Digital Parenting

What is digital resilience?
And why is it so important to your child’s future?

A parent’s guide to gaming
Coping with online peer pressure

PLUS
Advice on cyber crime, bullying, social media, and more

Vodafone
Power to you
Welcome to the fifth edition of Digital Parenting magazine. Today, families use a whole range of different devices that allow us to get online almost anywhere, at any time, and communicate with almost anyone using social media.

As parents, we have always had a key role in helping our children build resilience as they grow – and this is as true in the online world as in the offline.

Digital resilience allows children and young people to benefit from the exciting opportunities the internet has to offer while also being aware of how to stay safe when using it, and what to do if something goes wrong.

Please use this new edition of Digital Parenting to begin a conversation and share knowledge with your family as you explore the digital world together.

It’s an exciting place to be and we can all do our bit to help the next generation navigate it safely and make the most of all it has to give.

Paul Morris, Head of Government Affairs & Sustainability, Vodafone UK

For more parenting advice and inspiration visit vodafone.com/parents

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Thanks to our many contributors who have provided expert advice and help for this issue of Digital Parenting, including: NSPCC; The Diana Award; The Internet Watch Foundation; Place2Be; Childnet; and Parent Info. For a full list of experts and contributors, turn to page 47.
Parents are frequently told how important it is to talk to their children. But how? Parents are frequently told how important it is to talk to their children. But how? Parents are frequently told how important it is to talk to their children. But how?

Many adults believe that communication involves telling the child something, or seeking information. However, it should be a two-way street. If you let your child know that you really want to hear what they have to say, you’ll be surprised by how much they will tell you.

1) Listening is as important as talking
Many adults believe that communication involves telling the child something, or seeking information. However, it should be a two-way street. If you let your child know that you really want to hear what they have to say, you’ll be surprised by how much they will tell you.

2) Actions can speak louder than words
This has to do with wider aspects of communication, not just words. The better the example you set and the more you let your child know that you value them and will support them, the better communication will be.

3) Communication should be about positive things, not just about the things that have gone wrong
Focus as much on the good things that are happening as on nagging about the bad. It will make it easier to keep in touch with what’s really happening to your child when they go online.

“You often read that it’s good to talk to your child about what they do in the online world, but what does that mean? How do you talk to a child who seems to know more than you do – and who probably doesn’t want to talk to you? It’s important to remember that any conversation has to be appropriate for your child’s age. You need to adapt your strategy as they grow older and become more independent.”

Younger children need more structure and guidance as to what is safe. But with older children – say between the last year or two of primary school and Year 9 in secondary school – things can become more complicated. There are big differences between individuals at this time, with some maturing faster than others. Some will take more risks than others. So it is important to be alert to what your child does online.

As the child moves into adolescence, the degree and type of monitoring will have to evolve again as there will come a point when your child can find a way around any restrictions imposed by their parents. At this stage, negotiations and shared decision-making become more effective than rigid rules. Keeping your child safe is much more about the relationship you have than using technology to put on blocks and filters.

“It’s also worth remembering that your digital use is a model for your child. If you check for emails or social media posts all the time, your child is likely to do the same. It’s also a good idea to ensure that your family has a time when screens are not in use.”

The more parents do, the easier it will be to communicate with them about their online life.

Parents and Digital Technology: How to Raise The Connected Generation by Suzie Hayman and John Coleman is available now, published by Routledge.

Three main rules to keep in mind when talking to your child about staying safe online

1) Focus as much on the good things that are happening as on nagging about the bad. It will make it easier to keep in touch with what’s really happening to your child when they go online.

2) Always remember your body belongs to you. Explain to your child that their body belongs to them, and no one has the right to do anything that makes them feel uncomfortable. If anyone tries, they should tell a trusted adult.

3) Talk about secrets that upset you. Help your child feel confident enough to speak up about secrets that they’re worried about. Reassure them that they won’t get into trouble. Secrets shouldn’t be kept in exchange for something, and should never make your child uneasy.

What is PANTS?

Talking PANTS is a simple way to help keep children safe from abuse. The PANTS acronym teaches children that they have a right to say no, and that they should tell an adult if something upsets or concerns them. If your child says something that worries you, talk to a teacher or contact the NSPCC on 0808 800 5000.

Needs to know

It is to talk to their children. But how? Parents are frequently told how important as talking your child know that you really be a two-way street. If you let information. However, it should the child something, or seeking communication involves telling. Many adults believe that. Three main rules to keep in mind when talking to your child about staying safe online

Join thousands of parents talking PANTS

Understandably, some parents find it hard to talk to their children about online sexual abuse. The key to difficult conversations like this is to take your offline parenting skills online and adapt the advice you would feel most comfortable giving about the ‘real’ world to the virtual one. Having a conversation about sexual abuse will never be easy, but we at Digital Parenting think the NSPCC’s PANTS rule is a great way to start. Whether the person making them feel uncomfortable is in the real world, or on the end of a webcam, these tips can help.
How NOT to embarrass your child on social media

Parents used to make their children cringe by getting out the baby photos. But now there's a whole new world of ways to mortify your kids. Here are some pitfalls you need to avoid.

Words: Gary Crossing

1. Boasting about your family on social media where your children (and their friends) can see it

2. Communicating with your child via their Facebook wall. Writing, “Would you like Angel Delight for tea, Chuckie Cheeks?” for all their online friends to see will not go down well. And neither will liking everything they post and making inappropriate or ‘funny’ comments on their status.

3. Posting embarrassing photos online – and sharing cringeworthy photos of yourselves on your child’s Facebook timeline

4. Chatting with your child’s friends on social media

5. Posting a selfie from your child’s messy bedroom to shame them into tidying their room

6. Using online slang incorrectly

7. Looking up your child’s girlfriend or boyfriend on Facebook and liking one of their posts before you’ve even met them

Always use privacy settings
Always think before you post
Be thoughtful whenever posting content that involves a minor
Behave respectfully towards others online – respect their rights to have views and opinions
Keep your account and personal information secure
Respect intellectual property rights – copyrights, trademarks and other legal rights
No abusive behaviour, violent threats, bullying, harassment or hate speech
No graphically nude or pornographic pictures

Don’t offer sexual services, firearms or illegal or prescription drugs
Don’t break the law – don’t support terrorism, organised crime, or hate groups
No spamming, and no deceptive or fraudulent links
Don’t post videos that encourage others to do things that might cause them to get badly hurt
Don’t post content that promotes or glorifies self-harm
Don’t invade the privacy of others by taking and posting photos without their knowledge
Don’t pretend to be someone you’re not
No trolling – deliberately goading someone into a strong reaction

#1 Boasting about your family on social media where your children (and their friends) can see it

#2 Communicating with your child via their Facebook wall. Writing, “Would you like Angel Delight for tea, Chuckie Cheeks?” for all their online friends to see will not go down well. And neither will liking everything they post and making inappropriate or ‘funny’ comments on their status.

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#4 Chatting with your child’s friends on social media

#5 Posting a selfie from your child’s messy bedroom to shame them into tidying their room

#6 Using online slang incorrectly

#7 Looking up your child’s girlfriend or boyfriend on Facebook and liking one of their posts before you’ve even met them

This guide is sourced from the community rules and guidelines of the following platforms: Facebook, Twitter, You Tube and Instagram

Parent Info has produced up-to-date guides for parents that explain the social media sites and apps that children and young people love. The free guides cover familiar names such as Snapchat and Instagram, as well as apps that parents might not yet know about, such as ooVoo, Musical.ly and YouNow. You’ll also find expert information on popular games such as Minecraft and Pokémon Go.

Parent Info is a collaboration between Parent Zone and CEOP, the child protection branch of the National Crime Agency. Schools can sign up to run its expert content free on their own website, and parents can view the content for free at parentinfo.org.
The Stemettes are inspiring young women to break into the tech industry

**W**ords: Geraldine Bedell

**M**any of the best-paying jobs of the future will be in STEM professions – science, technology, engineering and maths. Yet fewer girls than boys choose STEM subjects at school – even though those who do could go on to earn up to 30 per cent more than if they only had GCSE-level qualifications.

Maths and computer science-graduate Anne-Marie Imafidon (inset, above) wants that to change. And so, in 2013, she founded Stemettes, with the aim of encouraging more girls to consider studying STEM subjects.

“The way that science and maths are taught is all about the facts,” says Anne-Marie. “There’s not much emphasis on how incredibly creative STEM subjects can be.”

Stemettes run a range of events, talks, visits and mentoring programmes, with activities for girls aged from five to 21.

“Everything we do is built around three things: it’s free, it’s fun, and there’s food,” says Anne-Marie.

At one recent ‘hackathon’ (where girls get together to solve problems using tech), 40 per cent of the girls had never done any coding before, but left with a new understanding and confidence.

“For many of them, it’s getting the feeling that this really could be for them and they don’t have to think of STEM subjects as just for boys,” Anne-Marie says.

Anne-Marie already had two GCSEs, in maths and information technology, by the age of 10. She was the youngest girl ever to pass A-level computing, at the age of 11, and had a graduate degree from Oxford at the age of 20. But her argument is that it’s just as important to help your child get the most from the digital world.

For example, if your child has difficulty communicating in the offline world, they may find it easier to socialise online, where instantly recognisable emotions like ‘happy’ and ‘sad’ can replace the need to decode body language and facial expressions. The internet can also be a valuable educational resource, especially for children who take longer to learn new things.

Anne-Marie explains.

During the summer, Stemettes run a residential programme – which Anne-Marie describes as “Big Brother meets Dragons’ Den meets The Apprentice” – for girls to develop ideas for start-ups. One of the ideas, an app that can be used to record harassment in the streets, has been featured in women’s magazine Grazia.

