Helping your child at home
Online Safety

How young is too young to start talking to my child about online safety?

Children love using technology and are learning to navigate websites, online games and consoles and touch screen technology like tablets and smartphones from a younger and younger age. It's never too early to start taking action to keep your child safe online.
As soon as your child starts talking about or exploring the online world, you should start conversations with them about their online activity and put support in place.

Research has found that children form 'digital habits' during early development (such as using devices after bedtime). Therefore, it is important for parents to support children to develop positive – and lasting – digital habits from an early age.

How can I support my child to use technology safely?
- **Put yourself in control**: Make use of parental controls available on your home broadband and any internet-enabled devices. You can find out how, at your broadband provider's website.
- **Supervise your child's use:** We recommend that you always supervise a young child when they are online as they may stumble across something which could worry, upset or confuse them. Since the internet can be accessed from a number of devices and many of these are portable, we would advise you to keep family and child devices in a busy part of your home e.g. the lounge or kitchen. This makes it easier for you to be involved in their technology use and you are right there to answer any questions and help them.
- **Search safely:** Use safe search engines such as swiggle.org.uk or kids-search.com. Safe search settings can also be activated on Google and other search engines as well as YouTube and it is possible to lock these so that they can't be inadvertently removed. You can find out more by visiting the Google Safety Centre. Once you've put all of these controls in place have a browse and search for a few things to see what your children might see, if they were to do the same. Remember that voice-activated search works really well now.
- **Set boundaries** It's never too early to start setting rules about when and for how long your child can use devices and start to introduce the subject of internet safety at the same time. Encourage children to use devices in a shared spaces like a lounge or kitchen. Make sure to keep other devices out of reach and use passwords so they cannot go online without asking you first. It's also a good idea to have tech-free mealtimes and not to allow children to have devices in their bedrooms at this age.
- **Explore together** Set your homepage to a child-friendly site such as CBeebies and give them a user account which only allows access to sites and apps you've chosen.
- **Help them learn through games** Games are a great way for young children to explore the internet and learn about the world around them. Choose a variety of safe and educational online games and apps to play with your child so that you'll feel

more comfortable with them exploring. Make use of websites and platforms designed specifically for pre-schoolers like CBeebies, YouTube Kids, Nick Jr, and use age ratings and reviews in the app store to check app suitability.

The Online Survival Kit

Padlock
Set strong passwords and set up passcode locks on all of your devices, especially your phone.

Permanent Marker
Everything that you put online is permanent, even if you hit the delete button after posting.

Toothbrush
Passwords and toothbrushes are very similar, you shouldn't share either!

Magnifying Glass
First impressions start with Google. What will show up when someone searches *you* (or your child in future years) on Google?

Toothpaste
Imagine the information that you are putting online is like the toothpaste coming out of the tube. Once it is out, it is almost impossible to get it all back in the tube!

Boundary Fence
Children need secure boundaries, remember to set parental controls on all devices they use.

Sieve
The amount of information on the internet is amazing! We need to be good at "sieving" out the bad stuff.

Mirror
Imagine having a mirror attached to your computer or device. If you looked in it and saw someone in the reflection, would they approve of what you (or your child) are doing or saying online?

Dog Lead
A lead gives a dog limits it can run to, in the same way set your child limits for how long they can go online and what they can go on.

Glasses
Children should use computers, tablets and phones in a place where you can see them so you know what they are playing or watching.

Plug
It is okay to unplug (or switch off) technology and it does children good to play with other toys or outside. You'll also both benefit if you ignore the messages on your phone whilst playing or talking with your child.

The following websites are a good resource

[Keeping children safe online | NSPCC](#)

[Keeping under fives safe online | Childnet](#)