



A parent & carer's guide to talking to your child about staying safe online

A parent and carer's guide to talking to your child about staying safe online

On any given day, parents and carers are inundated with media stories about online risks and harms. Many organisations across the United Kingdom provide a wealth of resources regarding online safety, and more specifically, the use of the internet, technology and social media in responsible and appropriate ways.

Parents and carers can further benefit from those resources by having open, honest and regular exchanges about their child's online activities.

This article will explore ways in which parents and carers can begin and maintain the lines of communication with their children and young people.



Importance of maintaining an open dialogue

Children in Wales unequivocally state [‘parenting is easiest when it is based on good communications.’](#) and this same statement can easily be transformed to ‘digital parenting is easiest when it is based on good communications’. If we want to positively encourage our children online and provide them with [‘the right to express themselves, learn and develop’](#), then good communication and open exchanges are fundamental to developing these skills. Parents and carers also have the right, and perhaps even an obligation, to ‘set limits about which online behaviours are acceptable and which are not’.

Encourage your children and young people to talk to you

You may find it difficult to hold a conversation with your child or young person and you may be at a loss on where to begin. Childnet has put together a list of five [conversation starter ideas](#) which starts with questions such as ‘What do you enjoy doing online?’ before moving on to more difficult questions such as ‘Would you tell me if anything strange happened online?’

Tips to engage the family to keep safe online together

If you are interested in specific conversation starter tips for primary learners, the [NSPCC provides age-appropriate advice](#) as well as useful videos to share with your child. The UK Safer Internet Centre also provides [tips for parents](#) to support their children in using the internet responsibly.

If you are interested in specific conversation starter tips for secondary learners, [Childnet provides conversation starters](#) on a range of difficult topics including cyberbullying, sexting and pornography. You can also find age-appropriate tip sheets and advice from [Internet Matters](#).



Family-friendly ideas to keep the lines of communication open:

- Opt for a tech-free dinner or tech-free day
- Have a family discussion on technology, benefits and risks
- Asking the opinion of your children and young people
- Create a [family media agreement](#) together and revisit regularly
- Stay up to date on online safety news affecting you and your child by referring to the [HWB Online Safety Zone](#) on a regular basis.

Understanding how children go online, what websites and applications they use, whom they play or chat with online, will [help parents and carers understand](#) where they need to support their children.

Communication is the key to supporting your children online.