Girls aged 15 and over can apply for Stemettes’ intensive mentoring programme, which offers introductions, work experience and help creating a CV. There are also activities for younger girls. The overall aim is to improve awareness, perception, knowledge, confidence and networks.

Even if girls have been put off STEM subjects at school, it’s not too late to get interested,” says Anne-Marie. “There are many ways into STEM careers – and it really can be fun.”

- Vodafone has joined with BT, Ericsson and O2 to promote STEM subjects to girls. The Step Into STEM mentoring scheme was launched in schools in early 2016.
- For a full list of STEM events nationally, see stemettes.org/events

If your child struggles with communication, they might find it easier to socialise online

Life online presents different challenges for children with special needs. By Cerebra, the UK charity dedicated to improving the lives of children with neurological conditions

The internet can be fantastic for children with learning disabilities and autism. Safety is the main concern for all parents, but it’s just as important to help your child get the most from the digital world.

For example, if your child has difficulty communicating in the offline world, they may find it easier to socialise online, where instantly recognisable emotions like ‘happy’ and ‘sad’ can replace the need to decode body language and facial expressions. The internet can also be a valuable educational resource, especially for children who take longer to learn new things.

Parents might want to:

1. Set ground rules about when and for how long your child can be online. If the internet is their main form of communication, you may allow them to stay connected longer than you would other children. As a parent you should judge what’s best for your child and adapt the rules accordingly.
2. Encourage your child to question what they read online. This is even more important for children who know that they’ve been diagnosed with a medical condition. At some point, they will probably want to go online to find out more, and could discover information that is either upsetting, just plain wrong, or both.
3. Remind your child not to share anything too personal. Children with learning difficulties can sometimes be more trusting of strangers than other children are. Encourage them to use a nickname online and to come to you as soon as they feel uncomfortable, or need advice.

But going online does have its risks. Access to technology means potential exposure to online bullying, grooming and inappropriate content. These are risks for all children who go online, but sometimes those with learning disabilities need a bit of extra help, support and guidance to enjoy the internet safely. So it’s best to discuss some strategies for staying safe before your child starts going online regularly.

Check out our tools section on page 39, to find information on the parental controls and safety settings you can set up to help protect your child. 
Using tech to enjoy the great outdoors

Do you worry that your child spends too much time on social media or watching YouTube videos? A new initiative from the Scouts helps switched-on youngsters use digital to get more from their offline life.

Words: Gary Crossing

The Scouts’ Digital Manifesto consists of six clear, concise rules (see right) to encourage young people to use digital technology to complement their offline life in a safe, creative, responsible way – for example, videoing an outdoor adventure and uploading it to YouTube.

As part of the Scouts’ long-term partnership with Vodafone, the Digital Manifesto sits alongside the Scouts’ new ‘Digital Maker’ and ‘Digital Citizen’ staged-activity badges, launched in January 2016. The ‘Digital Citizen’ badges are hugely popular and have already been completed by over 30,000 members across the UK.

Chief Scout and TV survival expert Bear Grylls is also a fan of the Digital Manifesto: “This will encourage hundreds of thousands of young people to develop a range of key digital skills, empowering them to have even greater adventures as well as helping them to stay safe online. "Scouting is a worldwide force for good and, with Vodafone’s help, our young people will have the chance to use technology to make even more of a difference in their communities while also getting outdoors and active.”

Alex Peace-Gadsby, Senior Scout Volunteer, says, “As a parent of two girls, both of whom are members of the Scout Movement, and as a volunteer myself, I know the importance of preparing young people for life. The Digital Manifesto outlines the importance of embracing new skills and using digital in a balanced and positive way. "Our ‘Digital Maker’ and ‘Digital Citizen’ badges are hugely popular and have already been completed by over 30,000 members across the UK.”

Alfie Deyes at Gilwell Park

“Time for a break from the digital world" - YouTube star Alfie Deyes

Big Deyes Out

YouTube star Alfie Deyes might have made his name online but he was happy to support the Scouts’ Digital Manifesto at a camp at Gilwell Park, in the Essex countryside.

More than 5 million young people subscribe to Alfie’s PointlessBlog channel on YouTube and he has a huge and enthusiastic following on social media. But he understands the importance of balance.

After an energetic day, he told his fellow adventurers: “I really enjoyed taking a break from everything. It’s definitely important to stay grounded in the real world.”

Apps that can help young people enjoy their offline life

Reach for the stars

SkyView Free Point your device at the sky to identify stars, satellites, constellations and more. (Free. Age 4+ on iOS; and PEGI 3 on Android.)

Map reading

OS Locate Make the most of your adventures in the great outdoors. Used with an Ordnance Survey map, OS Locate is a fast and highly accurate means of pinpointing your exact location on the map, anywhere in Great Britain. Comes with a built-in GPS system. (Free. Age 4+ on iOS, and unrated on Android.)

Safe and sound

First Aid by British Red Cross Know what to do in an emergency with the British Red Cross official first aid app. With videos, quizzes and simple advice, it’s never been easier to learn first aid. (Free. Age 4+ on iOS; and PEGI 3 on Android.)

Treasure hunt

Geocaching is the world’s largest treasure hunt. Download the app and begin thousands of great treasure hunts across the UK. (Free. Age 4+ on iOS; and parental guidance recommended on Android.)

App age ratings explained

For information on app age ratings, turn to page 46.
“I wouldn’t be children’s minister today if my parents hadn’t fostered”

Edward Timpson, Minister of State for Vulnerable Children and Families, grew up alongside 90 children his parents fostered. He tells Digital Parenting about the challenges the internet creates for children in care, plus what the government is doing to help keep children safe online.

Words: Eleanor Levy

In your role as minister of state for children and families, what are you and the government doing to help keep children safe online?

My Department produces statutory guidance called Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE). Schools and colleges must have regard to this guidance when carrying out their duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. While we want children and young people to be able to enjoy and benefit from new technology, unrestricted and unmonitored use can be unsafe. It leaves them vulnerable to activities such as grooming and sexual exploitation and increases the chances of them viewing unsuitable and harmful material.

We recently consulted on changes to ensure that KCSIE remains relevant and effective, and it now includes an online-safety section for the first time. This includes a requirement for schools and colleges to have filtering and monitoring systems in place to protect children from accessing harmful material online. However, no filtering and monitoring system can be 100 per cent effective and children will be accessing social media from their own mobile phones, tablets and laptops, and at home.

Therefore, education about how to stay safe, particularly online, is very important and we have changed the emphasis in the revised KCSIE guidance so that schools should ensure that children are taught about this in an age-appropriate way.

“I try to practise what I preach but, as parents know, it is often a war of attrition in which your children find boundless energy to try to make you cave in”

You are a father to Sam, Elizabeth and Lydia. What tech rules do you follow at home?

I try to practise what I preach but, as parents know, it is often a war of attrition in which your children find boundless energy to try to make you cave in.

Rather than taking a negative approach, I find that offering alternatives, like creative activities and games, can move the children’s attention away from staring at a screen. Ultimately, it’s like everything else in life — you need moderation and perspective, although I appreciate and know from experience that’s easier said than done. However, the rewards are definitely worth it.

While you were growing up, your parents fostered nearly 90 children. What do you think you gained as a parent from being raised in that environment?

I wouldn’t be children’s minister today if my parents hadn’t fostered. Although at the start it felt more like I was in a competition with the foster children for my parents’ affection, as I grew older and the age gap widened, I started to take on more of a caring role, learning to change nappies, do the late-night feed and look after them at school. In many ways I was a grandparent before becoming a parent.

In the same way that the internet can be a threat as well as a fantastic resource for other children, it’s no different for those who find themselves in care. What can cause additional challenges is cyberbullying, exploitation and the undermining of their placement. I know many foster carers find this tough to deal with. It’s why the work we are doing in government to improve the educational support for children in care — to strengthen their resilience and self-esteem, as well as their academic attainment — is so important. When you put children first, you can’t go far wrong.

Keeping pupils safe online: the teacher’s view

We asked Catherine Goodwin, assistant head teacher and safeguarding lead at St Ignatius College, Enfield, how parents can help children deal with problems created by the internet.

1. It’s illogical, but parents who quite often won’t let their children out on their own will buy them a phone or a tablet and have no idea what they are looking at on them.
2. The apps young people use are always changing, and it’s difficult to keep up with them. Take WhatsApp, for example. Children can add people they’ve never met to their WhatsApp group — hundreds of children they don’t necessarily know — and have no idea what these people will do with a message or picture after they’ve sent it. Parents should try to monitor the WhatsApp conversations that their child is having and who they are speaking to.
3. Ask if you can look at your child’s phone occasionally so you can check messages, WhatsApp conversations, photos and videos taken. This should be part of a contract between you and them when you buy them a phone or credit for their phone.
4. Show an interest in their digital habits and encourage them to tell you what apps they use or groups they belong to. If a child is very reluctant to show a parent what’s on their phone, trust your instinct.
5. You need to talk to them about what they are looking at. That’s the most important thing you can do.
6. Be honest and direct with them. And emphasise that it’s for their safety and benefit that you’re taking an interest.
7. Make sure that they know what to do if they get themselves into trouble online.
8. Sometimes, young people get into situations they think no one else has ever been in, and they’re too embarrassed to tell anyone. So let them know they can tell you anything. And, however shocked you are, you can’t show it.

For advice on where to report any problems your child encounters online, go to page 44.
Digital resilience

What is digital resilience, and why is it so important to your child’s future?

The internet is here to stay – so, as parents, we need to teach our children how to navigate it safely. Vicki Shotbolt, CEO of Parent Zone and executive board member of the UK Council for Child Internet Safety, explains how to teach your child digital resilience.

