

## Online Safety Conversation Tool for Parents

Keeping our kids safe is the most important part of being a parent. And when it comes to keeping them safe online it can be hard to know where to start. But it isn't that different to keeping them safe in the physical world. You can use same skills online as you do offline - the key thing is to talk to them, and to make sure they know they can talk to you. By opening up about online safety and showing interest in their online activities you can more comfortably agree to boundaries and set up safety measures that help keep your child safe.

We have some ideas of how to get the conversation started.

### Time to talk

Make sure your child knows that they can always talk to you.

As you set the rules, make sure you are providing them with a safe space to be honest about their online experiences.

**It's important to build trust so that they feel comfortable talking to you about their online experiences:**

- Encourage honesty. Try not to be angry when they come to you about something they've done online.
- Remind them that they can always come to you.
- Think of new ways to handle misbehaviour. Instead of taking away their phones or banning screen time as punishment, take the opportunity to remind your child why there are certain boundaries and how they keep them safe.



## Make Online Time, Family Time

We can all get lost in our own personal screentime these days. It can be hard to keep track of what your child is doing on their devices. Take the time to ask them about the games they're playing or the friends they're chatting to. Showing a genuine interest will make them more likely to share what they're up to. And there's nothing to stop you taking the time to get involved, too.

Whether playing a game with them or watching videos or browsing interesting sites, making online time family time is a great way to learn more about your child's online activity. And it makes them feel more comfortable talking to you about it.



## It's not about laying down the law

Giving your child a bunch of rules about what they can and can't do online is tempting. But it can often just lead to them hiding what they're doing. Be open and honest about your concerns, and agree to boundaries together. If you are clear and consistent they are likely to follow whatever boundaries you set. Especially if you explain why you have set them.

**For example instead of setting a hard rule limiting their screen time, encourage them to vary their time with online and offline activities. Here are some ideas on how you can negotiate boundaries:**

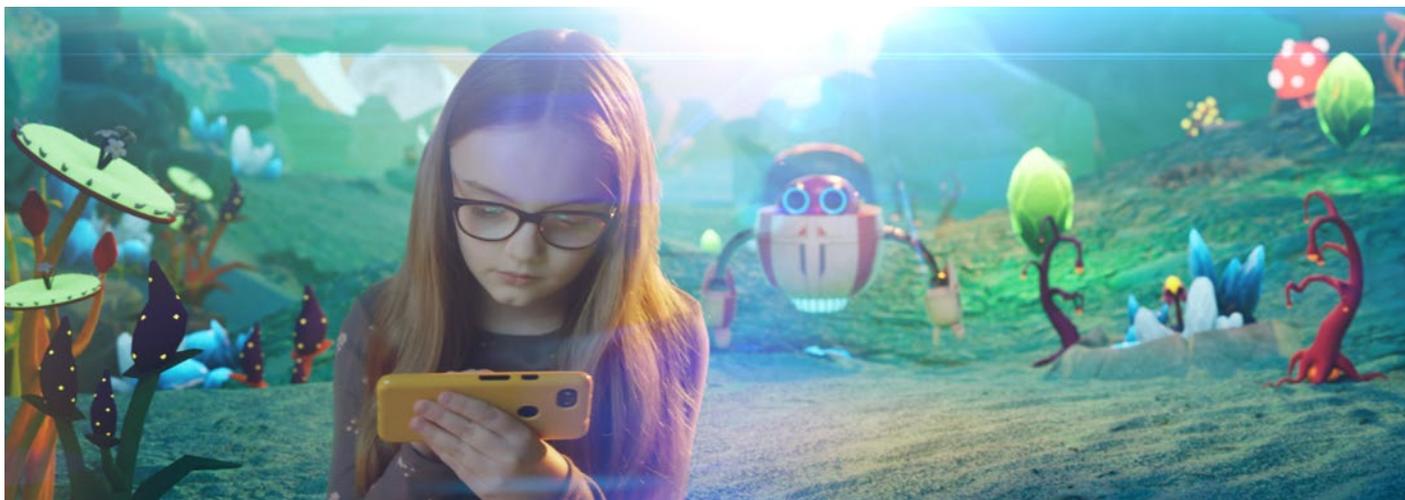
- Don't always say no. Instead, tell your child they can play an online game with their friends. But only after they've had a walk outside or once they've finished their homework.
- Ask them why they want to do certain activities. It might be because they want to chat with their friends. Or to go online to learn about a specific interest. It may be something that they could do offline instead. Tell them you'll take them round to a friend's house or go to a museum, sports centre or another venue related to what interests them.

**To get started, ask some questions while you're spending this time with them. Questions you could ask are:**

- What's your favourite part about this game?
- Who do you usually play this game with – your friends?
- Do you play with people you don't know in real life?
- What's your username?
- Did you make a profile to play this game?

**Also take the time to have your child try and think about what they do online, and ask them:**

- What are your favourite things to do online?
- How many of those activities take place on a screen?
- How much of your time online do you spend with your friends, or alone?
- Do you act online the same way you do in the physical world?
- How does going online make you feel?



**Another good time to talk is when they ask you to purchase or download new apps for them. Things you could ask are:**

- Do you know why you need my permission to get this app?
- What do you do if the app asks you if you want to buy something?
- What are the rules for talking to people in the game?
- Do your friends use this app or game?

**Also make sure to check that the content of the app is appropriate for your child, specifically if there are:**

- Parent controls
- Age restrictions
- In-app purchase options
- Ways to socialise within the app
- Find the teachable moments

## Find the teachable moments

You don't want to scare your child. But you do need to be clear that there are very real risks online. When the topic of online safety comes up on TV or at school use this as an opportunity to have a conversation.

**Things you could talk about are:**

- What rules in the physical world are the same online? They wouldn't talk to strangers in the street, or give personal information to someone they don't know. So why would they do it online.
- Ask why they would treat people differently online than they would face-to-face. Remind them that there's someone behind the screen so they should always be kind.

For more ideas and practical steps to keep your child safe online, visit **ParentClub.scot**