

# KEEPING SAFE ONLINE

## A GUIDE FOR PARENTS & TEACHERS

**FORTNITE**



**MINECRAFT**

### This factsheet has been produced for:

Parents and carers, to raise awareness of online safety. *When asked about online gaming, 50% of parents said that they were worried about their child's internet use, however, very few parents engaged with their children in regards to online gaming.*

As parents it's important to be present and understand what your children are accessing online – by having an open conversation with each other, children are more likely to let you know if something doesn't feel quite right before it escalates further.

We know it's hard to stay on top of your children's internet safety, however this resource can help with ways to safeguard your child when they are online.

The guidance will:

- Identify ways to keep your child safe online
- Provide detail on social media apps, games and message boards
- Highlight some of the concerns to look out for
- Direct you to further information and support

### The Youth Endowment Fund found that...

**55%** of children said they'd seen violence on social media.

**65%** of children had changed their behaviour due to fears about violence.

### Ofcom 2021 findings

**31%** of surveyed 12 to 15 year-olds said they had seen something online that they found worrying or nasty in some way that they didn't like.

### Online safety issues (NSPCC)

In 2021 online abuse crimes surged by **78%**.

Recorded crimes increased by three quarters in the 4 years leading up to 2020/2021 .

1 in 3 young people have seen something worrying or nasty online.

In 2020/21 there were over **2,500** Childline counselling sessions about online bullying.

These were just the recorded crimes! The numbers don't include some of the harmful and distressing things young people are seeing online that go unreported.

### Ofcom 2023 findings

Children are interacting directly via messaging/calling apps or sites, these were used by **79%** of 3-17-year-olds overall, and almost all children aged 12-17.

About **9 in 10** children played video games. Shooter games were more likely to be played by boys. Parents of boys were more likely than parents of girls to have rules in place.

# APPS + GAMES + SOCIAL MEDIA

The online world can create unrealistic, filtered lifestyle and beauty standards, around gaming or fashion for example.

Having a persona like this on social media can increase attention from influencers that are looking for people to promote them.

Videos that show things people find funny or show controversial issues or conflict gain traction more quickly and are shared more. Racism and extremism topics have been linked to such videos. There may also be potential implications around bullying, fake news, criminal consequences.

It can glamourise certain ways of life, e.g. gang life music videos.

Sites are not always regulated and allow children to view and share inappropriate content at any time.

Safety and monitoring is so important because children are getting all their information and news from social media and apps.

Almost 100% of children use video sharing platforms, and the majority of children have had a negative experience online.

There have also been links made between children who have commented on videos and subsequent grooming/exploitation.

## ONLINE PLATFORMS

**1** A YouGov study found that most parents think that 13 is the minimum age requirement for setting up an account on these platforms

**13 is the minimum age requirement for a lot of apps:** with a lot of them you also need to be 18 to agree to terms **but do not need to provide proof of age** so it can be easy to lie about this.

**2** Talking to your child about which platforms and apps they think are appropriate for different ages can be a good conversation starter. However, be mindful that **they might not have the same views as you** and their friends might all have different restrictions at home.

It is also a good idea to **follow your child's social media profiles** and use the apps too.

**3** Certain apps have been **linked to suicide and self-harm**, some have specifically been linked to **extremist content and radicalisation**, child abuse and **grooming**.

Some of the apps also allow users to map and **track other's locations**.

**4** Some gaming platforms have chatrooms that are attractive to **radicalisers**. The games can also **contain graphic, violent content** which could be distressing to a child.

**5** It's also worth mentioning that when online there are certain spaces that create **echo chambers** (such as Reddit) which means they are places that can confirm and validate possible extremist views.





## Instagram

a picture sharing platform

To have Instagram you must be 13 years old, however it can be easy for a younger child to sign up due to the verification process.

Instagram  
Parent  
Tips



There is a sensitive content control on Instagram and a tips for parents page. You can try searching for Instagram Parental Guide for more information.

Lots of children have multiple accounts, one that might represent their reality and another that might be highly curated and present a different persona to the world.

Instagram  
Parent  
Tips



It has been found that Instagram can contribute to poor body image, and other mental health difficulties including self-harm and suicidal thoughts.

On the other hand, children have found it to be a safe space to express themselves and proudly show their skills and talents.