It’s not a great word: resilience. You’ll probably never overhear a parent at the school gates saying how pleased they are with their child’s resilience. And your teenager is unlikely to tweet about how resilient they feel today. But that doesn’t mean it isn’t hugely important, and something that all of us should want to develop.

Because when we talk about a child’s ‘digital resilience’, we’re really talking about their ability to cope with setbacks and bounce back when they experience something difficult online. A resilient child is able to navigate successfully the online world’s potential risks. They have developed their own sense of right and wrong, and have the skills to make positive decisions about their life online.

Thankfully, digital resilience is easier to acquire than you may think.

Resilient children are less likely to experience harm

How can you ensure your child has the resilience to enjoy life online and avoid the pitfalls? A couple of years ago, Parent Zone worked with the Oxford Internet Institute (OII) to find out if digital resilience really mattered, and how children were able to acquire it.

First, we found that resilience was very important: resilient children are more likely to enjoy the benefits of the internet and less likely to experience harm. And second, we found that digital resilience is built by ‘good enough parenting’ and by children having digital skills and a positive attitude to technology.

What is ‘good-enough parenting’? Put simply, a ‘good-enough’ parent is consistent and responsive. They always aim to do their best for their child, while recognising that perfect parenting isn’t realistic or achievable.

In terms of digital resilience, ‘a good-enough parent’ equips their child with the skills needed to be able to take care of themselves. It’s about adapting what you already do to keep them safe and flourishing offline to work in the online world.

The benefit of boundaries

Setting boundaries is important in the digital world. Children need them because they feel more secure if they know what they can and can’t do.

We’ve all had trouble putting down our devices, so it’s easy to see why children need us to tell them when it’s been too long or too much. Of course, you’ll relax some rules as your child grows older, and there will be days when you bend them a little – but rules are critical in a digital world because managing technology use can be tough.

Finally, digital resilience is about letting children explore, knowing that you’ve taught them how to navigate the online world and that they can come to you if they have a problem. When they were younger, you taught your child how to cross roads safely—you didn’t wait until someone made the roads 100 per cent safe, because that was never going to happen. Likewise, the internet will never be completely risk-free.

But the answer isn’t to keep your child away from it. If you rely on filters and parental controls, there is a chance you may make your child less safe. The first time they go online outside of your walled environment, they could find they don’t have the skills to navigate potential problems and to make positive decisions. So it’s important to teach them how to be safe online, then have the confidence to let them go it alone.

“When we talk about a child’s ‘digital resilience’, we’re talking about their ability to cope with setbacks and to bounce back from something difficult”

...
Selfies vs sexting

Six out of 10 teenagers say they have been asked for sexual images or videos*. But when does sharing selfies turn into a criminal offence? As police guidance to schools, she opinion on the matter changes, Sharon Herbert, schools and youth engagement officer at City of London Police and mum of two, examines a very modern problem.

Selfies seem to be everywhere nowadays. And with so many of the younger generation seeming to jump happy to send pictures and often inappropriate content to each other, should it really come as such a big surprise that occasionally something goes wrong? Children haven’t changed. Although we didn’t have smartphones when we were going through puberty, we still said things that we shouldn’t have said and didn’t really understand. We explored our sexuality and pushed boundaries, just like every other generation does.

Our children need to grow, be allowed to make mistakes and learn from them. With headlines claiming that a whole generation is being criminalized, parents, teachers and police need to strike a balance. We need to understand what the law says, what the risks are and how we educate our children. And we must be careful not to drive necessary reporting and investigation underground for fear that mistakes made during childhood could be dragged up in adult life. Telling already vulnerable children that when an indecent image has gone, it’s gone, and it can’t be controlled is no longer the answer. We need to reassure them, look at prevention and seek to support those affected. We can give them the tools that make them emotionally more resilient and intelligent. After all, it’s not a fact that is just going to disappear.

Some schools and organisations are simply not sharing information because they’re concerned about their reputation or reports of criminalisation of young people. It’s been said before, but we should start starting more freely again. A young girl who shares a topless selfie via Snapchat may not have been coerced into doing so, but might be displaying worrying patterns of sexualised behaviour for other reasons. We should always think ‘child first’. Has she been a victim of neglect or sexual abuse? Is this more than just exploring sexuality and experimentation?

What about a teen boy who pretends to be someone else to get explicit images of a girl he likes? Where his browsing history shows he has been accessing questionable content. Should we consider him a victim or offender?

The Home Office’s National Crime Recording Standard is clear: where an image appears to have been sent to a police officer from a young person identified as a victim of sexual exploitation, police must record it under this ‘safety’ category. If a victim of sexual exploitation has said to police that a picture or video has been circulated, the process is in place to record it as a ‘safety’ image.

When sharing becomes sharing

One in 14 young people aged 11-16 have shared a nude selfie*. But what if the person they trusted with the image then passed it on to someone else? Childline International looks at what parents can do to protect their child.

In other words, the police will sometimes decide that, in their professional judgement, further action isn’t in the best interests of the public and the person involved. This should provide some reassurance that children won’t be unnecessarily criminalised and that the police will apply careful consideration when deciding what action to take.

As parents, we need to get digital – understand the technology, learn how it works and start to close the knowledge gap. Most of us will never be one step ahead of our children, but saying “I don’t do social media” will mean that you miss opportunities to connect with your children and keep them safe. Becoming ‘media mums’ and ‘digital dads’ is a step in the right direction.

Don’t wait for schools or the police to deliver their ‘safety’ lessons. The majority of children speak to professionals (as well as their own) switch off as soon as they hear the term ‘safety’.

Take responsibility and consider sexting as a much-needed life skill

Start the conversation at home before you give your child a device, and continue talking to them, just like you would when teaching them any other life skill. Parents shouldn’t fear this challenge to the professionals, but if your child is ever forced or coerced to ‘sex’ (even by another child), remember that you should report it immediately to your local police.

The law

If you’re under 18, it’s illegal to share an ‘indecent’ picture of yourself, or to look at or share someone else’s. CEOP (formerly the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre) has produced films to help parents understand this subject. Find them at vodafone.uk/CEOP.

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Viral videos, memes and images spread from a simple ‘like’ or ‘share’, creating a fun and fast-paced digital experience. But imagine the fear and humiliation you would feel if you discovered that your nude selfie was spreading among your friends and through your school community via social media and messaging apps.

This type of online sexual harassment can have a huge impact on a young person’s wellbeing in both the short and long term. This so-called ‘revenge porn’ is against the law, as it is illegal to take, distribute or download indecent images of people under the age of 18. And there are further laws that protect people from harassment and abuse online, including new legislation that came into force in the UK in 2015.

What you can do to protect your child

Talk to them regularly about the potential consequences of sending and sharing sexual images and videos, and make sure they know they can turn to you if anything worries them.

Try to encourage them to report sexual images they see online (see page 44 for how to do this) and to involve you, or a teacher if it concerns a pupil at their school.

Also, challenge attitudes that blame victims. You could use an example of an incident involving a celebrity and discuss why people might have a more negative attitude towards the person in the picture rather than the person who shared it.

And if the worst happens...

Stay calm and act quickly. You may feel shocked, upset, disappointed or angry, but it’s important to be supportive. Save the evidence, report to the relevant social media service and report to the police if the incident happened at school, encourage staff to seek support from the UK Safer Internet Centre’s helpline for professionals: saferinternet.org.uk/ helpline

Find out more

To learn more about reporting, see page 44.
Our family’s tech

We spoke to three parents about their family’s tech – how they use it, how they control it, and what their biggest challenges are.

Words: Gary Crossing

JULIET Tunbridge Wells, Kent
Mum to Louis, 14, and Flo, 12

We own...
Three iPads, four iPhones and two PCs. Flo has a laptop. Louis has a PC that he built himself. We also have games consoles.

Our rules...
“Weeknights they are allowed an unlimited gaming on Friday nights. For example, when you’ve done your homework, but no gaming. There’s more homework, or buy samurai swords! We also have games consoles.”

Our worries...
“Nobody remembers anything any more. They just look things up. Ninety-five per cent of the kids’ homework is on the computer, so it’s hard to monitor use and it’s hard for them as the temptation is always there.”

The best thing about... “Access to everything – but it’s a double-edged sword.”

“Nobody remembers anything any more. They just look things up.”

JAMES London
Dad to Heath, five, and Finley, three

We own...
A laptop, an iPad, an iPhone 4 and an LG G2 phone.

Our rules...
“Screen time is limited to the weekend. The boys appreciate it more when they’ve been deprived it all week. Our rules can be undone though by going to friends’ houses where their children are allowed access to technology most of the time.”

The best thing about... “The internet is a great resource for quick information – whether that helps the kids with homework, helps me answer their questions, or allows us to find out what’s happening locally.”

The worst thing about... “In-app purchases are a problem. The first I’ll know about them is when I get a text telling me how much they spent. The ease with which the boys can make these purchases alarms me.”

CHRIS Nottingham
Dad to Izzy, 11, and Ruby, four

We own...
A Mac, two laptops, an iPad, a Hudl tablet, two iPhones and an iPod Touch.

Our rules are...
“We don’t use parental controls and that seems to work at the moment. Our rules are a bit vague. One day we’ll say, ‘You’ve been on there too long, get off now and get outdoors.’ Then the next day it’s raining and we’ll let them stay on longer because it’s the convenient. We don’t allow them to take their tablets to bed though.”

Our worries...
“My biggest fear is that they stumble across sexual imagery and, being young girls, they then think that’s how women should be and how they should act. I want them to be two strong girls. I don’t want them thinking that way.”

