



# Online Safety: A Parent's Guide

*Helping you support your child to explore safely, confidently, and with care.*

Technology is evolving rapidly, transforming how we live, learn, and connect. It offers exciting opportunities but also presents challenges — even the most tech-savvy adults can struggle to keep up with the latest developments. For our children, who are still developing the skills to make safe choices, the risks can be greater.

## Children's Curiosity Meets the Online World

Children are naturally curious — it's how they learn and grow. Schools are required by law to provide safety measures such as filters and supervision. At home, you play the most important role in guiding your child's digital journey. Rather than try to eliminate risk entirely, help them learn to navigate it with your support.

## A New Parenting Milestone: Introducing Technology

Like teaching road safety or how to use a kitchen knife, introducing technology should be thoughtful, gradual, and supported. Every child is different. Think about when your child is ready and set clear boundaries to help them explore safely.

## Stay Curious — Not Just Concerned

Your best tool as a parent? Curiosity. Show genuine interest in your child's online world — the games they play, the videos they watch, and who they talk to. When children feel heard and supported, they're more likely to come to you if something feels wrong.

## Understand the Risks: The 4 Cs of Online Harm

- **Content:** Inappropriate, harmful, or illegal material — including violence, hate, self-harm, misinformation, or pornography. This can be accessed accidentally or intentionally.
- **Contact:** Being approached by strangers, including those who may try to exploit or groom children through games, social media, or messaging.
- **Conduct:** A child's own behaviour online — including bullying, oversharing, or participating in risky challenges.
- **Commercialism:** Scams, targeted ads, in-app purchases, and pressure to spend or share personal information.



## Steps You Can Take — Together

Building a safer online environment starts with small, shared actions:

- **Agree Family Rules:** Set age-appropriate boundaries for screen time, apps, and device-free times/places (like mealtimes or bedrooms).
- **Use Parental Controls:** Filters on your home Wi-Fi, devices, and apps can help reduce exposure to harmful content.
- **Check Privacy Settings:** Review and update their privacy settings. Help your child limit who can contact them or view their content.
- **Stick to Age Ratings:** Use age ratings to ensure content is suitable.
- **Model Good Habits:** Children learn from what they see. Show balanced, thoughtful use of technology in your own behaviour.

**Remember: Ultimately, you are the parent** - so it's your call. You make the decisions about how technology is introduced and used at home. You decide when your child is ready for a mobile phone, nobody else. You won't win any popularity awards, but you will know that you're doing everything you can to protect them.

## When Things Go Wrong

Inevitably, things can go wrong. What matters is how you respond:

- **Listen and Reassure:** Let your child know they can talk to you — and won't be in trouble.
- **Report and Block:** Help them learn how to report users and block inappropriate content.
- **Save Evidence:** Take screenshots or record details if something concerning happens online.

## Need Support?

The NSPCC offers trusted, up-to-date guidance for parents, carers, and professionals. Just search for “**NSPCC Online Safety**” or visit:

[nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety](https://nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety)