How to Prepare for an EMERGENCY with Your Google phone

If you need to provide emergency services with personal medical information (such as medication, allergies or blood type) during an emergency, you can present it on your Google phone's lock screen. It is crucial to provide emergency services with your specific medical information so that they can provide effective care while responding to your call.
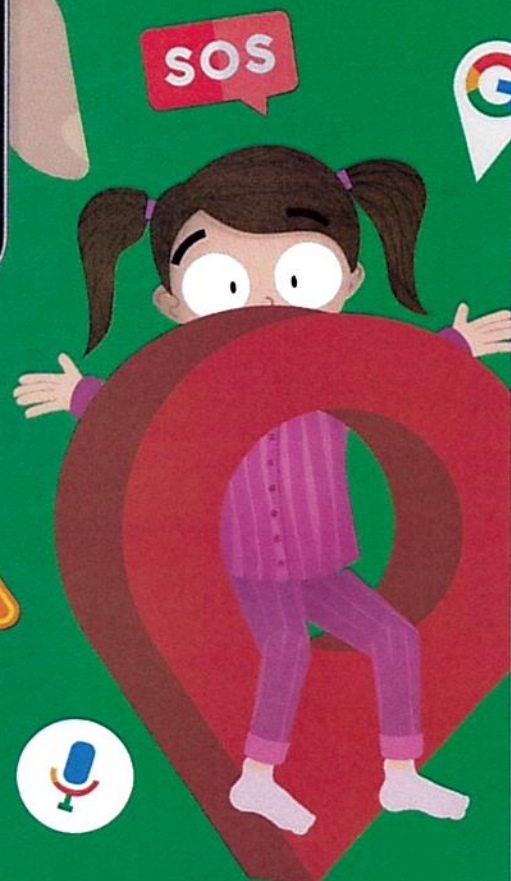
How to Add Emergency Contacts

1. Go to 'Settings'
2. Tap 'About Phone'
3. Tap 'Emergency Information'
4. Enter the information you want to display
5. For medical information, tap 'Edit Information' or 'Info'
6. For emergency contacts, tap 'Add Contact' or 'Contacts'

Location Services

If you dial an emergency number, your Emergency Location Service will automatically share your location. This will allow the emergency services to locate you easily and provide help as soon as possible. The Emergency Location Service may also provide additional information to the emergency services such as the language in which your Google phone is configured.

How to Turn Emergency Location Services on

1. Go to 'Settings'
2. Tap 'Location'
3. Tap 'Advanced'
4. Tap '(Google) Emergency Location Service'
5. Turn on Emergency Location Service

15:3
Wednesday
- Power off
- Restart
- Lockdown
- Screenshot
- Emergency

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www.nationalonlinesafety.com

How to Set up EMERGENCY MODE on Your Samsung

Emergency mode conserves your Samsung phone's power to extend the battery life for as long as possible. Although other areas of your device may be disabled or run slower (to help save energy in emergency mode), you will still be able to contact an emergency service number, call your emergency contacts and share your location via text messages.

How to Turn on Emergancy Mode

1. Press and hold the power button
2. Tap 'Emergency Mode'
3. If you are using emergency mode for the first time, you will need to agree to the terms and conditions
4. Tap 'Turn on'
5. Your Samsung will now display the emergency mode home screen

Power off

Restart

Emergency mode On

How to turn on SOS messages

1. Go to 'Settings'
2. Tap 'Advanced Features'
3. Tap 'Send SOS Messages'
4. Agree to the terms and conditions
5. Tap 'Add' to add a contact to your emergency contacts
6. Tap 'Done' to save your changes

Alerting Your Emergency Contacts

Your Samsung's SOS feature quickly notifies your specified contacts if you have an emergency. When this feature is enabled, you can press the lock button three times to automatically send an SOS message (including a link to your location) to your emergency contacts. You also have the option to send a photo and/or voice message to your emergency contacts, providing them with more information.

SOS

SOS

How to Make an EMERGENCY SOS CALL on an iPhone

The iPhone's emergency SOS feature lets you call for help quickly and easily, should you need to. When you activate the SOS, your iPhone immediately calls the local emergency number. Hopefully, your children will never have to use the emergency SOS call. However, it's crucial that they know how to do it in case they ever need to. Teach your children how to use the SOS call and how to make you their emergency contact with our easy-to-follow steps.

Making an Emergency Call iPhone 8 or later

1. Press and hold the side button and one of the volume buttons

2. Swipe the Emergency SOS slider to open

   SOS Emergency SOS

3. Alternatively, continue holding down the buttons. An alert will sound and a countdown will begin. Keep the buttons pressed until the end of the countdown

4. Your iPhone will call the local emergency services

5. You can also send an Emergency SOS by quickly pressing the side or top button five times. You'll hear the alert sound, and when the countdown ends you'll be connected to the emergency services

Making an Emergency Call iPhone 7 or earlier

1. Press the side or top button five times quickly

2. Swipe the Emergency SOS slider

   SOS Emergency SOS

3. Your iPhone will call the local emergency services

   📞 999
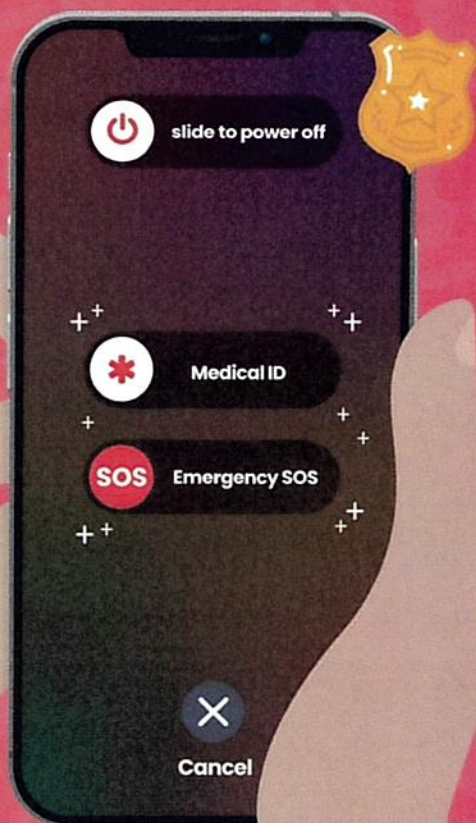
How to Add Emergency Contacts

1. Open the Health app

2. Tap your profile picture

3. Tap 'Medical ID'

   ✳ Medical ID

4. Tap 'Edit' and scroll to 'Emergency Contacts'

5. Tap a contact and select their relationship to you

6. Tap 'Done' to save your changes

Location Services

After you make an emergency call, your iPhone will send your current location to your nominated emergency contacts via text message (you can cancel this option if you wish). This temporarily activates your location services if they were disabled. Your emergency contacts will receive an update if your location changes.

slide to power off

Medical ID

SOS Emergency SOS

✕ Cancel

Medical ID
Cancel ✳ Medical ID Done

Allergies & Reactions
None Listed

Medications
None Listed

➕ add blood type
➖ Organ Donor   Yes
➖ Weight   72kg
➖ Height   5'6

EMERGENCY CONTACTS
➖ partner
➕ add emergency contact

What Parents & Educators Need to Know about
SCAMS AND FAKE NEWS

"Fake news" refers to falsified or misleading material presented as a legitimate account of events. It's often used by malicious actors online to push an agenda, or even by criminals as a way of making scams more persuasive. Scammers can trick us into handing over personal information, security details and even our hard-earned cash.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

"CLICKBAIT" PHISHING SCAMS

A message arrives saying "Have you seen this video of yourself?" or you might be sent an attention-grabbing headline about a celebrity that's been shared on social media. This kind of "bait" is produced by scammers to drive us to click on an unsafe link, where malware could be downloaded to our devices. These scams rely on our curiosity and our "need-to-know" instinct.

SALES, DEALS & DISCOUNTS

Some scams appear as adverts, offering a chance to buy something – such as designer products, expensive gadgets or tickets to a popular show – at a reduced price. Such ploys often include a time limit or countdown, urging us to hurry so we don't miss out on the deal. This pressure encourages us to input personal details or payment information before pausing to check if it's legitimate.

YOU'RE A WINNER!

This kind of scam involves fake giveaways, opportunities or freebies. It could be a message saying we've won a prize draw or competition. Or it could be a gift, free trial, bonus credit, and suchlike. It might claim that a package or refund is waiting. All these techniques are used to prompt us to share our personal information, thinking that there's something to be gained by doing so.

FALSE FRIENDSHIPS

Scammers often pretend to be someone they're not to gain their victims' trust. They might attempt to convince any children they connect with that they're a child of similar age with shared interests. Warning signs include a high volume of messages (often with an intense tone), secrecy, inappropriate levels of intimacy, guilt tripping, emotional manipulation, threats or blackmail.

PANIC MODE

To trigger a sense of panic, scammers may claim that a child's account has been hacked, or a virus has been installed on their device, or any number of other scary scenarios. They may claim to be able to fix the problem or offer a solution – if the child hands over control of the device or sensitive information. Similar scams involve impersonating a friend or relative, claiming that they're in trouble and need help.

FAKE CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENTS

Impersonating influential people online is a common tactic for scammers, who can use technology to create fake photos, audio and even videos that look authentic. These can be used to convince us, for example, to buy products, sign up for so-called "business opportunities" or invest in cryptocurrency schemes – all of which are fake or otherwise malicious. Many scams also involve the impersonation of popular companies' social media accounts, as well as those of individuals.

Advice for Parents & Educators

STAY INFORMED

Stay up to date with the latest information and best practice on cyber-security. See what scam stories are reported in the news and make note of what tactics were used. Keep up with young people's digital lives: talk about what they're doing online and use properly endorsed resources to learn what risks certain sites and apps pose to their younger users.

TALK TOGETHER

Chat often and openly with young people about fake news, online scams and how they both work. Encourage them to talk to you about anything they're unsure of or worried about online. If a child claims to have been scammed, don't pass judgement. Blaming the victim may deter young people from asking you for help. Remember: adults are scammed just as often, if not more.

ENCOURAGE HEALTHY SCEPTICISM

Most scams rely on emotional or psychological manipulation, tapping into our human instincts – whether that's to keep ourselves safe, help others, find answers, make friends, avoid losing out or to secure something we really want. Encourage children to recognise that pressure to act and to always consult with an adult – especially if what's on offer sounds too good to be true.

BE PROACTIVE

Children increasingly use digital devices for education, socialising, shopping and play. Don't wait for a problem to arise before you discuss the risk of scams, false information and fake news. Highlight what to look out for and clearly communicate under what circumstances the child ought to speak to an adult. Finally, ensure that they're aware of the support services that are available to them (such as Childline).

Meet Our Expert

Dr Holly Powell-Jones is the founder of Online Media Law UK and a leading expert in digital safety, media law and young people. Her PhD investigates children's understandings of risk online. She works with schools, businesses, and universities to provide award-winning education on the criminal, legal and ethical considerations for the digital age. Visit OnlineMediaLaw.co.uk for more.

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7 Top Tips for Supporting Children to EXPRESS THEMSELVES SAFELY ONLINE

The past year has left many children feeling uncertain and worried. So Children's Mental Health Week 2021 has adopted the theme of 'express yourself'. It's not necessarily about being the best – but instead encouraging young people to relish the joy of being 'in the moment' and loving what they do. So whether they're into music, art, photography, film, drama or dance, here are our top tips for helping your child to express themselves safely online.

1 Celebrate their Identity

Celebrating who children are and reminding them of their uniqueness has a huge impact on their confidence and self-esteem. This week, remind them of what you love about them. You could revisit some photos and videos on your phone or computer of special times you've shared. Chat about the importance of finding time to do what they love: underline that it's an important part of who they are.

2 Promote Their Passions

It's different for all of us, but every child has something which ignites their passions and brings them joy. Perhaps they love music and you could introduce them to a music-making app? Or if they enjoy taking photos or making videos, use this week to set a photography or video competition at home, with some fun categories.

3 Support Their Interests

Some children seem to know instinctively what interests them and what they enjoy doing; others can be less decisive about hobbies. Spend some time this week sharing their interests and doing something connected to it together. You could make a short Lego film to post on your Instagram, a vlog about baking that you share with relatives, or just play with them on their favourite video game.

4 Help Them Help Others

Some children love to express themselves through activities which help others. Perhaps your local area's Facebook group has a community project that your family could get involved with – even as a one-off; it doesn't have to be a long-term commitment. Depending on your child's age, you could introduce them to online fundraising (such as sites like JustGiving, for example) and how it can make a difference to less fortunate people.

5 Enable Emotional Expression

Children sometimes need help in articulating how they're feeling and in beginning to understand how to manage their emotions. A safe, healthy way for your child to explore their feelings is to let them conduct an activity – like listening to a story, or creating some art – and discuss with them afterwards how it made them feel. There are lots of stories available on YouTube, while Audible is streaming children's audiobooks free of charge while schools are closed. YouTube also has a plethora of fun art tutorials (if you log in on adult's account, remember to adjust your settings first to block inappropriate content and stop potentially unsuitable material auto-playing).

6 Let Them Stay Connected

The online world is a fantastic space for staying in contact with those who we can't be with right now. Young people are often very comfortable using social media to express themselves and stay connected by sharing their ideas, thoughts and feelings with friends. But bear in mind that most social media platforms require a child to be at least 13 before they should access it (WhatsApp is 16). Remind your child that, while it's OK to express who we are on social media, they should still always think before posting – and that their self-worth is never measured by their number of likes, friends or followers.

7 Coach 'Safe Sharing'

As part of expressing themselves, your child may want to share something online that they've created – like a funny video, a sketch, a meme or a dance. If they're too young to have their own social media, you could use your own account to share it with selected people who you trust. Emphasise the importance of only sharing content with people that your child knows well, like family and friends. This type of conversation is also useful for introducing young people to the risks and challenges that can come when expressing ourselves to a wider online audience of strangers.

Meet Our Expert

Anna Bateman is passionate about placing prevention at the heart of every school, integrating mental wellbeing within the curriculum, school culture and systems. She is also a member of the advisory group for the Department for Education, advising them on their mental health green paper.

About Children's Mental Health Week

Around three children in every primary school class has a mental health problem. Many more struggle with challenges from bullying to bereavement. Now in its seventh year, Children's Mental Health Week shines a spotlight on the importance of young people's mental health – and it's never seemed more relevant than it does in 2021.

Find out more at
www.childrensmentalhealthweek.org.uk

10 Top Tips for Parents and Educators
SAFETY ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Currently, children are growing up in an immediate and throwaway culture when it comes to content that's consumed online. So much material is now deliberately created to be shorter in nature – and may often contain hidden elements such as advertising, or extreme political and cultural views. With complex algorithms built to keep people on their phones and engaging with social media content, it's becoming increasingly difficult to reduce time spent on these platforms.

1 REDUCE DOOMSCROLLING

It's concerningly common for young people to spend hours 'doomscrolling': trawling through social media and aimlessly viewing every post they see, many of which might make them feel sad or anxious. Social media can be useful for keeping in touch with friends and family, as well as staying up to date on current events. However, it's important to use it with a clear purpose, instead of endlessly scrolling through content, which could lead to young people accidentally discovering harmful material.

2 TALK ABOUT THE CONTENT

It's important to keep appraised of the kind of content that a young person is being exposed to. Discussing what they're watching online can help you understand why they're using social media in the first place. Furthermore, ensure that children are aware of hidden content, such as advertising of a product – and that they know how to spot that the creator is being paid to talk about it.

3 FIND POSITIVE ASPECTS

Despite all the concerns, there's plenty of wholesome content on social media. It's worth spending time with children to help them find something suitable and enjoyable. Perhaps you'll even discover a joint interest, and you can enjoy the content alongside the child. As part of this, you should also point out why certain things shouldn't be given attention, explaining why it isn't suitable and why it's been created in the first place.

4 REDUCE SCREENTIME

Young people can sometimes be unaware of the exact amount of time they spend looking at social media. Smart phones don't just have the capacity to monitor screentime; they also record how much time is spent on each app. Consider setting targets to reduce this and support children to meet these goals, gradually reducing the amount of time spent on different apps.

5 FILL THE VOID

Monitoring and reducing screentime can create a lot of free time to fill, and young people can even face withdrawal symptoms when made to step away from their phones. To mitigate this, consider what offline activities you could introduce the child to, and what they would enjoy. This can ensure that young users will permanently cut down on their screentime, rather than temporarily doing so while they know it's being monitored.

6 REDUCE NOTIFICATIONS

One way in which social media platforms keep people coming back is through notifications. The algorithms behind these apps track people's daily habits, including the times of the day where they're most likely to engage with the platform. This data is then used to deliver specifically timed notifications to draw them back in. To avoid young users being exposed to this tactic, simply turn off notifications for the app in their phone's settings.

7 LIVE IN THE REAL WORLD

Overexposure to social media can distort someone's perception of the real world – from body norms to social conventions. This filtered environment can make it hard for young people to distinguish reality from online content, which is now becoming even more difficult with the rise of AI. To mitigate this concern, take time to teach young people how to discern truth from fiction, both on and off social media.

8 DIGITAL DETOX

Encouraging young people to take a 'digital detox', from even just a couple of the apps that they use, can result in an overall reduction of screentime and less exposure to potentially harmful content. Alternatively, rather than avoiding the app entirely, encourage children to take a 'digital detox' from content creators and influencers, and instead, keep in touch with friends and family – which is generally a far healthier use of these platforms.

9 MODEL GOOD BEHAVIOUR

Consider the habits that you're demonstrating to your children. How much time do you spend on your phone? How much do you 'doomscroll'? Comparing your own usage with the child's could put things into perspective for them – or if it turns out that you're also overusing social media, it can turn screentime reduction into a joint mission, which you and the child can work on together.

10 BE CLEAR ON THE "WHY"

Research shows that young people can become addicted to social media. There are many schools that are moving towards being 'phone free' due to the negative impacts of using social media and phones continuously. It's important to explain to young people why managing screentime is important. Set out the benefits and ensure they have all the relevant information, so it's not just seen as a punishment.

Meet Our Expert

John Insley is a senior leader in a Birmingham secondary school and has vast experience in leading schools over the past 15 years – including the development of computing curriculums across primary and secondary schools, writing e-safety policies and supporting schools with computing and e-safety advice.

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10 Top Tips for ...
KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE FROM CYBER CRIME

We all want to continue being informed and inspired by the ever-expanding capabilities of the internet. But we also need to be able to safeguard ourselves against the growing amount of online hazards. Knowing what is fact, understanding what dangers exist and taking appropriate steps can go a long way towards protecting yourself and your family. National Online Safety has collaborated with the Yorkshire and Humber Regional Cyber Crime Unit to compile 10 pointers to help you keep your children safe from cyber crime.

1. Spot Phishing Bait

Phishing messages are untargeted mass emails asking for sensitive information (e.g. usernames, passwords, bank details) or encouraging recipients to visit a fake website. It's safest to learn the warning signs of phishing and increase your child's awareness. Too good to be true? Spelling or punctuation errors? Odd sense of urgency? These are all red flags. Don't click on links or follow demands: if you're unsure, contact the official company directly online to enquire further.

2. Don't Over-Share

Is your child sharing too much on social media? Do they post things about their private life, upload images of your home, or discuss their friendships and relationships online? Criminals will gather this information and may try to use it for identity theft or other offences such as fraud. To combat this, ensure your child's privacy settings mean they are only sharing information with family and close friends. Use parental controls where appropriate.

3. Encourage Strong Passwords

Weak passwords make it faster and easier for someone to gain access to your online accounts or get control of your device – giving them a route to your personal information. For a strong password, national guidance recommends using three random words (e.g. bottlegaragepylons). Consider paying for your child to access a password manager. Encourage them to have a separate password for their email account. Ensure the whole family uses two-factor authentication where possible.

4. Stay Updated

People often put off installing updates to apps or software because they don't feel it's necessary, it can be time consuming, or could cause problems with programmes they rely on. But updates help protect users from recently discovered vulnerabilities to malware. You can usually set them to run automatically – encourage your child to select this option. Ensure updates are installed as soon as possible after you're notified they're available.

5. Back up Your Data

Some cyber attacks can lead to the theft or deletion of important (and possibly sensitive) data or loss of files (like photos and videos) that can't be replaced. Backing up your data to the cloud – or to another device – will help prevent data loss if you ever become the victim of a cyber attack. Where possible, set your child's devices to back up automatically. Also encourage them to back up their data prior to installing any updates.

6. Be Wary of Public WiFi

Free public WiFi is commonplace – but it's often not secure and sends unencrypted data via the network. A hacker on the same network could access personal data (like financial information) without you even realising they'd done so. To avoid this, suggest to your child that they use their 3G or 4G mobile data when they're out and about, rather than free WiFi. Consider purchasing a VPN (Virtual Private Network) where possible.

7. Take Care When Chatting

Criminals may look to manipulate others online and coerce them into using their talents or cyber skills for unethical means. Try to get your child to be open about who they are talking to online. Communication tools such as Discord are popular among gamers – but be cautious of the other people using them, and ensure you know who your child is chatting with.

8. Recognise Warning Signs

Often, budding cyber experts will relish the challenge of testing themselves or earning recognition from peers for their exploits. Even principled 'white-hat' hackers will look to test their skills online. If you think your child is interested in hacking, try to understand what their motivation is. You could encourage their participation in ethical competitions such as bug bounties.

9. Understand Their Motivations

Those being influenced online to use their skills unethically may display certain key warning signs. Sudden evidence of new-found wealth (unexplained new clothes or devices, for example), secrecy around their online behaviour or boasting of new online friendships are all causes for concern. If in doubt, refer through to your regional cyber crime team.

10. Know the Consequences

Many young people may feel that hacking is essentially a light-hearted prank, and not especially serious. So make sure your child is aware of the implications of a conviction under the Computer Misuse Act – not only the possibility of a criminal record, but also lifelong travel restrictions and damage to their future career or educational prospects.

What Parents & Educators Need to Know about

ROBLOX

AGE RESTRICTION
PEGI 7

Roblox is one of the most popular video games among children. In 2020, the game's developers claimed that more than half of the USA's children had played it. As a 'sandbox' title, the game lets players create their own gaming experiences with Roblox Studio to build custom levels, which can then be shared online.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

ONLINE PLAY RISKS

Because Roblox connects random players across the world, it can put younger players into an environment with anonymous users who could use the platform for nefarious reasons. For example, some role-play games are used for online dates and mature role play, which could expose youngsters to inappropriate messages in the public chat box.

MATURE CONTENT

Content is difficult to moderate throughout Roblox, due to the number of games available. This is particularly notable on smaller games and experiences, but in summary, some of the games and experiences offered on the platform contain age-inappropriate content that could easily be seen by young players.

IN-GAME SPENDING

The majority of games within Roblox have extensive monetisation options, usually through season passes or microtransactions. Purchases can range in value from a few pennies up to much larger sums of money. While some games offer a lot of content via purchases, others can offer very little for real world money, causing younger players to end up out of pocket.

ANONYMOUS PLAYERS

The anonymity of users can leave players vulnerable to bullying, harassment, and predatory behaviour. Without the right parental controls or monitoring, users can connect with each other via personal messages or friend requests, and it is very difficult to know who's behind a username in this vast online world.

RISK OF ADDICTION

Roblox games can feature rewarding or satisfying mechanics that keep players coming back – or persuade them to stay logged-in for much longer. Like most games, they focus on interactivity, with constant rewards via in-game unlocks and currencies, which can sometimes lead to an addictive need to remain online for long periods of time.

SCAMS

Many of the games on Roblox feature collectible items, pets, or characters. These objects, while digital, are worth a lot of real money on certain online markets. Scammers will attempt to trade with younger users in the hopes of getting rare items that can be sold for real money, manipulating the child into handing them over, usually via misleading information.

Advice for Parents & Educators

MONITOR THE CONTENT

While Roblox does implement plenty of moderation tools and parental controls, it's up to parents and guardians to monitor the types of games a child or impressionable player is experiencing. If a youngster wants to play Roblox, be sure to check out which specific games they want to play within it, and get a good idea of their content.

PLAY TOGETHER

Consider playing Roblox with the children in your care. There are few more effective ways to see how monetisation works, gauge whether the game could lead to addictive behaviours, or even witness how interaction between players works, than sitting down and trying the game for yourself. This should help you figure out whether it's suitable for particular children.

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF TOOLS

Use the parental controls within the game itself and teach youngsters how to report and block other players. Knowing the powers within their reach will make Roblox a safer, happier experience. You can set age ranges for who's allowed to contact you, close public chat boxes, block spending, and even make your Roblox profile completely private. All these options are helpful in cutting off bad actors from engaging with children.

TEACH ONLINE BEHAVIOURS

Have an open conversation about the risks of online play and how to spend money wisely. By being honest and giving tips on how a younger user can protect themselves, you can empower them to not only take care of themselves, but others too. Any user can be reported to Roblox moderators by other players for behaving inappropriately. With this knowledge, younger players can be aware of what to look for and help prevent it.

Meet Our Expert

Dan Lipscombe is a videogame journalist and author of over 20 books on gaming, including books on Minecraft, Fortnite, Roblox, and more. For 15 years he has been writing about his passion for gaming. When he's not playing games, he's talking about them at GAMINGbible.

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What Parents & Educators Need to Know about

FORTNITE

AGE RESTRICTION
PEGI 12

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

Fortnite was launched back in 2017, but it remains massively popular – with more than 650 million active players. That's partially due to the competitive nature of its player-vs-player combat, its pop culture crossovers and its constantly shifting map. Significant updates are rolled out with each new version of the game – known as 'chapters' – and within these sit shorter 'seasons'.

ALWAYS ONLINE

There's no single-player offline mode in Fortnite: it can only be played online. Internet access can sometimes be an issue when you're out and about (both in terms of connectivity and using up data), so you may find that dedicated young Fortnite players are often less enthusiastic about trips away – such as days out and holidays – than you might expect.

IN-GAME COSTS

Fortnite is free to download and play, but it does offer various additional purchases – cosmetic 'skins', music tracks and LEGO items – which don't really impact on gameplay but can cost a significant amount. These items are bought with in-game currency, V-Bucks – earned through completing the Battle Pass (which also costs V-Bucks) and can also be purchased from the game's store for real money.

POP CULTURE REFERENCES

Part of Fortnite's appeal is its ongoing crossovers with other popular franchises, ranging from movies and TV shows like Family Guy and Avatar: The Last Airbender to comic book characters including Batman to other games such as Street Fighter. This means you could have children asking questions about the monster from Alien or Geralt from The Witcher a little sooner than you otherwise might have.

CROSSPLAY AND PARTY CHAT

D@*#!

Fortnite is popular with many gamers of various ages. 'Crossplay' lets friends play with each other, regardless of whether they're on an Xbox, PlayStation, Nintendo Switch or PC – while the 'party chat' feature allows them to talk to each other during the game. This can, however, put youngsters at risk of hearing inappropriate language from older players in the heat of virtual combat.

VIRTUAL VIOLENCE

At its core, there's no avoiding that Fortnite is about shooting other players to eliminate them from the contest. That said, there's no blood or gore. The violence is rendered in a cartoonish style, and there are frequent comical touches to lighten the mood, such as fishing mini-games and dancing emotes. Machine guns, shotguns and other weapons often look and behave realistically, however, so discretion is advised.