The best thing about the internet...
“The best thing is to use parental controls. There will be settings you can choose on your home broadband, your phone and your tablet, which let you choose the type of content your children can access online. You can also ensure they don’t access inappropriate content stored on your device or make in-app purchases when playing games.”

The worst thing about the internet...
“Access to everything – but it’s restrictive. You get a phone app to OurPact, which is also free, and less restrictive. There’s also a not-for-profit organisation supported by BT, Sky, TalkTalk, Virgin Media, the BBC and Google. It offers step-by-step guides and advice about how to keep children safe online. For more, visit their website: internetmatters.org

For advice on preventing in-app purchases go to page 23).

By Internet Matters

Adjusting controls as children grow

Smartphones, tablets, games consoles, apps and computers all have tools to control what your child sees. But no one tool can work all the time. Use a range of strategies, including supervision, regular conversations and taking an interesting in their digital life.

Most apps have age restrictions, and you should make sure that your child only downloads age-appropriate ones. (Find out how to do this on page 41.)
As a parent, you worry about what your child will find online

Vodafone's Helen Lamprell explains why the company is proud of Digital Parenting magazine and its other initiatives to help families make the most of the online world.

Words: Eleanor Levy

Vodafone's #BeStrong anti-bullying emojis let children show support for victims of bullying. You can download them from vodafone.com/be-strong-online-emojis.

Strength through knowledge

Vodafone and The Diana Award are collaborating on Be Strong Online, a digital-skills programme to encourage older children to pass on knowledge of how to make the most of the internet safely and securely. The programme produces modules for secondary schools on subjects including cyberbullying, critical thinking, social media, and self-esteem. There is accompanying information for parents produced by Parent Zone.

The programme is being expanded for the 2016/2017 academic year, including the addition of in-school training events. To find out how your child's secondary school can sign up, go to vodafone.com/parents.

What should I do if my child is being bullied?

It can be upsetting when your child is being bullied. But it's important to give them the tools to deal with it.

1. If your child tells you they’re being bullied, thank them for talking to you. It takes a lot of courage to admit to being bullied but it’s the first step to sorting out the problem. It may be hard, but try not to get upset. Stay calm and reassure your child that you’ll help sort things out.

2. Don't take over. Ask your child what they want to do, talk about possibilities, and make sure they’re happy with what will happen next.

3. If the bullying happens at school, talk to your child’s teacher. They may be able to arrange for someone to keep an eye on your child at school and set up a system for your child’s approval and support to report any further bullying.

4. Speak to your child about whether there’s a member of staff they can talk to or a place they can go if they are being bullied at school. Maybe they could join a club so they would be in a group at lunchtimes and therefore less vulnerable to bullying.

5. Encourage your child not to react if they’re being bullied, as this often fuels bullying behaviour. Tell them to remove themselves from the situation as quickly as possible and report any bullying to an adult.

6. Monitor your child, ask them how school has gone and check in regularly with a teacher to see how they are getting on during the day. If you don’t get a detailed response, ask questions. Stay positive and try not to let the situation get you down.

7. Bullying can affect a child’s confidence and self-esteem. Focus on their strengths and do activities that they enjoy and which help relieve stress.

8. Keep a record of the bullying so you have evidence if you need to take the matter further. For more advice, visit antibullyingpro.com/support-centre.
**Apps for under 10s**

From educational titles to videos and games, there are a whole host of excellent free apps available for children under 10. Here are five of our favourites for you to try.

**BBC iPlayer Kids**

IOS/Android (Free)  
Minimum age: 4+  
PGEI 3  
A third of shows watched on the BBC’s iPlayer are children’s programmes, according to the BBC. That’s why it launched a standalone iPlayer Kids app. It’s an easy way to stream shows from the BBC’s CBeebies and CBBC channels. The app keeps a separate profile for each user and knows their age, so it knows which shows are appropriate for them to watch. Children can search for their favourites or browse the latest selection. The app also lets them download shows to watch offline – perfect for a journey without internet access.

**Tynker**

IOS/Android (Free)  
Minimum age: 4+  
PGEI 3  
Children as young as five are now being taught computer programming at school, so apps that help them to develop their coding skills at home are becoming more popular. Tynker, available for iPad and tablets, is one of the best. It starts with a series of exercises teaching children to program using drag-and-drop code blocks: it feels like a fun puzzle game, even though kids are learning as they play. The real fun comes when children enter the app’s free-creation mode. This allows them to make their own games, animations and physics demos, letting their imagination run free.

**Doctor Who Comic Creator**

iOS/Android (Free)  
Minimum age: 9+  
PGEI 3  
For decades children have watched Doctor Who from behind the sofa. But this official BBC app gets them in front of their devices making their very own Time Lord tales. It encourages children to turn various Doctors, companions and aliens into on-screen comic strips, writing their own speech bubbles to tell their story. It’s simple to use, easily customised and a great way for kids to flex their creative muscles. They can even design their own baddies using bits of famous Doctor Who aliens.

While the app is free to download and use, it does sell packs of extra characters and scenery as £1.49 in-app purchases.

**Crossy Road**

iOS/Android (Free)  
Minimum age: 4+  
PGEI 3  
The original Crossy Road game has been a big hit with children, as it reimagined the classic arcade game Frogger for a new generation of (purely virtual) road-hopping gamers. Disney Crossy Road is an entirely separate version, featuring more than 100 Disney favourites – from Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck to the stars of The Lion King, Toy Story and Wreck-It Ralph.

The gameplay is the same: tap the screen to hop over roads and rivers without being squashed by passing traffic. And yes, the characters really do get squashed – some young Disney fans may need to look away. The game is free to play, but sells some characters using in-app purchases – although the same characters can also be unlocked purely by playing the game.

**Read with Fonics**

iOS/Android (Free)  
Minimum age: 4+  
PGEI 3  
Fonics is one of the most popular ways for children to learn to read in school and at home – and Read with Fonics is an app hoping to get them practising their newfound skills on their parents’ tablets and smartphones. Created by primary school teacher Sophie Cooper, the app is based around fun phonics games that test children on their letter-sounds – from the simple ones they first learn, through to harder three-letter sounds. There’s a points system to track their progress, but it never feels stressful.

Read with Fonics may also make its way into classrooms in the months ahead – Sophie is hoping to get teachers using it with their pupils.

**Game ratings and apps**

You may be familiar with the PEGI age ratings you find on the packaging of games for consoles, such as PS4, Nintendo DS and XBox. These Europe-wide symbols show consumers at a glance the age that each game is suitable for and the specific type of content included in the game. Apps for Android phones and tablets available in the Google Play store are also categorised using the PEGI age-rating system.

The Apple app store doesn’t use PEGI age-ratings but it does have ratings that show the minimum age that the game is suitable for.

For more information about PEGI ratings for video games, see page 46.

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**What you can do to stop your child making in-app purchases**

People rarely develop apps for charitable reasons. Even people who make free apps are hoping to make money from them, and many do this by offering in-app purchases. You can turn these off in a variety of ways, depending on the app. Within a game, you can find how to do this in the settings menu (look for a ‘log in’ icon) or you can create a password that means your child won’t be able to buy anything without your knowledge (obviously that will only work as long as you keep the password a secret). You can also restrict in-app purchases at device level.

Ofcom has produced a series of video guides designed to show parents how they can turn off in-app purchases on a variety of popular phones and tablets.

You can find the video guides online at vodafone.uk/OfcomGuides.
It might not seem like something your family needs to worry about, but even young children can fall victim to cyber crime. Here are some of the top cybersecurity issues for children and adults to be aware of – and useful tips for staying safe.

Is your family cyber secure?

Words: Rachel Rosen and Gary Crossing

What is cyber crime?

The National Crime Agency (NCA) defines cyber crime as an offence ‘committed using a computer, computer networks or other form of information communications technology (ICT)*.

It includes crimes such as:

Hacking
This involves gaining access to someone’s computer network without their permission. The hacker can then take control and/or access information.

Malware (malicious software)
This can include viruses, spyware and remote access trojans (or RATs) – programs that create a ‘back door’ to allow administrative control from outside over a targeted computer. These programs allow criminals access to other people’s computers to carry out illegal activities.

Distributed Denial of Service attacks (DDoS)
These involve sending a website a huge amount of internet traffic at one time. This can result in people who want to visit the site not being able to access it.

Clickjacking
This is when fraudsters disguise links that download malware onto your device or steal your personal information. The links are often made to look like something innocent and tempting such as a funny video, an exciting offer or ‘clickbait’-style article. This type of cyber-attack is common on social media.

Where to report
Even if you’ve taken precautions, things can still go wrong. Action Fraud is the UK’s national centre for reporting cyber crime and fraud. You can report online via their website actionfraud.police.uk or ring them on 0300 123 2040.

What you can do
Warn your child to be careful what they click. Usually with ‘clickjacking’ links there’s something suspicious if you look closely – an offer that’s too good to be true, or a phrase the person who shared it is unlikely to use. If it doesn’t seem right, don’t click on it.

Identity theft
Even children have to worry about identity theft as teens are appealing targets for some criminals. Often more trusting than adults, they can be tricked into sharing private information.

What you can do
Make sure your child knows not to give out personal information online. Obviously, they should never share their passwords. But any personal details that would help answer security questions on their account or profile information – such as their mother’s maiden name, their first pet’s name, or their postcode – could leave them vulnerable to cyber crime.

Unsafe passwords
Your child’s passwords are the keys to their online life. It’s important to choose passwords that are impossible to guess, and to not use the same password for more than one account. For your child, the passwords to their social media and email accounts are especially important.

What you can do
Tell your child about how to create a strong password. See our box below for tips about how to do this. Online password generators can help. And remind your child to keep their passwords private – even the best password is useless if it’s shared.