## TikTok

a video sharing platform

TikTok's age-rating is 13 years old. Anyone under 18 must have parental consent before using the app. Again it can be easy to sign up by entering a false date of birth.

TicTok  
Guardians  
Guide



Ofcom recently highlighted that over half of 3-17 year olds are using the app.

TikTok has an algorithm which shows different users different content based on content and their watch history. It can be easy to come across negative or inappropriate content because of the algorithms.

Recently a video went viral of a person dying by suicide. Due to the nature of the app and people aiming for fame, it can be a target for online groomers.

It can also be a positive space and creative outlet for children. There is a version of the app for younger viewers to use which has additional privacy features.



## Snapchat

a short video sharing platform

Snapchat's age rating is 13+. It will ask for a date of birth on signing up.

Content disappears after use which can cause problems if you need to see something again. However, this provides false hope that people won't be able to see things posted again but they can always be screenshotted or filmed on another device and re-shared. It can be visible to 10s of 1000s people at a time.

NSPCC  
Guide



Snapchat has a new function called 'My AI', it's a chatbot which is designed to talk to users like a person. Concerns include that children may rely on this for emotional and social support. This could increase isolation and loneliness.

More  
About The  
App



One recent report found that most children had registered as 18 year olds so there were no default settings in place and all of them had seen graphic, violent, sexual and often illegal content on Snapchat.

Snapchat also has a map setting which allows users to see other users (which might be strangers) on a map and access their profile and videos from there. Turn on Ghost mode to hide location, click [here](#) to find out how.



## WhatsApp a messaging and picture sharing app

A person has to be 16+ to sign up for and use WhatsApp. A recent report found that WhatsApp was the most used app for children aged 3-17 for interacting directly via messaging/calling apps or sites.

**WhatsApp  
FAQs**



**WhatsApp  
Help  
Centre**



WhatsApp has a 'Communities' feature which allows users to connect multiple groups together which can mean 1000s of people can be in the one group.

To prevent children being added to groups by people they don't know, change the group settings to 'My contacts except' and use the tick icon to select all contacts. Meaning that only the selected contacts are able to add them to a group. Or at least without first sending an invite.

There is also a map setting which allows users to share their location, even after you've stopped sharing people in that chat will be able to see your last updated location. Some children might benefit from 'Read Receipts' being switched off, this can help to take the pressure off replying to messages.



## YouTube a video sharing platform

The legal minimum age to have a YouTube account is 13 but you don't need an account to watch videos.

YouTube was the most used online platform for 3-17 year olds (Ofcom 2023), there is a YouTube kids and an adult version.

**Managing  
Harmful  
Content**



It is used to watch, create and share videos, this could be anything from video-game themed videos, to music. It can cause problems as it allows children to search for things online without adult supervision which again, may be harmful or upsetting to them. The app also recommends videos based on what you have watched, this can lead to videos which contain adult/inappropriate content.

**Google  
Accounts  
For  
Children**



For example this could be something a child has seen in the news.

Communication can happen via the comments, this can put someone at risk of seeing negative language or being on the receiving end of such language. Subscribing to someone's channel might open up the opportunity for contact from other subscribers.

YouTube has a page on it's commitment to protect users from extremist content - search online for YouTube Policy Violent Extremism. YouTube aims to remove content when it is flagged.

There is a 'Supervised Experience' available on YouTube, with a google account managed under 'family link.





## Facebook

a messaging, chat, picture and video sharing app

Facebook requires everyone to be 13 years old before they can create an account.

You can alter privacy settings to manage whether posts, photos etc. are private or visible to friends or the public.

Facebook  
Parent  
Controls



It is becoming less popular with children and young people but a significant number are still using it.

Concerns with facebook include plans to allow encryption messages, meaning that only the sender and receiver can receive messages. This could put more children at risk of child abuse.

In addition to this there have been issues where death by suicide or terror attacks were live streamed on the app and the app has been accused of not removing the profiles of those expressing extremist views.



## Reddit

a discussion, image and video sharing platform

The age rating for Reddit is 13. Reddit has a parental guidance rating in the Goggle Play store of 17. It is one of the only apps for which the usage is higher in boys than girls.

Parents  
Guide



The app has content suitable only for those older than 18, it is marked NSFW (not safe for work). You can turn this off in settings so that those posts won't come up.

