



# **Internet Safety for Parents**

February 2019

# Internet Safety

A spokesperson for the NSPCC in Northern said:

"The constantly evolving digital world means a steady influx of new apps and games and can be hard for parents to keep track of. That's why it's important for parents to talk regularly with children about these apps and games and the potential risks they can be exposed to."

The NSPCC publishes advice and guidance for parents on discussing online safety with their children, as well as Net Aware - the UK's only parental guide to social media and gaming apps. Some of this information is summarised in this document.

Common signs to watch out for include children who:

- Become very secretive, especially about what they are doing online
- Are spending a lot of time on the internet and social media
- Are switching screens on their device when approached
- Are withdrawn or angry after using the internet or sending text messages
- Have lots of new phone numbers or email addresses on their devices

If adults are concerned or have any questions on how to approach the subject with their children, they can contact the NSPCC Helpline on 0808 800 5000 or **visit the NSPCC website**.

## Parental Controls

The 4 big internet providers in the UK – BT, Sky, TalkTalk and Virgin Media - provide their customers with free parental controls which can be activated at any time by contacting them or via your online accounts.

Alternatively there are a range of software packages available. The following websites provide information on protecting your family online and available software packages:

<https://uk.pcmag.com/parental-control-monitoring/67305/the-best-parental-control-software>

<https://www.internetmatters.org/parental-controls/smartphones-and-other-devices/>

Don't forget if your child uses their device away from home, then they'll be able to connect to public WiFi which might not have the same settings.

If your child accesses the internet through 3G or 4G rather than using WiFi then they won't be subject to the parental controls.

## Remember that filtering is only part of the solution

No filter or parental controls tool is 100% effective, and many of the risks that young people face online are because of their own and other's behaviour. It is therefore important to talk to your children about staying safe online and make sure they know that they can turn to you if they get into any difficulty.

## Devices that connect to your home internet

In addition to content filtering offered by your internet provider, many devices such as games consoles, smartphones and tablets have their own parental controls, for example to limit spending or restrict access to apps based on age rating. Likewise, many web browsers have built-in tools and features to help you control the kinds of content users can view.

## Staying safe when out and about

If children are taking their devices out of the home, it's worth bearing in mind that they could connect to public wifi, for example, in a shop, cafe or restaurant. Look out for the Friendly WiFi symbol:



which shows that the wifi has filters in place to limit access to pornographic content.

## Settings on Apps and Game Consoles

- **TV and music settings** – Smart TVs and services like Netflix, iTunes, BBC iPlayer and YouTube have settings that allow you to control who sees what.
- **Search Engines** – Make sure the content that your child sees online is age appropriate by using the controls available in search engines like Google and Bing. You can set up filters like Google SafeSearch or use child-friendly search engines like Swiggle and Safe Search Uk.
- **Snapchat** – For ages 13+. This app will share the user's location unless the 'ghost mode' is enabled. You can enable this in Settings.
- **Instagram** – For ages 13+. Instagram has developed a filter that will block certain offensive comments on posts and in live video. All other comments will appear as they normally do and you can still report comments, delete comments or turn them off. To access it click the Settings Menu from the Profile, Privacy and Security, Comment Controls.
- **Facebook** – For ages 13+. Look at the privacy settings on Facebook accounts by clicking on Settings and Privacy, Privacy Shortcuts.
- **Twitter** – For ages 13+. Twitter allows you to mute words to help filter inappropriate content from your timeline and notifications. Tap Settings, view Content Preferences, Muted then Muted Words and simply add the words you would like to block.
- **Whatsapp** – For ages 16+. You can hide personal information on Whatsapp. Features like 'Last seen', 'Profile photo', 'About', 'Status' and 'Live location' can be hidden via Settings, Account, Privacy. There are additional settings under Security.
- **YouTube** – To implement the Restricted Mode, go to YouTube.com and click on the Settings symbol, change Restricted Mode to 'On'. To Lock Restricted Mode scroll down to Settings on the left-hand side, scroll down to the bottom of the page and along the bottom click on 'Restricted Mode: On', then 'On' followed by 'Save'.
- **Game Consoles** – Like with Mobiles and Tablets, the controls on your games console help you manage what your child can and can't do. Some devices allow you to set up different profiles for each family member, deactivate the internet, turn off chat functions to stop your child from talking to stranger.

It's important to note that new challenges are arising on the internet all the time. We have created this guide to raise awareness of the issue and offer advice on helping parents to talk to their children about making safer decisions online. See also our '7 conversation starters' guide for more tips on better communication with your child.



Momo is a sinister 'challenge' that has been around for some time. It has recently resurfaced and once again has come to the attention of schools and children across the country. Dubbed the 'suicide killer game', Momo has been heavily linked with apps such as Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, and most recently (and most worryingly)... YouTube Kids. The scary doll-like figure reportedly sends graphic violent images, and asks users to partake in dangerous challenges like waking up at random hours and has even been associated with self-harm. It has been reported that the 'Momo' figure was originally created as a sculpture and featured in an art gallery in Tokyo and unrelated to the 'Momo' challenge we are hearing about in the media.



## What parents need to know about

# MOMO

### CHILDREN'S VIDEOS BEING 'HIJACKED'

There have been recent reports that some seemingly innocent videos on YouTube and YouTube Kids (such as 'surprise eggs', unboxing videos and Minecraft videos) have been edited by unknown sources to include violence provoking and/or other inappropriate content. Even though YouTube monitor and remove videos that include inappropriate content, clips can be uploaded and viewed thousands of times before they get reported and removed. As a parent, it's difficult to spot these videos as the harmful content doesn't appear until partway through the video.

### DISTRESSING FOR CHILDREN

Popular YouTubers and other accounts have been uploading reaction videos, showing their experience of the MOMO challenge. Some of the videos include a disclosure message warning that the content may be "inappropriate or offensive to some audiences" and that "viewer discretion is advised" but these videos are still easily accessed by clicking 'I understand and wish to proceed'. The image of the 'Momo' character can be deeply distressing to children and young people and it's important to note that it may slip through parental settings and filters.

### SUGGESTED VIDEOS ON YOUTUBE

Video apps such as YouTube include an 'up next' feature which automatically starts playing another video based on the video just watched. Due to YouTube's algorithm, users are shown 'suggested videos' that they may be interested in. The thumbnails used on suggested videos are purposefully created in a way to encourage viewers to click them. During our research, we found that when watching one Momo related video, we were shown countless other Momo themed videos and other scary content which would be age-inappropriate for children under 18.



**National  
Online  
Safety**

## Top Tips for Parents

### TELL THEM IT'S NOT REAL

Just like any urban legend or horror story, the concept can be quite frightening and distressing for young people. Whilst this may seem obvious, it's important for you to reiterate to your child that Momo is not a real person and cannot directly harm them! Also, tell your child to not go openly searching for this content online as it may only cause more distress.

### BE PRESENT

It's important for you, as a parent or carer, to be present while your children are online. This will give you a greater understanding of what they are doing on their devices, as well as providing you with the opportunity to discuss, support and stop certain activities that your child may be involved in. As the nature of each task become progressively worse it's also important to recognise any changes in your child's behaviour.

### TALK REGULARLY WITH YOUR CHILD

As well as monitoring your child's activity, it's important for you discuss it with them too. Not only will this give you an understanding of their online actions, but those honest and frequent conversations will encourage your child to feel confident to discuss issues and concerns they may have related to the online world.

### DEVICE SETTINGS & PARENTAL CONTROLS

Ensure that you set up parental controls for your devices at home. This will help to restrict the types of content that your child can view, as well as help you to monitor their activity. In addition to this, it's vital that you are aware of your device and account settings to ensure your child's utmost safety. For example, on YouTube you can turn off 'suggested auto-play' on videos to stop your child from viewing content that they have not directly selected.

### PEER PRESSURE

Trends and viral challenges can be tempting for children to take part in; no matter how dangerous or scary they seem. Make sure you talk to your child about how they shouldn't succumb to peer pressure and do anything they are not comfortable with, online or offline. If they are unsure, encourage them to talk to you or another trusted adult.

### REAL OR HOAX?

As a parent it is natural to feel worried about certain things you see online that may be harmful to your child. However, not everything you see online is true. Check the validity of the source and be mindful of what you share as it may only cause more worry.

### REPORT & BLOCK

You can't always rely on parental controls to block distressing or harmful material. People find ways around a platform's algorithm in order to share and promote this type of material. Due to this, we advise that you flag and report any material you deem to be inappropriate or harmful as soon as you come across it. You should also block the account/content to prevent your child from viewing it. Also encourage your child to record/screenshot any content they feel could be malicious to provide evidence in order to escalate the issue to the appropriate channels.

### FURTHER SUPPORT

Speak to the safeguarding lead within your child's school should you have any concerns regarding your child's online activity or malicious content that could affect them.

If your child sees something distressing, it is important that they know where to go to seek help and who their trusted adults are. They could also contact Childline where a trained counsellor will listen to anything that's worrying them.

The Childline phone number is  
0800 1111.



SOURCES:  
<https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/world-news/sick-videos-youtube-youtube-kids-14052196>  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk>  
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-47359623>