Viruses and malware
Make sure your child is aware of the risks of viruses. Opening an infected attachment or visiting a corrupt website could download harmful files onto their device, or yours, leading to fraud, important data being deleted or even your computer being made unusable.

What you can do
Install antivirus software on any device your family uses to go online, and update it regularly. Tell your child not to turn off your virus scanner, and talk to them about the risks. Even with virus protection, make sure your child knows not to download suspicious files or attachments.

More ways to protect your family
Get Safe Online: getsafeonline.org
Cyber Streetwise: cyberstreetwise.com

Five tips to help you create a strong password

1. Use a different password for each account. If you use the same one for multiple accounts, they are all vulnerable if one is hacked.
2. Using a random combination of at least eight letters (both upper and lower case), numbers and symbols makes it much harder for would-be hackers. The Home Office’s Cyber Streetwise campaign suggests the strongest password consists of three random words. “Numbers and symbols can still be used if needed. However, three random words is the key to a strong password.”
3. Never use personal information such as your name, whole words, or sequential patterns such as 1234.
4. Regularly update your recovery email address so you can be easily contacted if you need to reset your password. You can also add a phone number to receive password reset codes by text. Ensure that the answers to any security questions you create are things that only you know.
5. Keep your passwords secure. Don’t leave them lying around on a Post-it note on your desk.

Get Safe Online: getsafeonline.org
Cyber Streetwise: cyberstreetwise.com

Malware (malicious software): This can include viruses, spyware and remote access trojans (or RATs) – programs that create a ‘back door’ to allow administrative control from outside over a targeted computer. These programs allow criminals access to other people’s computers to carry out illegal activities.

* The National Crime Agency (NCA) defines CYBER CRIME as an OFFENCE COMMITTED USING A COMPUTER, COMPUTER NETWORKS OR OTHER FORM OF INFORMATION COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (ICT).
Children and young people have always been influenced by their friends. This can now include people they meet online, which presents particular challenges for parents. Eleanor Levy, editor of Parent Info, the online advice and information service for schools, explains more.

It’s normal for children to want to copy their friends. But now offline peer pressure is joined by influences from the online world. The friends they chat to on social media or while gaming, and the celebrities they follow on Instagram or YouTube. Of course, a child wanting to copy their peers isn’t necessarily a negative thing. Young people can be inspired by friends and online role models to be creative, take up a sport and eat more healthily, or encouraged to work harder at school. But sometimes online peer pressure can result in young people being pressured into acting in ways they would never think of doing by themselves, or in the offline world.

Cyberbullying
Bullying among schoolchildren isn’t a new problem but the internet has created new ways for young people to gang up on others. Encouraging someone to make nasty comments on social media, or joining in to impress your friends, may seem OK at the time. After all, it’s easy to do when you’re not standing in front of the person you’re victimising and everyone else you know is doing it too. Unfortunately, the online bullying follows the person being bullied everywhere they go, even to what should be the safety of their own home.

What you can do
If you discover your child has joined in with online bullying, or has shared a cruel image, talk about why they did it. Explain that it is often difficult to realise you’re being pressured until afterwards, but encourage them to learn from the experience. Recognising the signs will help them identify if it happens again – and next time they may choose to act differently.

Radicalisation and extremism
There have been a number of instances of children from the UK becoming radicalised online and joining criminal extremist organisations such as the Islamic State group, or becoming involved with racist, far-right groups in the UK. People looking to radicalise young people use social messaging apps with encryption so that their messages can’t be read by others. Extremists often use friendship to make targets feel part of a force for good – a compelling message for young people who feel powerless and aggrieved.

What you can do
The best thing you can do is listen to your child. Ask them what they do online, who they talk to and where they go. If you take an interest, it will lessen the need for them to go somewhere else for support.

Parent Zone has produced Resilient Families – a free online course for parents and carers that covers all aspects of helping your child cope with the challenges of the internet. Episode 2 covers radicalisation and extremism. You can find it at parentzone.org.uk/resilient-families.

Being made to feel bad about their looks
Peer pressure isn’t just about imitating your friends’ actions. It can also be about affecting how young people feel about themselves. When we’re all vulnerable to self-esteem issues, young people’s lives are increasingly lived online. It can bring pressure to look a certain way.

What you can do
Ask them to talk about why a celebrity has posted a particular image of themselves on social media. Ask now what they think went into making that image look perfect. Also, it may seem obvious, but don’t constantly point out your child’s physical flaws or weight gain – and try not to comment on your own in earshot either. Suggest that they visit the YoungMinds website at vodafone.uk/healthcharity. The specialist mental health charity has really useful tips for resilient families.

What you can do
Remind your child that both drinking and smoking are illegal if they are underage and that doing either to excess is dangerous. They may feel patronised but, as parents, sometimes it’s our job to state the obvious. (Setting a positive example can be worth a thousand words!) Also, point out that pictures of them partying could still be viewable years later, when their social media feeds may well be looked at by prospective employers and other people they want to impress. Today’s fun night out could be tomorrow’s rejected university application or career setback. This might be a good time to suggest they make sure their social media privacy settings are set to ‘friends only’.

Online peer pressure

"But everybody does it..."

Digital Parenting
vodafone.com/parents
Almost 1,300 followers. Also, we're both trying to learn Korean, and having this account means we can practise the language with other people and learn from them. I love Instagram because there are so many other worlds out there, and you can discover them all with just one tap of your finger.

What parents need to know
Minimum age: 13
Instagram allows its users to share images with each other. Users can comment on posted photos, which can lead to both positive and negative comments. Shared photos can be seen by anyone, but you can change your child's privacy settings so that only people they know can see them. However, their bio, profile and profile image will remain public. See page 42 to find out more about parental controls for Instagram.

Snapchat
This is a photo messaging app that allows users to take photos, record videos of up to 10 seconds, add text and drawings, and send them to a controlled list of people. The user controls how long the Snaps are available for, usually just seconds. Recipients of images can't download them, but they can take a screenshot or record the video and send that to other people. Parents should remind children not to share inappropriate images on social media. See page 42 to find out more about Snapchat. For advice about selfies and sexting, see page 16.

The perils and pleasures of social media
By Kate Medlin
Social media plays a large role in many young people’s lives today. It gives them access to a new, different world to the one their parents had at their age. But there are, of course, pitfalls to that new world. For example, a teenager struggling with an eating disorder may find it difficult to turn to recovery support accounts from pro-ana ones (which promote anorexia as a lifestyle choice). For their parents, it must feel like they can’t stop the enemy from coming straight through their front door and into their child’s bedroom. Likewise, it can be unsettling for a parent to learn not all of the followers their child has on social media are personal friends.

Into the unknown
One of the hardest decisions a parent has to make as their child goes up to secondary school is how to protect them from the emerging dangers. How do we do that when we don’t know the family? Do we stick to the spending and sending highly restricted rules that the police and their parents may not pick up when they’re 17? These are solvable problems, but not necessarily easy – but it is not so simple when it comes to online life.

However, while social media presents new problems, they are like any other parenting hurdles that have to be navigated and negotiated. The only radically different element of the unknown is: so what can parents do?

It can be hard to keep up when the social media world moves so quickly, but knowledge is your best weapon. For example, some young people will have duplicate ‘parent-friendly’ accounts on social media. However hard it is, try to keep an eye on what your teenagers are up to, especially if their behaviour changes drastically. Even if you don’t understand what they’re doing, ask them questions about it – talk about the benefits, not just about the dangers. If they think they have to defend something to you, they’ll be less likely to share with you when something feels wrong.

Communication, as always, is the key. Keep those channels open, and your teenagers should be able to enjoy their online life and allow it to open doors to that they never even knew existed.

Kate Medlin is a member of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy. She works in private practice and for the counselling service at a London university.

Ask about the benefits, not just about the dangers. If they think they have to defend it, they may be less likely to share with you when something doesn’t feel right.

The main point of Snapchat is to be social. Rather than forcing you to sit and hope that your post gets a certain number of ‘likes’, it provokes conversation and interaction – which, in my opinion, is a far healthier way to interact with people.

What parents need to know
Minimum age: 13
Snapchat is a photo messaging app that allows users to take photos, record videos of up to 10 seconds, add text and drawings, and send them to a controlled list of people. The user controls how long the Snaps are available for, usually just seconds. Recipients of images can’t download them, but they can take a screenshot or record the video and send that to other people. Parents should remind children not to share inappropriate images on social media. See page 42 to find out more about Snapchat. For advice about selfies and sexting, see page 16.
Every parent worries about keeping their children safe online. But making sure they stay physically fit and healthy while using their devices is often overlooked. Physiotherapist Joe Shotbolt explains some potential problems and how to avoid them.

### Don’t let tech be a pain in the neck (and other bits!)

**Pain in the neck, lower back and hand are the ‘tech tri’ of problems caused or exacerbated by excessive technology use.** And they’re more common than you might think—one in six youngsters experience discomfort in their wrists, arms, shoulders and neck. Here are some simple ways your child can make sure they don’t end up with aches and pains caused by prolonged tech use.

**Helping hand**

**These exercises will help with hand and wrist pain**

1. **Wrist bend**
   - Put your elbow on a table, with your arm upright and wrist straight.
   - Slowly bend your wrist forward and hold it at 90 degrees for five seconds. Straighten, then bend it back and hold for another five seconds. Do three sets of 10.

2. **Hand squeeze**
   - Hold a rubber ball in your hand and squeeze it for five seconds. Then switch hands. Do three sets of 10.

3. **Chin to chest**
   - Drop your head so your chin rests on your chest. Gently tense your neck muscles and hold for five seconds. Lift back to a neutral, upright position and repeat. Do five sets.