Reddit has sub groups which are blog-style groups based on personal views. These sub groups can be places where people discuss their favourite games or hobbies for example. There is even one for people aged 13-19.

They can also be described as an 'Echo Chamber' and have at times been found to discuss controversial topics, such as hate and misogyny. There are no parental controls on the app or website but there are things you can do to maximise safety.



## Fortnite

a computer game with online live voice chat

Fortnite is a fighting game, there are a number of different games, including some to fight other humans, zombies and monsters.

It contains frequent violence (described as mild) and is rated age 12 plus.

Parents  
Guide



There is an in chat feature, which comes through headphones so parents don't always know what's being discussed.

These chat features are where concerns and links with radicalisation are highlighted.

However, parents can set up a lobby of friends before starting to play so that children aren't playing with strangers.



## Minecraft

a computer game with online live voice chat/messaging

Extremists have been found to use this game to share their views.

In 2019 a child threatened to carry out a mass shooting on a Minecraft chatroom.

Extremists might start by talking on the chatrooms of Minecraft or Roblox and then move discussions to other less moderated platforms, such as message boards.

The picture above is a picture of a Nazi Concentration Camp created on Minecraft by a user. It has been found that the platform along with Roblox allows users to create extremist roleplay environments like the above.

**Minecraft  
Parent  
Controls**



## Roblox

a gaming platform for children

Roblox is a gaming platform aimed at children. There are different games available on the platform which children can choose to play.

You have to be 18 to agree to terms and conditions but you can be any age to have an account. Account holders can disable and limit chat features.

Roblox has different games to try on the platform, there are age restrictions on all content depending on the game, however some have been linked to violence and racism.

Both Minecraft and Roblox platforms have been linked to grooming and child abuse.

The picture to the top right shows a violent end to one of the games available on Roblox.

**Extremists  
Using  
Gaming  
Chat**



**Advice  
For  
Parents**



## Discord

a discussion app

The Google play store has a 'Teen' rating for this app but the servers that require users to be 18+ can be easily accessed.

Anyone can message anyone, so content is discussed such as abusive language, suicidal ideation and extremism,

Discord also has NSFW (Not Safe For Work) channels.

Users can block or mute others,

There is a safe and direct messaging feature to scan and delete messages containing explicit content.

**Discord  
Safety  
Centre**





# Grand Theft Auto + Call of Duty

Grand Theft Auto (GTA) and Call of Duty both have age ratings of 18+ due to high levels of violence within the game.

Concerns include that the games glorify violence, specifically against women (GTA), gang violence, nudity, drug and alcohol abuse.

Voice chat and messaging is part of these games.



## ONLINE MESSAGE BOARDS

**Extremists use mainstream sites to attract young followers** by discussing popular topics like beauty, sport, cars and gaming but this then leads on to extremist content.

After a child or young person has been attracted on the mainstream site, **they are then being encouraged to access message boards.**

Content can be shared really easily on message boards, so although the mainstream apps might be the early entry into extremism, this is where more **graphic and extreme stuff happens.**



### 4chan, 8 chan

4chan is an image-board website.

The age limit is over 18 and it is unsafe for anyone under this age to use it. However you don't need to sign up to use the site.

It contains easily accessible, inappropriate and adult content via discussion boards.

Some of the content is extremist and includes hate speech such as racism, transphobia, pornographic material (and more).

You can set parental control on broadband and mobile networks to limit access to these message-boards.



## Telegram

a cloud based instant messaging app

Telegram is a cloud based instant messaging app, similar to Whatsapp and Facebook Messenger - that works across several platforms and accessed by people throughout the world. The app increased in popularity in 2021 after WhatsApp announced changes to its privacy policy that would allow it to share data with parent company Meta.

Telegram is free to download and use on any device. This lets you keep track of messages easily. Users can send files of any type, make video calls and participate in group chats. Users can also enable encryption and disappearing messages.

According to the terms of service telegram is safest for those ages 16 and older. Apple app store has set the age restrictions to 17 and older, while Google Play store rates it as requiring parental guidance – however users are not asked their age when signing up.

Users can also join groups that can hold up to 200,000 members, most of whom won't personally know each other. Anyone can be invited by their mobile number or username to join a group. If privacy settings aren't set to limit who can see a user's account, then anyone from that group can see whether or not someone is online and any other information available.

