WHAT'S IN THIS MONTH'S ISSUE:

- Setting boundaries
- Setting up a new device
- Resources to support online safety.

Spotlight on Safeguarding

Dear Parents / Carers,

Welcome to our December edition of our Safeguarding Newsletter. With Christmas nearly here and with some children receiving new technology or related games, we hope the information in this newsletter will support you to set up appropriate parental controls and set boundaries from the start to ensure healthy tech habits and safety. Take a moment to think about how your child currently uses technology and how you envisage them using the new device.

TOP TIPS TO TALK ABOUT CYBERBULLYING

Internet Matters have collated their tips to help you talk about cyberbullying with your child based on different age categories. The information is divided into four sections:
1. Before you start the conversation
2. Things to talk to them about such as how to deal with cyberbullying
3. What to do next
4. Where to get further help
https://www.internetmatters.org/issues/cyberbullying/cyberbullyingconversation-starter-guide

WHY IMPLEMENT BOUNDARIES FROM THE START

Allowing children unrestricted access to the internet can expose them to various risks that many parents may not initially be aware of.
Here's why setting boundaries when your child first receives a device is important:

1. Exposure to inappropriate content: The internet contains content that may not be suitable for children, from graphic images to violent videos and adult websites.

2. Cyberbullying: Online platforms can sometimes become spaces for cyberbullying. Children with unrestricted access might be more vulnerable to encountering or participating in harmful behaviour.

3. Privacy and online predators: Children may not fully understand the importance of keeping personal information private, which can lead them to overshare details such as their name, location, or school. This information can be used by online predators, who often frequent online spaces where young people are active.

4. Screen addiction and mental health: Too much screen time, especially on social media or video platforms, can lead to issues like screen addiction, reduced attention span, and mental health struggles.

5. Impact on sleep: Unrestricted access often means children use devices late into the night, which can interfere with sleep and, in turn, affect their focus and performance in school. Creating limits on when and how long devices can be used helps ensure that tech use doesn't interfere with academics or health.

Techosaurus – New NSPCC Resources

Techosaurus is aimed at little ones who are starting to use technology and the internet, and keeps the conversation around online safety positive. Techosaurus will help your child to form healthy online habits, routines and behaviours from a young age, and build basic knowledge and skills related to online safety.
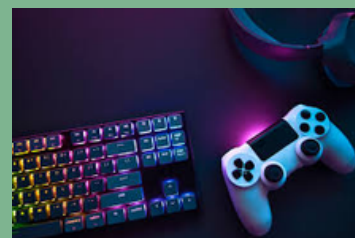
Age Appropriate Games

Do you need suggestions on age appropriate games? You could use either of the following to search suitable games. Remember, PEGI rates the gameplay so whilst it is important to review age ratings, you must also check if it has a communication feature as this might mean you decide a game is not suitable for your child.

https://www.askaboutgames.com/find-the-right-game

https://www.familygamingdatabase.com/home

How to keep your child safe whilst gaming

01 Get to know the games they play to understand why they enjoy them.

02 Enable 'airplane' mode for young children's devices to prevent online interactions.

03 Refer to the PEGI ratings as a reference to determine if the content is age appropriate.

04 Teach them how they can block and report other users, should they need to.

05 Monitor who they are connecting with whilst they are playing.

06 Establish boundaries like setting daily time limits and screen-free activities.

07 Teach them how to behave positively whilst gaming.

Report any concerns if you suspect a child is being abused or is in danger of being abused.
Please contact the Designated Safeguarding Lead (Mrs Claire Roper) , or one of the Safe and Sound team.
You can also contact the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) on:
- 01925 443322, press one and either say MASH or the name of their person you wish to speak to (if known)
- Outside of office hours call on 01925 444400.
- if you believe the child is in immediate risk of harm, call 999.
- If you believe a crime has been committed, contact the police on 101.

Whatsapp

Users should be at least 13 years old to use WhatsApp. Since WhatsApp lacks parental controls, it is important to think about whether it is really the right platform for your child. For example, you should consider if your child has the critical thinking skills to recognise bullying. Furthermore do they understand how to manage peer pressure and refrain from joining in on harmful behaviour? If your child is using WhatsApp, it is crucial to have regular conversations with them. Talk about who they are chatting with, encourage them to think carefully about the messages that send and how they might be perceived by others.

What Parents & Carers Need to Know about
SETTING UP NEW DEVICES FOR CHILDREN

At Christmas, millions of lucky children will be excitedly ripping the wrapping off new phones, tablets, computers or consoles. However, in the rush to let young ones enjoy their shiny gadgets, many parents neglect to set these devices up safely – increasing the chances of children going online and stumbling across adult content, making expensive downloads or installing unsuitable apps. A little time configuring the device properly can save a lot of anguish later. Here are our top tips to ensure that a dream gift on Christmas morning doesn't turn into a nightmare by New Year.

PASSCODES FOR IPHONE/IPAD

If your child's getting their own iPhone or iPad, you can set parental controls that make it difficult for them to access inappropriate content or download expensive apps. Once the device is set up, go to the Settings app and tap Screen Time, then select Use Screen Time Passcode and enter a passcode. Keep it to yourself so your child can't switch the protection off.

SCREEN TIME SETTINGS ON IPHONE/IPAD

Once you've set a Screen Time Passcode, you can adjust various safety settings. You could, for example, only allow communication with people from the Contacts app, place restrictions on App Store purchases and apply age limits to movies, music and web content. There are many protective options available within the Screen Time settings section.

FAMILY LINK FOR ANDROID

Parents can manage Android phones and tablets, as well as Google Chromebooks, through Google's Family Link app. This gives your child some independence (and their own Google account) but lets parents monitor which apps are being used, set limits on content and ensure that parental permission is required to install apps. Look for Family Link in the Google Play Store.

ADD A CHILD TO FAMILY LINK

The easiest way to add a child's device to Family Link is to set it up with its own Google account. It's a good idea to create this before they use their new phone, tablet or Chromebook. Once they're logged in, open the Family Link app on your phone, press '+' in the top right and add a new family member using their Google account details. Then follow the on-screen instructions.

FAMILY SHARING ON A MAC

Families using a Mac get similar screen time options to iPhone and iPad users. Again, if you're setting up a Mac for a child, make yourself the main admin and add them as a user. This is handled through Apple's Family Sharing service, which not only allows you to put controls on child accounts but share apps and other purchases with them too. Search 'family sharing' at https://support.apple.com.

PLAYSTATION PARENTAL CONTROLS

With parental controls for the PS5, you'll need a PlayStation Network account (as the 'family manager') and the child will need their own account, which they should sign in with on the console. This all needs to be set up in advance, so you might want to do it before the big day. Go to PlayStation.com and search 'family account' for instructions.

DISCUSS IT WITH YOUR CHILD

If you're planning to implement any kind of restriction or protection settings on your child's new device, we'd recommend having a discussion with your young one first about what these controls do, and what they are for. If you try to impose parental controls surreptitiously or with no advance warning, don't be surprised if your child tries to find a way around them.

SET AN ADMIN ON PCS

On Windows PCs and laptops, it's important not to let your child share a general user account or be the main admin on the device. If you're booting up a new family PC or a child's own device, set it up using your own account details and you'll become the admin by default. Then set up children with their own separate account: Settings > Accounts > Family & Other Users > Add Other User.

SET WINDOWS LIMITS

Once your child's account has been created, a parent admin can go back into the Family & Other Users menu and apply limits to it. These include restricting screen time, the type of games and apps that can be installed, web filters and more. Microsoft also includes reporting tools which, for example, can email you with a weekly summary of your child's activity on the device.

TREAT AN XBOX LIKE A PC

The same control settings you use for a PC can be used to apply parental controls on an Xbox. Again, once your child is signed into the Xbox with their own account, you can then monitor and regulate their activity from a PC or web browser. Microsoft's dashboard allows you to manage voice communication through the console: so you can limit who can contact your child, for example.

INSTALL XBOX FAMILY SETTINGS

If you don't have a PC, but your child does have an Xbox, it might be easier to use the Xbox Family Settings app for iPhone or Android. Here, you can restrict console screen time (particularly handy if the console is in a bedroom), restrict communication and monitor the types of game being played. There's also a feature where you can allocate spending money for games or in-game purchases.

STAY VIGILANT

It's important to remember that none of these methods is 100% foolproof. Nobody will ever invent flawless filters or parental controls – not least because what's unacceptable to some parents is perfectly acceptable to others. So although devices' parental controls will help to keep your child safe online, they work best side by side with good old-fashioned parental vigilance.

Meet Our Expert

Barry Collins has been a technology journalist and editor for more than 20 years, working for titles such as the Sunday Times, Which?, PC Pro and Computeractive. He's appeared regularly as a technology pundit on television and radio, including on Newsnight, Radio 5 Live and ITV News at Ten. He has two children and writes regularly about internet safety issues.

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