FREQUENT UPDATES

The game's developers release content in 'seasons' that usually run for around ten weeks. Each fresh update sees items added to the in-game store, changes to the environment's map and a different over-arching theme (such as 'medieval', 'pirates' or 'party'). These regular renewals help to hold players' interest – but also give young gamers plenty of reasons to keep coming back.

Advice for Parents & Educators

MATCH GAMING TIMES

Younger players tend to play Fortnite with their friends. With that in mind, it could be worth speaking to the parents and carers of a child's social group and coordinating their gaming around certain times of day. Safety in numbers is obviously a factor here, but it will also help children feel that they're getting adequate opportunities to socialise with their friends online.

SET SPENDING LIMITS

Fortnite's rotating store is a not-so-subtle mechanism for coaxing players into buying sought-after items before they disappear for weeks or months. This could lead to surprise transactions on bank cards if children are tempted into an impulse purchase. Parents could consider getting a prepaid card for the child or ensuring that purchases require adult authorisation. This can be done through parental settings on a console or account settings in the Epic Games app on PC.

USE UPDATES AS REWARDS

Fortnite's seasonal updates are free, but each also brings the option of a 'battle pass', unlocking exclusive rewards for playing the game and completing set challenges. The passes cost around £8 and are also available as part of larger bundles. The purchase of passes can be an effective reward to young Fortnite fans for good behaviour or academic performance, or as an incentive for completing chores like tidying their room.

BE WARY OF SCAMS

The immense popularity of Fortnite with younger audiences – that are generally more trusting – means there's no shortage of scammers looking to fraudulently obtain passwords and other personal data through techniques like phishing. As the developers point out on many of Fortnite's loading screens, they never ask for a player's account password outside of the game: make sure any young player knows this.

ENJOY FORTNITE TOGETHER

Fortnite also offers split-screen gameplay, meaning that two people can play simultaneously on the same console or computer. This can be a good option for siblings or for when a child's friends visit, but it also offers an opportunity for parents and carers to do something fun with their child, while also making sure they're playing the game safely. Who knows? You might even teach them a thing or two!

Meet Our Expert

Lloyd Coombes is Editor in Chief of gaming and esports site GGRecon and has worked in the gaming media for around four years. A long-time gamer, he is also a parent and therefore a keen advocate of online safety. Writing mainly about tech and fitness, his articles have been published on influential sites including IGN and TechRadar.

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What Parents & Educators Need to Know about

SNAPCHAT

NAP STREAK
9 7
DAYS

AGE RESTRICTION 13+

Snapchat is a messaging app which allows users to send images, videos and texts to others. Its best-known feature is that anything sent 'disappears' 24 hours after it's been viewed; however, users are known to take screenshots or use another device to obtain a photo of their screen. In 2023, Snapchat added a chatbot function called 'My AI'.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

My AI is Snapchat's new chatbot, which replies to questions in a human-like manner. However, the software is still in its infancy and has significant drawbacks, such as biased, incorrect or misleading responses. There have already been numerous reports of young users turning to AI for medical help and diagnoses, which could be inaccurate and therefore potentially dangerous.

PREDATORS AND SCAMS

Predators can exploit Snapchat's disappearing messages by, for example, telling a user they have naked photos of them and will post them unless they're paid. Snapchat's own research found that 65% of teenagers had experienced this – on this app or others. This likely isn't helped by 'SnapMaps' – a feature which highlights your exact position in real-time. This is meant to help friends keep track of each other, but could be used for more sinister reasons.

MY EYES ONLY

Snapchat has a hidden photo vault called 'My Eyes Only'. Teens can conceal sensitive photos and videos from parents and carers in this folder, which is protected by a PIN. You can check for this by clicking on the icon which looks like two playing cards. This takes you to the 'Memories' folder which stores photos, stories and the My Eyes Only folder.

SCREEN TIME ADDICTION

Snapchat prioritises user engagement, with features like streaks (messaging the same person every day to build up a high score). The app also has sections called 'Discover' and 'Spotlight', which show tailored content to each user. However, this could also be seen as an attempt to hook users into watching videos endlessly. Furthermore, constant notifications can lure people into using the app.

INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

Some content on Snapchat simply isn't suitable for children. The hashtags used to group content are determined by the poster, so even an innocent search term could still yield age-inappropriate results. The app's 'disappearing messages' feature also makes it easy for young people to share explicit images on impulse – so sexting continues to be a risk associated with Snapchat.

ONLINE PRESSURES

Although many of Snapchat's filters are designed to entertain or amuse, the 'beautify' effects on photos can set unrealistic body image expectations – creating feelings of inadequacy in younger users. Snapchat now also has 'priority' notifications (which still get displayed even if a device is in 'do not disturb' mode), increasing the pressure on users to log back in and interact.

Advice for Parents & Educators

UTILISE PARENTAL CONTROLS

Snapchat's 'Family Centre' lets you view the details of the child's account – their friends list and who they've spoken to in the last week – and report any concerns. You must invite a child to the Family Centre for them to join. To keep the child's location hidden on the app, go into settings and turn on 'Ghost Mode' and 'Hide Live Location', and ensure they know not to share their location with anyone.

BLOCK AND REPORT

If a stranger *does* connect with a child on Snapchat and begins to make them feel uncomfortable through bullying, pressure to send explicit images or by sending sexual images to them, the child can tap the three dots on that person's profile and report or block them. There are options to state why they're reporting that user – such as annoying or malicious messages, spam or masquerading as someone else.

FAMILIARISE YOURSELF

Before you allow a child to download Snapchat, download it yourself and familiarise yourself with the app. Snapchat has produced a parents' guide to the app to help you understand how it works and any protections they have in place. A link for this can be found in the sources below.

ENCOURAGE OPEN DISCUSSIONS

Snapchat's risks can be easier to handle if you nurture an open dialogue. For example, discuss My AI's responses to questions and how reliable they are. Talk about scams and blackmail before letting children sign up. If they're lured into a scam, encourage them to tell you immediately. Talk openly and non-judgementally about sexting, emphasising its inherent risks. Furthermore, explain how popular 'challenges' on the platform can have harmful consequences.

Meet Our Expert

Dr Claire Sutherland is an online safety consultant, educator and researcher who has developed and implemented anti-bullying and cyber safety policies for schools. She has written various academic papers and carried out research for the Australian government comparing internet use and sexting behaviour of young people in the UK, USA and Australia.

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What Parents & Educators Need to Know about
TIKTOK

AGE RESTRICTION 13+
(Certain features are restricted to over-18s only)

Adults tend to associate online videos with YouTube – but among teens, TikTok is king. The app provides a stream of short clips tailored to users' interests, based on what they've already watched. Around half of British children use TikTok, and while much of the content is benign, Ofcom considers it the app where youngsters "were most likely to encounter a potential harm".