4. **Sideways stretch**
   - Tilt your head towards your shoulder, with your head facing straight ahead. Gently tense your neck muscles and hold for five seconds. Slowly lift your head back to the middle and repeat on the opposite side. Do five times on each side.

5. **Flex your neck**
   - Turn your head 45 degrees to the side. Gently tense your neck muscles and hold for five seconds. Return to looking straight ahead, then repeat on the other side. Do five times on each side.

The ideal position to adopt is with your feet touching the floor, your bottom and lower back touching the chair, and your forearms gently touching the table. Also, make sure the screen is at head height. This should be easy to adjust with a desktop computer, but more difficult with a laptop. Using an external keyboard and mouse will allow you to raise the screen. These are easy if you’re at a table or desk.

If you’re using a laptop on the sofa and you’ve got one eye on the television, you’re going to find it a bit harder. Sofas, by design, tend to make you slump, so you’ll need some pillows to support your back and a pillow for the laptop to raise it up.

**Neck and back pain are very common and can have many different causes**

- **Slothers** tend to lean backwards, sliding their hips forwards, putting the lower back out of contact with the chair, causing lower back and neck pain.
- **Leavers** rest their forearms on the desk, putting pressure on the shoulders, bending the spine out of shape, causing neck and lower back pain. Nearly all of us fall into bad habits, but there are ways to minimise the risk of injury.

**Move it!**

Do these exercises every day for better posture

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**Illustration: Romualdo Faura**

*Anyone starting a new exercise regime should check with a GP or qualified physiotherapist beforehand **sciencedaily.com/releases/2016/04/160406124740.htm***
How to be a digital role model

Dr Fiona Pienaar, director of clinical services at children’s mental health charity Place2Be, explains how to support your child in the digital age

As a parent, it’s important to get to know the world your children are growing up in. Your openness, knowledge and attitude to all things digital will play a major role in maintaining your child’s mental health and emotional wellbeing as they navigate an exciting but challenging new world.

How do we ensure our children grow up emotionally and mentally healthy?

A lot has been written about the negative aspects of the digital world, particularly social media. Online bullying, children becoming addicted to gaming, and the potential consequences of trying to create a perfect online image are all well-documented. But the digital world has also had an enormously positive effect on society.

So how do we find a balance? How do we ensure that our children grow up with an objective, sensible and well-adjusted approach to life in the digital age?

As a society, we have fairly recently moved to acknowledge how important it is to protect our children and young people from the real and potential challenges associated with life in the digital world.

Children pick up habits and attitudes from the significant adults around them

Nothing is more important than the example we set for children from the start of their lives. Children pick up habits and attitudes from the significant adults around them. Thinking about what we, as adults, present as normal in our homes, and in society in general, is crucial. How we manage digital devices dictates how our children and young people absorb early learning and how they develop their personal attitudes, beliefs and values.

Young people today not only have to manage their lives in real time, but also in a parallel digital-time. If we want them to navigate that parallel world from a strong base of emotional well-being and mental health, we have to provide them with the guidance, education, tools, skills and support to do so.

Make time to talk to each other and, just as important, to listen to each other

If you want your child to have a balanced approach to technology in their lives, set a good example. Eat meals together at a table without any technology turned on. Make time to talk to each other, and to listen to each other. Show interest in their daily lives, and explain how you decide which TV programmes you watch. Equally, explain how you decide when not to engage in digital technology; how and why you turn your devices off, and how you can use time to engage with others.

Why not create family traditions early in life that become so well-established and loved that they will always want to do them? Get outside, play games, walk in your neighbourhood and take your child to a favourite café for a milkshake.

In these ways you can support your child to use digital technology in a safe and knowledgeable way – and try to have fun together doing it.

Is the internet having a negative effect on your child’s mental health?

It’s something we worry about as parents, but what do young people think? Parent Zone’s Rachel Rosen asked hundreds of young people and teachers across the UK

Research shows that one child in 10 has a diagnosable mental health issue, and many experts say that number could be even higher.

Through Parent Zone’s work with schools, health practitioners and parents, we know that they’re worried about this trend, and some wonder if technology could be partly to blame.

In my report, The Perfect Generation: Is the Internet Undermining Young People’s Mental Health? we set out to find out what young people really think about mental health and the internet. We talked to people aged 13 to 20 around the UK, as well as to teachers, deputy head teachers and school nurses.

What do young people think?

Is the internet bad for your mental health?

Many comments highlighted how the internet can have both a negative and positive effect. “The internet definitely amplifies everything — the good and the bad. You just have to choose the right route” was one response.

Another made a similar point: “Harmful sites [...] are too easily accessible. These can either trigger or amplify existing mental health issues, or exacerbate it. On the other hand, the internet can make it easier for some to reach out for help, and one can also find others online struggling with similar difficulties.”

The study also revealed that just over a quarter of young people would turn to the internet first if they had a problem, but more than 60% would prefer to talk in person, to someone they trust. The most common reason that children said they wouldn’t reach out was because they were worried about disappointing their parents or feeling awkward around their friends.

How can we help?

Nearly three-quarters of schools have dealt with a pupil with a mental health problem that they think was made worse by the pupil’s online activity. And lots of teens felt adults would be more able to help them with digital problems if they better understood a young person’s perspective.

The internet is now where social dramas play out, and where teens experiment with relationships. It’s a tool they use to study and discover the world. As parents, we need to do what we’ve always done: talk to our children, be there for them, and make sure they know we love them no matter what.
Growing up digital

“I don’t like adverts. They are on a lot of things. They get in the way.”
August, 5

“I like Netflix... and I play Subway Surfers on my mum’s phone with her.”
Aisha, 5

“I like Evan and Jillian [young YouTube stars whose videos show them unwrapping toys]. I’m allowed to watch them for 20 minutes, them unwrapping toys.”
Robyn, 6

“I use the internet to do my homework. I looked up Victorian times. What they wore – the big skirts.”
Natalya, 6

What kids really think about the web
Kids today have never known a world without the internet. We asked a group of primary school pupils about the digital world they live in.

Words: Eleanor Levy

Quick-fire Q&A
Where does the internet live?
Robyn “It lives all around us.”
August “It lives on electrical things.”

What do you like to watch?
Aisha “My Little Pony.”
August “I like Star Wars. And Lego. I like to watch The Lego Movie.”
Louisa “I hate Star Wars.”
August “Don’t say ‘hate’, it’s a bad word.”

If you had five minutes to watch anything you wanted online, what would you look for?
Natalya “Jackets. I like fashion.”
August “Transformers.”

They’re machines that transform into cars. I’ve watched all the Transformer films.”

“I can watch ice skating videos on YouTube. I did ice skating once. I fell over.”
Robyn, 6

“Wow, you’re happy with that?”
August “Yes, our head teacher told us about disrespect and respect online.”

“I hate Star Wars.”
Louisa, 6

“Don’t say ‘hate’, it’s a bad word.”
August

“I use the internet live!”
Robyn “I’m not allowed to watch for very long. They stop me if I’ve been on too long. I’m happy with that.”

Robyn and Natalya’s mum “Wow, you’re happy with that!”

Do your teachers ever talk to you about staying safe on the internet?
August “Yes, our head teacher told us about disrespect and respect online.”

Do you have any devices of your own?
August “I have a Nintendo 3DS.”
Natalya “We [pointing to her twin sister Robyn] have an old phone to share. And we have an iPad to share.”

What’s your favourite character?
August “Transformers. And Lego.”

“I have a Nintendo 3DS.”
Natalya “We [pointing to her twin sister Robyn] have an old phone to share. And we have an iPad to share.”

Robyn “I’m not allowed to watch for very long. They stop me if I’ve been on too long. I’m happy with that.”

Robyn and Natalya’s mum “Wow, you’re happy with that!”

How you can manage your child’s screen time
Professor Lydia Plowman is chair of education and technology at the University of Edinburgh and a contributor to CBeebies. Here, she offers some useful tips for parents.

Few parents ban all screens, but some feel guilty about how long their children spend looking at them – whether it’s a mobile phone, a tablet or the television – and others wonder if they should feel guilty, but like having peace and quiet to do things without distractions. Here are a few tips to help you achieve a healthy balance.

1. Have family guidelines
Most families have a routine for mealtimes and bedtime, and the same approach can work for screen time.

2. Start early
The sooner you establish a pattern of behaviour, the better. It’s much harder once children know what their friends are allowed to do.

3. Set boundaries
You might allow screen time on Sunday morning so you can have a lie-in, but not on weekday mornings, or within an hour of bedtime. Similarly, screen time in the living room may be OK, but not in the bedroom. Depending on your child’s age, you could make these decisions together.

4. Share screen time
Perhaps take it in turns to choose a game or video to watch – and talk about it the same way you would a book you were reading. Or video-call a relative and encourage your child to talk to them family news or a story, or show something they’ve made.

5. Involve your child in your own screen time
Share activities such as looking up train times and encourage them to join in. But try to limit your screen time when your child’s about. If you’re always checking your phone, they’ll do the same.

6. Encourage creativity
Use apps to help your child create photos, videos, drawings and stories.

7. Extend your child’s play beyond the screen
Find out which apps they like, and plan related activities, such as dressing up as one of their favourite characters.

These tips fall into one of two groups: ones that use screen time for positive, worthwhile activities, and those that create workable routines when your child can play independently. But there are no hard and fast rules – you have to work out what’s best for your family.

