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Staying safe online this summer

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With the summer holidays just around the corner, children are looking forward to having more free time.

For some, this will be spent using the internet to keep in touch with friends, catch up with the latest apps and online trends, and playing their favourite games.

For parents, it's a great chance to sit down with your children and visit their favourite sites and games together, so you can keep in touch with their online lives, and show them you are interested. It's a good opportunity to have positive conversations about the internet, so that if anything happened online that worried or upset your children later on, they would feel more confident in confiding in you. Our **conversation starters** are a great tool to help encourage an open dialogue with your child.

Keeping in touch online

During the summer holidays, young people may want to keep in touch with their friends through social networking sites or games. It's a good time to ask them about what sites they use, and remind them you have to be at least 13 to use most social networks.



Encourage your children to use the privacy tools on the services they use, so that the content they post is only available to people they know and trust in real life. To help your children set these up, we have a guide to the privacy settings of different sites [here](#). You can also download the **safety checklist's** for popular sites such as Instagram, Snapchat and Facebook.

Managing online friendships

The holidays are also a good opportunity to talk to your children about their online friendships and encourage them to be good online friends. Do this why not:

- Watch [Smartie the Penguin talk to Red and Murphy](#) about respecting difference online in our video we created for Safer Internet Day.
- Read Childnet's [Digiduck's Big Decision](#) and help educate children aged 3 - 7 about how to be a good friend online.
- Take the '[Play your Part Online](#)' quiz and help 9 – 13 year olds see if they make kind choices when faced with dilemmas online.

It's also important to remind young people that even if you have been chatting to a friendly person on a site or in a game for a while, if you only know them from being online they are still a stranger and you should not give out your personal details to them. If you are worried about an adult pressuring your child online, you should contact the Police and report it to [CEOP](#).

Sharing those holiday snaps

Some children may want to share photos and videos of what they are getting up to in their summer holidays online. Talk to your children about what types of photos are appropriate to share, and who they are okay to share with. Photos can hold clues that give away personal information. For example, if you share a selfie of you and friends, are there any landmarks or street signs that give away your location?

Finding a balance

Without the structure of the school day, children may spend a lot of their time on the internet. The internet is a fun place to be, and children may find it hard to manage their time between being online and offline. Talk to them about how important it is to spot the signs that they have been online for too long. For example, they might get tired eyes, a headache, interrupted sleep or mood swings. Setting a time limit can be helpful, but remember to set it before they start playing a game or chatting online, so they get less frustrated when it's time to stop. Offer some alternative activities to being online, and remind them the summer holidays are also a time to enjoy being outside and having a rest.

If you're looking for more information, Childnet have leaflets for parents on [Supporting young people online](#) and [Young people and social networking sites](#) available to download for free. These offer tips and guidance about issues such as privacy settings, reporting and frequently asked questions. The UK Safer Internet Centre's [Parents' Guide to Technology](#) introduces some of the most popular devices young people are using and highlights the safety tools available.

Enjoy the summer holidays!