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

AGE-INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

While TikTok's Following feed only displays videos from familiar creators, For You is a collection based on a user's previously watched clips. Most of these videos will probably be inoffensive, but the app *could* potentially show something unsuitable. If children then engage with this content, more like it will follow. TikTok's guidelines prohibit the sharing of illegal or inappropriate content, but the huge number of uploads means that a small amount inevitably slips through.

BODY IMAGE AND DANGEROUS CHALLENGES

According to Ofcom, most online harms for teens are body image related for girls (promoting unhealthy eating, body shaming and so on) and dangerous stunts for boys. Both are prevalent on TikTok. One extreme example of the latter was the 'blackout' trend, which encouraged users to hold their breath until they passed out from a lack of oxygen. This led to two families filing lawsuits against TikTok over the tragic deaths of their children.

IN-APP SPENDING

TikTok is free, but users have the option to buy TikTok coins, which can be used to purchase gifts for content creators. Coin bundles range from £9.99 to an eye-watering £99; while that may not sound appealing, the app still generated £7.9 billion in user spending in 2023. TikTok's policy is that under-18s can't make in-app purchases, but it's possible to bypass this with a fake birth date.

CONTACT WITH STRANGERS

With more than 1.5 billion users globally, the potential for contact from strangers on TikTok is high – especially as accounts created by over-16s (or young people using a fake date of birth) are set to public by default. This means that not only is someone's profile visible to everyone else on the app, it also suggests their videos to others and enables *anyone* to download or comment on them.

MISINFORMATION AND RADICALISATION

Although the short videos on TikTok tend to be more frivolous than the longer ones on YouTube, clips can still influence impressionable minds in a negative way. Not only is there plenty of dangerous misinformation on TikTok, but Ofcom reports that nearly a third of 12 to 15-year-olds use TikTok as a news source – so you should be wary of misogynistic, racist or conspiracy-themed material shaping how they see the world.

ADDICTIVE DESIGN

With its constant stream of eye-catching videos, TikTok can be addictive to young brains. In 2024, UK children spent an average of 127 minutes per day on the app: that's twice as much as in 2020. Excessive use can interfere with young people's sleep patterns – often leading to irritability – and distract them from other, healthier activities. The instantly skippable nature of bite-size videos may also impact children's ability to maintain focus.

Advice for Parents & Educators

ENABLE FAMILY PAIRING

Family Pairing allows parents to link their TikTok account to their child's, and control settings remotely. Parents can then turn on Restricted Mode (reducing the chances of a child seeing inappropriate content), set screen-time limits, make accounts private and manage whether their child can send messages – and if they can, to whom. Children can't alter these settings without parental approval.

BLOCK IN-APP SPENDING

If a child is using an iPhone or Android device to access TikTok, you can alter their settings to prevent them from making in-app purchases. We'd recommend enabling this feature, as it can be quite easy for a young person to spend a significant amount of real money buying TikTok coins to unlock more features of the app – sometimes without even realising.

DISCUSS THE DANGERS

If a child wants to use TikTok and you're happy for them to do so, it's good practice to discuss the potential risks. Ensure that they don't share any identifying personal information, and that they know to talk to a trusted adult if they're worried by interactions on the app. With more teens using TikTok for news, it's also worth talking about misinformation and propaganda, and how to identify it.

READ THE SIGNS

If you're concerned that a child is spending too much time on TikTok, or that they've been emotionally affected by something they've seen, it's important to know how to spot the signs. Increased irritability and a lack of concentration are potential red flags, as is failing to complete homework or skipping meals. Remember, the parental controls are there for a reason, and it's never too late to introduce limits.

Meet Our Expert

Alan Martin is an experienced technology journalist who has written for the likes of Wired, TechRadar, Tom's Guide, The Evening Standard and The New Statesman.

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What Parents & Educators Need to Know about
WHATSAPP

AGE RESTRICTION 13+

WhatsApp is a free messaging service owned by Meta which allows users to send text and voice messages, make video calls, share multimedia – such as images, videos, documents and polls – and have group chats. WhatsApp messages are encrypted, meaning only you and the recipient can view what is sent. While this privacy may sound attractive on paper, this app unfortunately comes with several risks that must be considered – especially for younger users.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

EVOLVING SCAMS

WhatsApp's popularity makes it a lucrative hunting ground for scammers. Recent examples include posing as the target's child, requesting a money transfer because of a spurious 'emergency' and even cons where fraudsters trigger a verification message by attempting to log in to your account, then, posing as WhatsApp, call or text to ask you to repeat the code back to them, giving them access to your private messages and personal information.

CHANNELS

Channels let users follow interests without sharing their phone numbers or sending direct messages, allowing only votes on polls and reacting to posts with emojis. However, fraudulent channels can impersonate legitimate organizations, tricking people into sharing personal data and even spreading misinformation or hate speech. Additionally, WhatsApp may collect details about followed channels and sell this information to third parties, raising data privacy concerns.

FAKE NEWS

WhatsApp's connectivity and ease of use allows news to be shared rapidly – whether it's true or not. To combat the spread of misinformation, messages forwarded more than five times on the app now display a "Forwarded many times" label and a double arrow icon. This makes users aware that the message they've just received is far from an original – and might not be entirely factual, either.

CHAT LOCK

Another new feature named 'Chat Lock' allows users to store certain messages or chats in a separate 'locked chats' folder, saved behind a passcode, fingerprint or face ID authentication. While this usually functions as intended, it can potentially be exploited by younger users to hide conversions and content that they suspect their parents wouldn't approve of – such as the sharing of age-inappropriate material.

DISAPPEARING MESSAGES

Disappearing messages are useful for sharing personal or sensitive information, but young people may have a false sense of privacy regarding the content they share. These messages disappear after anywhere from 24 hours to 90 days – depending on the user's preference – or can even be set to be viewed one time only. However, the recipient can 'keep' the message by bookmarking or screenshotting it, making them not as private as they may first appear.

VISIBLE LOCATION

WhatsApp's 'live location' feature lets users share their current whereabouts, which can be helpful for friends meeting up or parents checking that their child's safely on the way home, for example. However, children are able to share their location with anyone in their contacts list or a mutual group - potentially letting strangers identify their live location.

Advice for Parents & Educators

EMPHASISE CAUTION

Encourage children to treat unexpected messages with caution. Get them to consider, for example, whether it sounds like something a friend or relative would really send them. Make sure they know never to share personal details over WhatsApp, and to be wary of clicking on any links in messages. Setting up two-step verification adds a further layer of protection to their WhatsApp account.

THINK BEFORE SHARING

Help children understand why it's important to stop and think before posting or forwarding something on WhatsApp. It's easy – and all too common – for content sent to one user to then be shared more widely, and even publicly on social media. Encourage them to consider how an ill-judged message might damage their reputation or upset a friend who sent something to them in confidence. Real-life friendships are far more important than likes, after all.

ADJUST THE SETTINGS

It's wise to change a child's WhatsApp settings to specify which of their contacts can add them to group chats without needing approval. To do this, go to Privacy, then Groups. You can give permission to My Contacts or My Contacts Except ... . Additionally, if the child needs to use Live Location, emphasise that they should enable this function for only as long as they need – and then turn it off.