Additionally, while users must be 16 or older to join the app, according to Telegram's Terms of Service, the app does not ask for age confirmation upon download and sign up.



## Twitch

a live video streaming platform

Twitch is a live streaming platform popular among those interested in video games. Users can watch live or pre-recorded videos of gameplay while chatting to others in the stream via the website or twitch app. Geared towards the gaming community it also offers gaming news, product announcements and broadcasts esports tournaments which offer large sums of prize money to professional players.

Twitch is available across devices. There are 2 ways for Twitch to work: as a viewer (watch live gameplay, live chat, subscribe) or as a streamer.

To use Twitch, users must be at least 13-years-old. However, the Terms of Service also require anyone under 18 to only use Twitch under parent supervision.

Accounts found to belong to a user under 13 will be terminated. The Apple App Store gives the Twitch app a 17+ age rating while the Google Play Store rates it suitable for Teens



## Signal

Signal is an encrypted messaging service for instant messaging, voice, and video calls. The instant messaging function includes sending text, voice notes, images, videos, and other files. Communication may be one-to-one between users, or for group messaging.



## Session

Session is an end to end encrypted messenger that removes sensitive data collection and is designed for people who want privacy.



# DEFINITIONS

## Doxxing

Publicly sharing someone's information online.

There was a case in 2013 where this reportedly led to a person dying by suicide

## Click Bait

Something online that encourages people to click on it and read further. It might be a headline to an article or a link to a website

## Fake News

Stories that are untrue and created for political reasons or as a joke. This is done in order for the video to gain popularity and spread over the internet. It is usually controversial and so spreads quicker. Sometimes the fake news contains hate messages and therefore creates tension between groups of people.

This term is no longer recommended, **disinformation** is now recognised: which aims to stop members of the public from making informed, reasonable choices by spreading false information

## Conspiracy Theories

An attempt to explain an events often by placing blame on a group or organisation.

A number of these have resulted in violence towards others.

This is why it is important that people feel informed and able to challenge information they read online

## Cyberbullying

Any type of bullying happening online, this could be through any medium such as a game console, phone or a computer. This might happen on several sites, such as social media, chatrooms, gaming sites and more

## Deep Fakes

This is a term for the creation of a digital version of someone, enhanced videos and presentations by artificial intelligence

## Echo Chamber

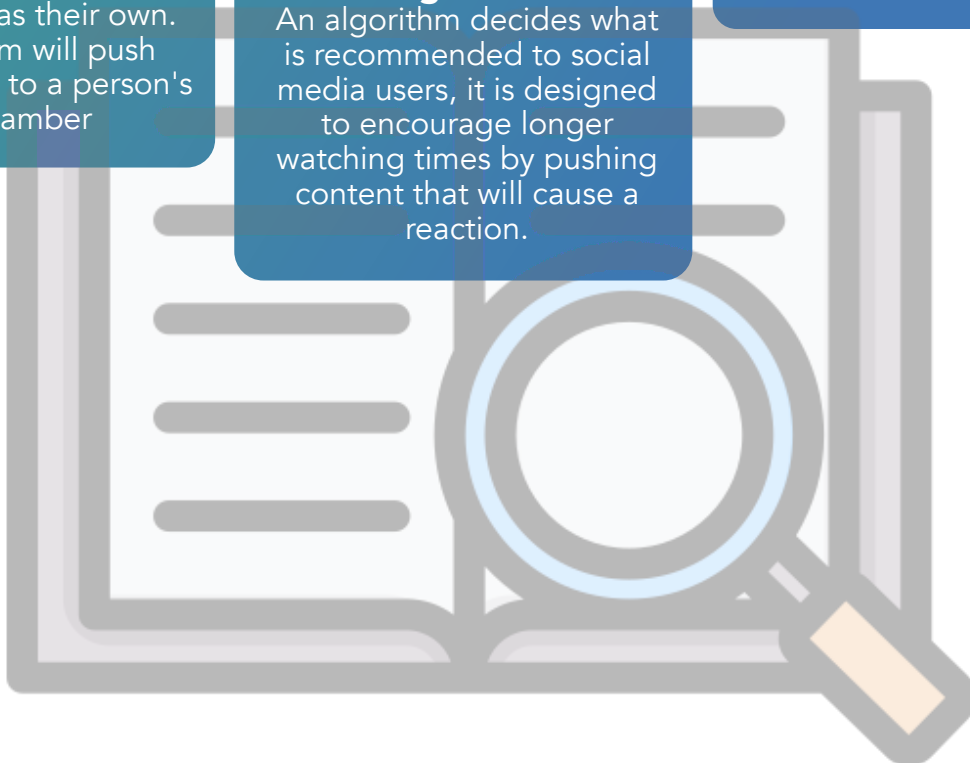
An echo chamber is place where a person only sees information or opinions that are the same as their own. The algorithm will push posts that fit in to a person's echo chamber

