can go online. For example, not going online just before bed time or in the morning before school.

Explain that you think it's important they do a variety of activities. You recognise that they enjoy being online, but you think it's important they do other things as well.

Discuss your family agreement and remind them why it's important. Use technical tools to help you reinforce online times. Many sites have timers that you can set, or you can set it up on the computer, mobile or tablet.

Make sure that you stick to what you've agreed and that you manage your own time online.