You can find more articles by Lydia at edinburgh.academia.edu/~lydia.plowman
enjoy video games and many parents roll their eyes at what is often a point of conflict and concern in the home. While games are second nature to children, parents worry about addiction, the negative impact gaming may have on their child’s concentration and fitness and, where in-app purchases are concerned, the amount of money it may cost. But, although research into gaming is still in its infancy, studies show that there are actually lots of positive lessons to be learnt from gaming. As well as helping to develop social skills, such as taking turns and collaborating, games can also nurture strategic and conceptual thinking. You just have to set some ground rules.

Screen time is a recurring concern. General advice is that up to an hour a day is acceptable, but a better measure for parents is how varied a child’s screen time and interactions are. Ensuring children engage in a variety of activities on their screens instigates regular breaks between sessions and can also create a context for families to play games together.

Lack of exercise is another perceived danger for gaming children. Certainly, youngsters need to engage in a range of activities that aren’t all sedentary or take place indoors. While some games with motion controls build in movement, it’s essential that any games with motion controls are played but limits online interactions and sharing as you deem appropriate. You can also disable in-app purchases so you don’t have any surprises in your next bill.

Most youngsters are keen to share and talk about the games they play – just ask them about their favourite Minecraft mob.

Parents often assume that children don’t want Mum and Dad interfering with their games, but most youngsters are keen to share and talk about the games they play – just ask your child about their favourite Minecraft mob.

Finally, it’s crucial that you set up parental controls on tablets and consoles before putting them in the hands of children. This not only specifies what PEGI age-rated games can be played but limits online interactions and sharing as you deem appropriate. You can also disable in-app purchases so you don’t have any surprises in your next bill.

Doing this as a family means that you can agree the settings together, and have a healthy conversation about which games you play, and for how long you play them.

While not all of these things are easy to achieve, it’s important to invest the time and effort. Make video games a family activity and most concerns will be resolved along the way. Children also get more out of these experiences by discussing and sharing them with the wider family.

Keeping gaming technology in shared family spaces, and ensuring tablets don’t end up in bedrooms is another way to stay involved in your child’s video game enjoyment.

Parents are often asked what games to buy their child. PEGI ratings can actually prevent children accessing inappropriate games. You can do this by setting age-appropriate parental controls on your child’s games consoles and devices.

To find out more about setting parental controls and for a full explanation of age ratings, go to our Tools and settings section, which begins on page 39.

**Family gaming tips**

1. **Play together**
   - Keep games consoles in communal rooms and play games together. There are a number of active and sports titles available for consoles that the whole family can join in with.

2. **Check PEGI ratings**
   - These statutory age ratings help parents identify appropriate games based on their content.

3. **Set up parental controls**
   - Ensure you have specified what content children can access with secure passwords and user settings.

4. **Regular breaks**
   - Screen time studies vary but all agree that regular breaks are essential. Take one every 45-60 minutes.

5. **Check play history**
   - See what your child plays, and for how long, by checking the user history on their profile. For example, on the 3DS this is in the Activity Log app.

A bit about PEGI ratings

Many video games in Europe are given a PEGI age rating. If you wouldn’t want your child to watch an 18 film, you probably wouldn’t want them to play an 18 game. PEGI ratings can actually prevent children accessing age-inappropriate games. You can do this by setting age-appropriate parental controls on your child’s games consoles and devices.

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The rise of the mummy and daddy blogger

Why did you start writing about your family online?
My wife started blogging a few years before me when she was on maternity leave with our first child. I joined in a couple of years later because I like creating things.

Did you have any concerns before you started blogging?
From the start we had rules when it came to blogging. We don’t use the children’s real names (my daughter’s name isn’t Fifi) and we try to use photographs that don’t identify the kids or our location. That’s only fair in a world where digital footprints are becoming more and more relevant.

Also, we don’t blog anything about the younger generation – if your children or their friends, or leave something up that might adversely affect them.

You can read Alex’s blog at daddacool.co.uk

Blog log
Mrs Meldrum
Aberdeenshire mum of two
Rebecca blogs and vlogs about pregnancy and parenting, shopping and meal plans. Nominated for Best Lifestyle Blog and Best Use of Video at 2016’s Mum and Dad (MAD) Blog Awards. mmmeldrum.com

Goblin Child
Amber Wilde lives with her partner, Kirsty, and their twin boys, in London. She blogs about her family, life as a gay parent, IVF, and her pregnancy with twin girls due this summer. Nominated for Best Pregnancy Blog at the 2016 MADs. goblinchild.co.uk

Yorkshire Dad
Karl is a 2D something dad of two boys under two. He writes about fatherhood, food, and fashion. Oh, and he lives in Yorkshire. yorkshiredad.co.uk

How do some vloggers and bloggers make money?
Charging people to mention their service or product on screen, or social media, such as Facebook or Twitter.

Selling adverts on their website or YouTube channel.

A vlogger can be paid every time somebody clicks on an ad displayed on one of their videos, or watches an ad for longer than 30 seconds.

Being paid to make personal appearances.

Where can I find help?
Keeping your child safe online can sometimes be a daunting prospect – but there are lots of tools available that can help.

Parental controls on your computer’s operating system
Windows 10 offers access controls, time limits and activity reports, including reports on the websites, apps and games your child uses. You can set up individual user accounts with different age-appropriate controls. Earlier versions also offer controls but the set-up process differs.

Mac OS X Parental controls on your Mac let you add a ‘managed user’ so you can limit your child’s access to age-appropriate websites and apps. Determine who they are allowed to contact via Mail, Messages and Game Center; set time limits and block use of the computer’s built-in camera.

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Digital Parenting
Safety controls on search engines

Setting SafeSearch on search engines means that the majority of sexually explicit videos and images will be filtered from search results, along with results that may link to explicit content. It isn’t 100% reliable but is useful if you have a young child.

Restricted Mode on YouTube performs a similar function to SafeSearch – and both can be locked if you have a Google+ account. But these are device-level settings – meaning you have to set them on each tablet, phone or computer your child uses.

Google’s SafeSearch setting enables you to filter out most adult content. If an inappropriate search result gets through, you can report it to them.

You can also find information about safety features on YouTube, Google Play, Chrome and other services in the Google Safety Centre.

Parental controls on your home internet

Most UK broadband providers offer free ‘whole-home parental controls’ which apply to any device that connects to your broadband via your home hub.

Sky has parental controls turned on by default, and you have to choose to turn them off. For the others, you can turn them on or off yourself. Contact the company for details of how to do this.

Bear in mind that these controls only work on your Wi-Fi network, not when you’re using 3G or 4G to get online. (See opposite for more about parental controls on mobile devices.)

Parental controls on your web browser

You can change the settings on the browser you use to access the internet. But if you use more than one browser, you’ll need to change the settings on each one.

Chrome

BT Parental Controls let you manage internet access on all devices that connect to your BT Home Hub and BT Wi-Fi Hotspots (for example, cafes and other public spaces).

Available for free, they include Strict, Moderate and Light filters, an option to restrict access to specific websites, and a Homework Time setting that blocks social media, gaming and homework chat sites.

To find out more: vodafone.uk/BT

TalkTalk

TalkTalk Home Safe lets you control internet access on all devices connected to your TalkTalk router (Wi-Fi and cable). The free package includes Kids Safe (which lets you block all or your choice from nine categories of website), Homework Time (which limits access to social media and gaming websites at certain times) and Virus Alerts (which avoids malicious websites).

To find out more: vodafone.uk/TalkTalk

Virgin Media

Virgin Media Web Safe works on any device connected to your home Wi-Fi. Provided free in broadband packages, it has two settings: Child Safe, which blocks websites that are unsuitable for younger users, and Virus Safe, which blocks websites that could lead to viruses and other security issues.

To find out more: vodafone.uk/VirginMedia

Parental controls on your child’s smartphone and tablet

Parental controls on tablets and smartphones can restrict specific sites and ‘adult content’. Mobile phone companies can filter content rated 18+ at network level. Contact your mobile phone company to check whether this filter is on or off.

Android

(e.g. LG, Samsung, Sony, HTC, Huawei, Motorola, Amazon)

The Restricted User feature lets you choose which apps and content your child can access, such as the camera and Chrome web browser.

To find out more: vodafone.uk/android

iOS

(e.g. iPhone and iPad)

You can enable Restrictions on your child’s iPhone or iPad and select ‘on’ or ‘off’ for features such as FaceTime, in-app purchases, and Safaris.

To find out more: vodafone.uk/apple-ios

Third-party parental controls

You may decide to use a dedicated parental control solution to block inappropriate content. If you already have a security suite on your computer, check whether it includes parental controls. You may not need a third-party one. Some are free, but most will cost you an annual subscription.

See our online version at vodafone.com/protect and scroll down to ‘multiple user tips’ for direct links to the parental support pages for each service we mention.
### Safety and privacy controls on social networks and apps

**Facebook**
- Minimum age: 13

**Snapchat**
- Minimum age: 13

**Twitter**
- Minimum age: 13

**Kik**
- Minimum age: 13 with parental permission; 18 without

**Whisper**
- Minimum age: 17

**WhatsApp**
- Minimum age: 16

**ASKfm**
- Minimum age: 13

**ooVoo**
- Minimum age: 13

**Periscope**
- Minimum age: 13

**ASKfm**
- Minimum age: 13

**Live streaming services**

Live streaming platforms let users chat to each other or broadcast videos of themselves in real-time. This can create privacy and safety issues for users of all ages, so check the settings and controls on each individual app. Here are three of the most popular streaming platforms:

**YouNow**
- Minimum age: 13 with parental permission; 18 without
- What can you set? Use a nickname; hide your location and block people.
- To report concerns: vodafone.uk/YouNowReport

**You Tube**
- YouTube's Restricted Mode helps to screen inappropriate content that you wouldn't want your child to see.
- To report concerns: vodafone.uk/YouTubeReport

**Skype**
- What can you set? You can hide your location set Private Broadcast, so only people you invite can watch your broadcasts; restrict chat to only the people you follow and choose not to share your broadcast on Twitter.
- To report concerns: vodafone.uk/SkypeReport

**Twitter**
- Minimum age: 13

**Snapchat**
- Minimum age: 13

**Digital Parenting**

Tools and settings

**Apple TV**
- Movie and TV channels online offer a huge range of content for all the family. Some use a combination of password and PIN to set restrictions on viewing, based on age ratings, and let you create separate profiles for child users so they can only view child-friendly content. Obviously, these restrictions only work if you keep the passwords and PINs secret.
- To find out more: vodafone.uk/AppleTV

**Sky TV**
- Using PIN-protected parental controls, you can restrict the programmes and channels your child can watch on Sky TV. In addition, the Sky Kids app contains thousands of children's shows and lets you filter them by age.
- To find out more: vodafone.uk/SkyTV

**Netflix**
- Netflix parental controls (Little Kids, Older Kids, Teens and Adults) to help you control what your child watches.
- To find out more: vodafone.uk/netflix

**Safe mode on video websites**

We have listed select features of all services. There may be other safety or privacy settings available.