CHAT ABOUT PRIVACY

Have a conversation with youngsters about how they're using WhatsApp, emphasising that it's for their own safety. If you spot a 'Locked Chats' folder, you might want to talk about the sort of messages that are in there, who they're with and why a child might want to hide them. Also, if a young user has sent any 'view once' content, discuss their reasons for using this feature.

Meet Our Expert

Dr Claire Sutherland is an online safety consultant, educator and researcher who has developed and implemented anti-bullying and cyber safety policies for schools. She has written various academic papers and carried out research for the Australian Government comparing internet use and sexting behaviour of young people in the UK, USA and Australia.

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What Parents & Carers Need to Know about
FACEBOOK

AGE RATING 13+

With 2.9 billion users, Facebook, owned by the recently rebranded Meta, is the world's most popular social media platform. It encourages interaction with other people by (among other things) adding them as friends, reacting to or commenting on their content, sharing images and videos, posting status updates, joining groups and playing games. Facebook is free, and anyone over 13 can join – but with no age verification, younger children can easily create an account: it's likely your child is already familiar with the platform, even if they don't yet use it themselves.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

ADDICTIVE NATURE
Facebook's quick reward cycle of likes and comments on shared posts can be hugely addictive. It encourages users to keep returning to post things and increases FOMO (the Fear Of Missing Out), which leads to people checking the app even more frequently and finding themselves endlessly scrolling through content.

CYBERBULLYING
A 2021 Ofcom report found that around one in four UK 12–15-year-olds had been cyberbullied or trolled (intentionally antagonised online). On Facebook, this can happen through private messages (on Facebook Messenger); hurtful comments on their profiles and posts; pages or groups set up purposely to torment a victim; or exclusion from pages or groups.

FUTURE IMPACT
Like most social media platforms, anything posted on Facebook leaves a permanent 'digital footprint'. This can have future consequences for young people: many universities and employers, for example, now review someone's Facebook timeline during the application process.

CONTACT FROM STRANGERS
Just like in the offline world, there are people on Facebook with malicious intentions. Ofcom reports, for instance, that 30% of 12–15-year-olds have received a friend request from a stranger. This, sadly, can include individuals seeking to take advantage of impressionable youngsters.

OVERSHARING
Facebook encourages you to post "what's on your mind", but children should be wary of revealing too much about themselves online. Users can give away their location by checking in or using Facebook Live, for example, while some photos can also be traced using file data.

INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT
Facebook monitors and removes material like hate speech or extreme political views, while adverts on the platform are now forbidden from targeting under-18s based on their interests. Offensive content isn't always taken down instantly, however, so there's still a risk of children encountering it.

VIDEOS AND STREAMING
Facebook Live lets users stream video live to their friends or watch others' broadcasts. Viewers can comment in real time, which is problematic to moderate. Short, user-created clips called Reels can now also be displayed on profiles and feeds. These video features could contain unsuitable material or allow children to be cajoled into doing something on camera that they wouldn't normally do.

Advice for Parents & Carers

KEEP ACCOUNTS PRIVATE
In the settings area, you can choose whether a Facebook profile is public or private. By far the safest option is to switch your child's to private, so they can only interact with people who they are friends with on the platform. Facebook's settings can also prevent your child's personal information (such as contact details, school name or date of birth) from appearing publicly.

SAVVY SHARING
Make sure your child realises that what they share online with friends can end up being shared again by others. It's important that they think about what they share online and who they share it with. Facebook's 'Audience Selector' gives users the option to filter who sees what they are sharing, whenever a status is updated, photos are uploaded or anything is posted.

ENCOURAGE SAFE FRIENDING
Facebook can help your child to stay connected with the people and the things that they care about. However, it's important for them to understand that they should only accept friend requests from people who they know. The key questions to consider are "has your child met them in person?" and "do they know and trust them enough to feel comfortable accepting them as a Facebook friend?"

RESPECT BOUNDARIES
Once you've talked about Facebook safety with your child, give them some space and trust them to make smart choices. Make it clear, however, that you're always open to discussing social media if they need to. In the early stages, you could occasionally review your child's social media activity with them to put your mind at rest – but take care not to become reliant on checking it every night.

LEAD BY EXAMPLE
Let your child watch you using Facebook – this will demonstrate how it can be used safely and appropriately, reducing the risk of them encountering harmful content themselves. Teach them the habit of thinking before sharing anything online and try to follow the same rules that you set for them – so if you agree time limits on your child's Facebook use, then you should stick to them, too.

BLOCK AND REPORT
On Facebook, you're able to report harmful content and block particular people or groups so they can't contact your child or view their profile. Before they start spending serious time on the platform, show your child how these features work and explain why they might need to be used. Facebook's Bullying Prevention Hub offers advice on dealing with harassment on the platform.

Meet Our Expert
ex Wright is a former Facebook employee and social media xpert with more than 15 years' experience in digital media. e has worked with some of the biggest organisations on the anet and has a vast understanding of how social media atforms work and how they engage their audience.

Sources: www.facebook.com/safety/bullying

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What Parents & Carers Need to Know about

FACEBOOK MESSENGER

Facebook Messenger is a communication app through which users can exchange messages and send photos, stickers, and video and audio files. Messenger allows both one-to-one and group chats, has a stories feature and – via its latest addition, Rooms – can host a video call with up to 50 people. As of 2021, the app had 35 million users in the UK alone (more than half the population!) among its 1.3 billion users worldwide. Whereas Messenger is integrated into Facebook on desktops and laptops, it has existed as a standalone app for mobile devices since 2011.

AGE RATING 13+

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

ADDICTIVE NATURE

Messenger's numerous features can encourage children to spend more time on the app – and therefore on their phone, increasing their levels of screen time. It also invokes FOMO (the Fear of Missing out), especially among older children, who will almost certainly have a high proportion of their friends communicating via the app.

LIVE STREAMING

The new Rooms feature lets Messenger users hold video calls with up to 50 people. A young person can join any room they see, but the other people in these rooms don't even necessarily need to be Facebook account holders. This live streaming development heightens risk factors around privacy, security and the possibility of exposure to inappropriate content.

REQUESTS FROM STRANGERS

If the Facebook profile which accompanies their Messenger app is set to public, there's a possibility that young people will receive message requests from individuals they don't know. There have previously been reports of grooming attempts on Facebook, with predators using fake profiles to engage children in conversation.

OVERSHARING PERSONAL INFO

If the app is given access to their device's photo library or location services, young people can unintentionally share sensitive information (private photos, videos, their number or current whereabouts) with people on Messenger who they don't know. Even among friends, shared photos or videos don't always stay private: the recipient(s) could save and re-share them with others.

CYBERBULLYING

Like many communication apps, Messenger can be an avenue for cyberbullies or trolls to target children. This might take the form of harassment, abusive messages or being purposely excluded from (or targeted in) group chats. A 2021 Ofcom report revealed that more than half (55%) of 12–15-year-olds had suffered such negative experiences online in the preceding year.

