



# Your child's screen time

Know the risks and what you can do to help keep your child safe.

## What's the problem?

Spending time online and on devices can be a beneficial activity, especially when used for educational purposes.

However, high levels of screen time can put your child at greater risk of:

- Being bullied online
- Abuse and grooming (when someone builds a relationship with a child to exploit or abuse them)
- Seeing inappropriate content
- Not getting enough sleep and exercise
- Disruption to learning and studying
- Negative effects on mental well-being

While it may be tempting to ban devices altogether, this also has some risks, as it can:

- Cause children to keep any screen time a secret, making it more difficult for them to seek help with bullying, harmful content or potential grooming
- Make children more prone to grooming, as abusers could offer them a 'secret' device
- Slow technology skill development. Technology is part of everyday life, and teaching children how to benefit from it can help prepare them for the future and develop online safety skills
- Block access to resources that could be beneficial, such as educational apps or websites



BEST INTERESTS OF THE CHILD



FAMILY GUIDANCE AS CHILDREN DEVELOP



LIFE, SURVIVAL AND DEVELOPMENT



PROTECTION OF PRIVACY



ACCESS TO INFORMATION



RESPONSIBILITY OF PARENTS



HEALTH, WATER, FOOD, ENVIRONMENT



REST, PLAY, CULTURE, ARTS



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## 4 steps you can take to protect your child

### 1) Set parental controls on devices

Use parental controls to restrict access to in-app purchases and explicit or age-rated content, and, on some devices, how long your child can spend on the device or certain apps.

You'll likely need to set a password for parental controls. Make sure it's different from the password used to access the device, and that your child doesn't know it.

Parental controls can be different for each device. See below for instructions for some popular devices.

### 2) Agree on rules for screen time

There are mixed views on 'safe' screen time, but you could agree on some limits to stop screen time interfering with your child's sleep or family activities:

- Make a plan together, and stick to it. You could set media-free times and zones, like during meals or in bedrooms
- Try to avoid screens an hour before bedtime
- Model the behaviour you want to see – this may mean no screen time for you at the times agreed with your child. Children are more likely to learn from example
- Try to minimise snacking during screen time
- Turn not using screens into a game, using apps like [Forest](https://www.forestapp.cc/), where not using devices is rewarded (<https://www.forestapp.cc/>)

### 3) Discuss online safety with your child

Discuss the restrictions and why they're needed. Teach them:

- That anyone can pretend to be a child online
- That if they talk to people they don't know, not to give away personal information, like what street they live on or where they go to school, or to share their location with them. To say no if they are asked for images or videos of themselves, and to stop talking to the other person if they are asked for these things
- To set their profiles to private, to limit what others can see
- To be 'share aware' – think carefully about what they share and with whom. Once it's out there, they have no control over what the other person does with it. Remember, it's illegal to take, share or possess sexual images of under-18s, full stop
- If they see something that upsets them, or someone bullies them, to tell an adult they trust. Bullying and upsetting content is not their fault.

If you don't feel confident starting a conversation with your child about what they're doing online, take a look at this advice from the NSPCC: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/talking-child-online-safety/>

### 4) Encourage off-screen activities

Help your child get physically active for the recommended 60 minutes a day:

- See [www.nhs.uk/change4life/activities](http://www.nhs.uk/change4life/activities) for free ideas for activities and games
  - Consider local sports or activity clubs. Your local authority or council should have details on youth clubs and activity groups near you. Find your local authority here: <https://www.gov.uk/find-local-council>
  - Try an app that's designed to get children active – see examples at: [www.internetmatters.org/resources/apps-guide/apps-to-help-kids-get-active/](http://www.internetmatters.org/resources/apps-guide/apps-to-help-kids-get-active/)
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## How to set parental controls

### Microsoft devices (Windows computers and Xbox)

- › Getting started with Microsoft Family Safety: <https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/account-billing/getting-started-with-microsoft-family-safety-b6280c9d-38d7-82ff-0e4f-a6cb7e659344>
  - › Family-friendly gaming for everyone, Xbox: <https://www.xbox.com/en-GB/family-hub>
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### iPads and iPhones

- › Use parental controls on your child's iPhone or iPad: <https://support.apple.com/en-gb/105121>
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### Android phones

- › Manage devices, apps and screen time: <https://support.google.com/families/topic/7336331>
  - › Get started with Family Link: <https://support.google.com/families/answer/7101025?hl=en>
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### Fire Tablet

- › Set up parental controls on your Fire Tablet: <https://www.amazon.co.uk/gp/help/customer/display.html?nodeId=GG2LBLE5V2T8XUX8>
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### PlayStation

- › How to set up family accounts on PSN: <https://www.playstation.com/en-gb/support/account/playstation-family-account-set-up/>
  - › How to set up parental controls on PlayStation consoles: <https://www.playstation.com/en-gb/support/account/ps5-parental-controls-spending-limits/>
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### Nintendo Switch

- › Nintendo Switch parental controls: <https://www.nintendo.com/en-gb/Hardware/Nintendo-Switch-Parental-Controls/Nintendo-Switch-Parental-Controls-1183145.html>
  - › Nintendo Switch support pages: <https://www.nintendo.com/en-gb/Search/Search-299117.html?f=147397-3958-143-42>
  - › How to set Nintendo eShop restrictions: <https://www.nintendo.com/en-gb/Support/Nintendo-Switch/How-to-Set-Nintendo-eShop-Restrictions-1406403.html>
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### Broadband Provider – e.g. BT, EE, SKY, Virgin Media, Vodafone, TalkTalk, Plusnet

To set parental controls on your broadband, most providers offer features within their customer portals or apps. You can often find these controls by logging into your account, navigating to security settings, and activating parental controls. These controls allow you to restrict access to certain websites, apps, or even pause internet access for specific devices or profiles.

Alternatively, call your broadband provider and activate Parental Controls.