- YouTube's Restricted Mode helps to screen inappropriate content that you wouldn't want your child to see.
- To report concerns: vodafone.uk/YouTubeReport

**App store restrictions**

You can set up parental controls on the App Store at vodafone.uk/apps and Google Play at vodafone.uk/googleplay to prevent your child downloading apps that are inappropriate for their age.
Did you know...

Premium-rate services such as competitions, voting in TV shows, donations to charity and directory enquiries calls can all add charges to your mobile phone bill. PhonepayPlus regulates all phone-paid services in the United Kingdom and they can help you track down unexpected charges on your mobile phone bill.

If you’ve spoken to your service provider and your network and you’re still not satisfied, you can contact PhonepayPlus on 0300 303 0020. They’re open Monday to Friday, 9.30am to 5pm, excluding bank holidays.

To opt out of a text service, send a new text saying “STOP” to the short code quoted in the message this is a five- or six-digit number that usually begins with 6, 7 or 8, or 5 in the Republic of Ireland. This should cost the same as a standard network message and should be included as part of any inclusive text and call packages, depending on your provider and the package you have.

For more information, visit the PhonepayPlus website phonepayplus.org.uk/for-consumers/unexpected-charge.

*Calls to 03 numbers should cost no more than geographic 01 or 02 calls and may be part of inclusive minutes, subject to your provider and your call package.

Reporting

Where can you report content that’s hateful or illegal, or inappropriate contact with an adult online?

If your child becomes upset or concerned about something they’ve seen online, it’s important to talk to them about what they encountered. Then, depending on the type of content they came into contact with, you have a number of options for reporting it.

If they experienced bullying or abusive comments, or saw something inappropriate such as pornography, racial hatred or images of violence, you can report it directly to the content provider – e.g. the website, service or app that hosted the images, videos or words and made them available to view.

Most social media platforms have simple processes in place for reporting inappropriate content. Try searching for ‘Report’, or look through their terms and conditions, or Help section. You will find links for reporting to the most popular social media sites on p42. Although there’s no guarantee that the content will be removed, sites should take your concerns seriously.

If your child stumbles across something illegal online, such as images of children being abused, there are established organisations who will deal with the report promptly.

Internet Watch Foundation (IWF)

Any images or videos that show child sexual abuse should be reported immediately to the IWF. Reports can be anonymous and confidential. You can report to the IWF via their website iwf.org.uk. (If you want to find out more about what happens when someone reports illegal content to the IWF, see below for our interview with a senior internet content analyst.)

ParentPort

ParentPort is run by the UK’s media regulators and allows you to make complaints about online content, wherever you find it. Their website is parentport.org.uk.

True Vision

True Vision is a fund-backed site that provides information about hate crime. You can report all forms of hate crime, including online content, via report-it.org.uk. This includes racial, homophobic, transphobic, religious or disability hate crime.

Mobile phone content

Report any unsuitable online content that your child sees on their mobile phone – films, still images or even just text – to your mobile operator. If the mobile operator requires further advice, the query may be passed to the British Board of Film Classification, whose website is bbfc.co.uk.

Inappropriate contact with an adult online

You should report it immediately if you know or suspect your child has been communicating with an adult online who has done or tried to do any of the following:

1 Talk about sex or other type of sexual activity
2 Asked them to do something that makes them feel uncomfortable, such as sending them an image or video in which they’re naked or partially clothed
3 Asked them to meet offline
4 Asked them to lie to their parents about their online relationship or tried to hide it.

Should your child experience any of these things, report it immediately to CEOP (formerly the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre), the child protection command of the National Crime Agency. You can make a report via their website: ceop.police.uk/CEOP-Report.

What happens when you report an inappropriate image online?

The Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) is a charity dedicated to supporting victims of child sexual abuse by taking reports of, analysing and removing the images of their abuse. They provide an anonymous and safe hotline to report online child sexual abuse imagery. Find out more at iwf.org.uk.

Ian, a senior internet content analyst at the Internet Watch Foundation, explains the process of reporting to them:

When should someone report something they’ve seen to the IWF?

Let’s say that you’re on your favourite social media site, or just surfing online. All of a sudden, you see an image or a video that you think shows a child being sexually abused. Instead of panicking and closing down the windows on your mobile device or computer, you need to report that image or video to us.

How do you make a report?

Reporting to the IWF is quick and easy. And you can remain completely anonymous. Copy the URL (web address) associated with the image or video in your browser. How to do this will vary on different devices and different browsers. A quick search online will show you.

To report something to the IWF, go to iwf.org.uk/report and follow the five-step process with clear instructions about what you’re reporting, and paste the URL into the correct field. Then just click submit.

What happens next?

Every single report made to us is considered seriously. And that’s why reports are so important to us – by choosing to report, you could be saving a real child from abuse.

How can Vodafone help?

Vodafone Content Control prevents access to online content and services rated 16+, such as violent games, adult content and gambling websites, on Vodafone’s mobile network.

Content Control is in place on most of the devices Vodafone offers, except BlackBerry devices, which use their own server.

The age-restricted content bar only works on Vodafone’s mobile network, not on Wi-Fi, and proof of age (16+) is required if you wish to remove it from your device.

To find out more: vodafone.co.uk/control

For more information about parental controls, check out the interactive guide on the Vodafone Digital Parenting website at vodafone.com/parents/tools.

Games consoles

Games consoles have built-in parental controls, which are usually accessible through the console’s home screen. These allow you to restrict users to viewing only age-appropriate games, based on the official PEGI ratings. To find out more about PEGI ratings, see the next page.

You can also disable in-app purchases for some games. You can find detailed instructions about setting up controls for the following consoles on the website of the Video Standards Council: Xbox One, Xbox 360, PS4, PS3, PS Vita, PSP Nintendo 3DS and Nintendo WiiU. Visit gamesratingauthority.org/rCa and click on Controls in the top navigation bar.

vodafone.com/parents
the Games Rating Authority explains why ratings matter

I t has been suggested that video game ratings – and also film and DVD ratings – are pretty pointless. The argument goes that, these days, most of us (including young people and children) can access virtually anything anywhere, anytime, courtesy of the internet, and without official hindrance.

While this may be true to a certain extent, the problem is that, while we welcome the freedom the internet offers us, that freedom brings with it a certain amount of responsibility – particularly for content providers. This is where organisations such as the Games Rating Authority (GRA) and ratings systems such as the Pan European Game Information (PEGI) can be used to help parents and young people make informed choices.

In the UK, all physical games are regulated by the GRA, which uses the PEGI rating system to ensure that they are suitable for the specified age group. While PEGI 3 and 7 ratings are not legally binding, PEGI 12, 16 and 18 are. It’s illegal to sell a game to someone younger than the specified age. Anyone who does so can be prosecuted.

The GRA also has active input into the International Age Rating Coalition (IARC), an organisation incorporating worldwide regulators to oversee online content such as apps and games. This enables online stores such as Google Play and Microsoft to display recognised PEGI ratings.

The GRA strongly believes in providing as much information as possible, so as well as the PEGI rating and content descriptor, it also provides Additional Consumer Information (ACI) – a detailed breakdown of why a game has the rating it does by describing the degree to which content issues such as violence, sex and bad language appear. This information is readily available via the GRA’s website: gamesratingauthority.org.

Through the PEGI system, the GRA is committed to providing independent, clear information, which is why we’ve launched a campaign to get schools on board in providing appropriate knowledge and information to parents and children alike.

In a world of modern and often complex entertainment media and systems, games ratings DO matter. Not only do they remove a lot of the guesswork and uncertainty involved in choosing the appropriate game, but they also ensure that the widest range of games are available for all to play safely without the risk of something frightening, worrying or unpleasant suddenly appearing on screen.

We hope you agree, and if you require further information about video game ratings then contact us at videostandards.org.uk.

Games ratings explained

Just like films and DVDs, many games have age ratings – and you can use parental controls to make sure your child only plays age-appropriate games. Gianni Zamo from the Games Rating Authority explains why ratings matter.
Just some of the great feedback we received after last year’s *Digital Parenting*

“It’s highlighted how important it is to have open and regular discussions with my teenage stepdaughter about internet safety.”

*Cass, mum and stepmum of two, Leeds*

“This practical and informative guide is greatly appreciated.”

*Michael, dad of one, Cumbernauld*

“*Digital Parenting* addressed some real-world issues the digital world was creating – thank you!”

*Naomi, mum of two, Leicester*

“Parents love it. Our head teacher loves it. I love it!”

*Tony, teacher, Hertfordshire*