SECRET CONVERSATIONS

The Secret Conversations function lets Messenger users have encrypted exchanges that no-one else can read. Unlike regular chats on the app, these can only be viewed on the device being used at the time. Messages can also be set to delete once read (although screenshots can be taken), so a child could chat privately with someone without any record of that conversation having taken place.

Advice for Parents & Carers

USE ADDITIONAL SECURITY

Messenger's App Lock feature uses your child's fingerprint or face ID to ensure that nobody else can access their messages without permission. Messenger has also added a variety of optional tools to increase young people's safety on the app, including two-factor authentication, login alerts and filtered message requests.

REVIEW THE CHAT LIST

Some parents regularly check their children's Messenger conversations (to see who they're talking to, rather than what they're talking *about*). While this is certainly safe, it *can* seem intrusive. If approached in a sensible, collaborative way, however, it can help parents and carers to keep an eye on exactly who their child is communicating with.

REPORT INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR

If your child experiences anything negative on Messenger, you can help them report it. Facebook can then take action such as disabling the offender's account, limiting their ability to send messages or blocking them from contacting your child again. If your child doesn't want to display to others that they're online, they can switch off Active Status in the app's settings.

DISCUSS LIVE STREAMING

Talk with your child about safe and secure video calling. When setting up calls on Messenger Rooms, only invite people who your child knows and trusts. Show them how to lock a room if they don't want other people joining – and how to remove anyone they don't want on the call. Remind them about behaving responsibly during a live stream, even if it's with people they know.

ADJUST PRIVACY SETTINGS

Make your child's Messenger stories visible only to their friends. Avoid adding your child's phone number (so they can't be found by someone using their number to search for them), and not syncing contacts lets your child choose who to add (or not) individually. Via Settings, you can control who appears in your child's chat list, who goes into the message request folder and who can't contact your child at all.

ENCOURAGE SAFE SHARING

Ensure your child knows to send pictures and videos *only* to family and trusted friends, and not to publicly share images which compromise their location (showing a landmark near home or clothing with identifiable logos, like a school or local club crest). Encourage them to pause before sharing anything – if there's a chance it could harm their reputation (or someone else's), don't send it.

Meet Our Expert

[Al]ex Wright is a former Facebook employee and social media [ex]pert with more than 15 years' experience in digital media. [H]e has worked with some of the biggest organisations on the [pl]anet and has a vast understanding of how social media [pl]atforms work and how they engage their audience.

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What Parents & Educators Need to Know about
INSTAGRAM

AGE RESTRICTION 13+

Instagram is a highly popular social media platform with over 2 billion active monthly users. The app is continuously updating and adding new features to meet the wishes of its audience, allowing them to upload images and videos to their Instagram feed, create interactive 'stories', go live, exchange private messages or explore and follow other accounts that catch their eye.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

ADDICTION

Many social media platforms, Instagram included, are designed to keep us engaged on them for as long as possible. They encourage scrolling often and scrolling more in case we miss something important – in essence, a fear of missing out. On Instagram, young people can lose track of time when aimlessly scrolling and watching videos posted by friends, acquaintances, influencers and possibly strangers.

UNREALISTIC IDEALS

Children sometimes compare themselves to what they see online: how they look, how they dress, and the way their life is going in comparison to others on social media. However, most people only share the positives about their lives online and many use filters when sharing pictures of themselves. A constant comparison with unrealistic ideals can lead to insecurity over one's own appearance and lifestyle.

GOING LIVE

Livestreaming on Instagram allows users to connect with friends and followers in real time. Risks increase if the account is public, because that means anyone can watch the broadcast, which could result in further contact from strangers. Additional dangers of going live include an impulse to act inappropriately to draw more viewers, as well as being exposed to harmful content or offensive language.

INFLUENCER CULTURE

Social media influencers are sometimes paid thousands of pounds to promote products, services, apps and more. When celebrities or influencers post such content, it often says 'paid partnership' above the post. In April 2024, Ofcom found that over a quarter of children (27%) believed in influencer marketing, accepting their endorsement of products wholeheartedly. So it's perfectly possible for young people to be taken in by this kind of content.

PRODUCT TAGGING

Product tags allow users to tag a product or business in their post. This tag will take viewers directly to the product detail page on the shop where the item can be purchased. Children may also be encouraged by influencers to purchase products that they advertise.

EXCLUSION & OSTRACISM

Youngsters are highly sensitive to feeling excluded, which comes in many forms: not receiving as many 'likes' as expected; not being tagged in a friend's photo; being unfriended; not receiving a comment on their post or a reply to a message they sent. Being excluded online hurts just as much as offline. Young people have reported lower moods and self-esteem when excluded in this way, feeling as if they don't belong and aren't valued.

Advice for Parents & Educators

AVOID GOING PUBLIC

If a young user wants to share their clothing style, make up or similar and use product tagging to show off the items in their post, they may be tempted to change their settings to public. This leaves their profile visible to everyone, which carries the risk of strangers getting in touch with them. Set a child's account to private and explain the importance of keeping it this way.

HAVE AN OPEN DIALOGUE

Talk to children about the positives and negatives of social media, including the risks involved and how they can view or create content safely with family and friends. Explain how safety settings will ensure only followers can view them, and why this is so important. Also, if you find a child continuously uses filters on their photos, ask them why and impress on them that they don't need it.

MANAGE LIKE COUNTS

Due to the potential impact on mental wellbeing, Instagram allows users to hide the total likes on their posts, to prevent people from obsessing over that number in the corner. Users can hide like counts on all the posts in their feed as well as on their own posts. This means others can't see how many likes a person gets. This can be done by going into Settings > Notifications > Posts > Likes > Off.

USE MODERATORS

Instagram Live has implemented a mechanic called 'Moderators', meaning that creators can assign a moderator and give them the power to report comments, remove viewers and remove the ability for certain viewers to comment at all. Consider this if a child in your care wants to go live on the platform. It's also recommended to keep devices in communal spaces so you're aware if a child does go live or watch a livestream.

FOLLOW INFLUENCERS

Following influencers will allow you to monitor what they're sharing as well as being able to discuss anything which you deem inappropriate. Talk to children about who they follow and help them to develop critical thinking skills about what the influencer is trying to do. For example, encourage the child to ask themselves if an influencer is trying to sell them a product when they make a video endorsing it.

BALANCE YOUR TIME

Instagram has a built-in activity dashboard that lets you control how much time is spent on the app. Make sure children sign in to the platform with the correct age, as Instagram's 'Teen Accounts' afford much more control for parents and carers over how long they can use the app each day. Talk with young users about how much time they spend on Instagram and work together to set a healthy time limit.

Meet Our Expert

Dr. Claire Sutherland is an online safety consultant at BCyberAware. She has developed and implemented anti-bullying and cyber safety workshops and policies for schools in Australia and the UK. Claire has written various academic papers and carried out research for the Australian government comparing internet use and sexting behaviours of young people in the UK, USA and Australia.

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