## Algorithm

An algorithm decides what is recommended to social media users, it is designed to encourage longer watching times by pushing content that will cause a reaction.

## Confirmation Bias

This means that people interpret or look for information that backs-up or is the same as their existing beliefs



# EXTREMISTS INFLUENCING ONLINE

Radicalisation concerns can be reported via **ActEarly, Police, Education, GP** or **any other statutory organisations**. Click [here](#) to visit ActEarly and read about how to spot the signs of radicalisation. Or [here](#) to see videos from NetMums and ActEarly

## ONLINE RADICALISATION

The process by which someone starts to support extremist ideas and **develops extremist views**.

Radicalisers have views of a certain **ideology and exploit vulnerable children and adults** to try to influence them to take on their ideologies. The online space is a good place to do this. Some groups might **trick people into thinking** the cause is charitable or supportive. They also use **songs or images that would appeal to children** to draw them in and link to their cause.

Children might not be able to distinguish between a link that is safe versus a link that is trying to radicalise them and this is why it's really **important to be speaking to children** about what they are seeing online.

- **A change in behaviour: For example, someone might be more withdrawn, or display more confidence**
- **A change in socialising habits: someone might have a new group of friends or be spending more time on their own. Perhaps they have been arguing more with their peers. They might be more isolated from friends and family**
- **Getting in more trouble at school**
- **Spending more time on their phone / in their room**
- **Discussing extremism or terrorism or attending events**
- **Talking as if from a script**
- **Denial or an unwillingness to engage in conversation when challenged**
- **A change in mental health: someone may be increasingly angry, low in mood, or self-harming for example**

These are just examples; this list is not exhaustive and could also be signs of something else going on in a child's life

# TALKING TO YOUR CHILD ABOUT ONLINE SAFETY

Engaging in your child's online use is a great place to start. Ask yourself, what and who is your child seeing, hearing and visiting when they are online?

- Be someone your child can talk to if they are worried about something they have seen online
- Make time for regular and routine conversations around online usage; plan for these
- Encourage your child not to keep secrets
- Be in charge of the apps and platforms your child downloads
- Follow the rules around age limits on apps
- Monitor social media use daily (or more than once a week), monitor apps, talk history, chatrooms
- Report any extreme or inappropriate content or users to the hosting platform
- Set clear and consistent boundaries with your child
- Turn on parental control settings on all devices and be in charge of the settings and controls for the family
- Read parental guides of each of the apps. Try searching for the App on the NSPCC Website or on the Internet Matters Website
- Keep devices in shared family rooms so that you can hear and see what is happening
- Discuss the limitations of chatbots with your child. Remind them that a chatbot cannot be relied upon to support them emotionally and that it's best to talk to a trusted person
- Some parents use the following methods to support positive wellbeing online:
  - Passcodes for phones
  - Take away devices at certain times of day and overnight
  - Set daily caps for screen time
  - Use an activity timer on an app or use parental controls that are built into your phone's operating system
  - Show them your social media profile and feed
  - Ask them to share their direct messages
  - Use family pairing parenting tools, where you can connect your child's account with your own to give you parental control to manage their usage
  - Use comment filters (to block certain words or people from commenting) and content controls (where you can control which content appears / does not appear on feeds)
  - Create content together

Click [here](#) to visit Parent Zone which is at the heart of digital family life

Try a parental control app, click [here](#) to look at Qustodio

Click [here](#) to help you decide if your child is ready for social media

Click [here](#) to visit Childnet

## InternetMatters.org

Offers practical tips, from age specific online safety checklists to comprehensive guides on setting parental controls. Discover the knowledge and tools you'll need to help your children safely and confidentially explore the digital world

