



# Online Safety Newsletter

## Tips for talking about cyberbullying

Internet Matters has created a helpful guide with advice on how to talk to your child about cyberbullying, tailored to different age groups. The guidance is organised into four key sections:

1. **Before you start the conversation** – preparing yourself and setting the right tone.
2. **What to talk about** – including how to recognise and deal with cyberbullying.
3. **What to do next** – practical steps to take if your child experiences or witnesses online bullying.
4. **Where to find further help** – [Cyberbullying conversation starter guide](#) | [Internet Matters](#)

## Social Media Influencers

### What is an Influencer?

An *influencer* is someone who has a large following on social media platforms such as **YouTube, Instagram, or TikTok**.

Influencers often share their opinions, experiences, and ideas with their followers. Many are paid to promote or advertise products, which means the content they share can be designed to encourage people to buy something.



### What Should I Be Concerned About?

While many influencers create positive and entertaining content, some share material that can be **misleading, inappropriate, or harmful** — for example, promoting **sexist, racist, or unrealistic views**. Because influencers can seem trustworthy, their opinions are sometimes mistaken for facts.

Encourage your child to:

- Think critically about what they see online.
- Fact-check information before believing or sharing it.
- Talk to you if they come across something that makes them uncomfortable.

### What We See on Social Media

The posts and videos we see online are shaped by **algorithms** — systems that suggest content based on what we've previously liked or watched. While this can make social media feel more personal, it can also create an **echo chamber**, where your child only sees one type of viewpoint. This can make it harder to see a balanced picture of the world. Find out more here: [What are social media algorithms? Advice for parents and carers](#) | [Childnet](#)

### How Can I Help My Child?

- **Talk regularly** about who they follow and what they enjoy watching.
- **Check influencers together** if you're unsure about their content.
- **Encourage balance** — follow a variety of accounts that share different ideas.
- **Model good habits** by showing your own critical thinking when using social media.

For more advice on supporting your child online, visit: [Topic: Online Safety and Social Media](#) | [SWGfL](#)

## WhatsApp: What Parents Need to Know

Does your child play games online? Consider the point below to help create a safer online environment for your child.

### Age Requirements:

Children must be at least **13 years old** to use WhatsApp.



### Common Concerns:

Schools often hear about children using WhatsApp inappropriately - for example:

- Sharing images to embarrass others
- Sending unkind or hurtful messages
- Spreading rumours
- Excluding others from group chats

Because WhatsApp does **not include parental controls**, it's important to consider whether it's really suitable for your child. Ask yourself:

- Does my child have the maturity to recognise and respond appropriately to bullying?
- Can they resist peer pressure and avoid joining in with harmful online behaviour?

If your child does use WhatsApp, make sure to have **regular, open conversations** about how they use it. Talk about who they message, what they share, and how their words or actions might make others feel. It's also helpful to **model positive digital behaviour** yourself - children often copy what they see adults do online.

### Key Things To Be Aware Of:

#### Group Chats:

Anyone in a group chat - even those who aren't saved as contacts - can see all the messages shared there. If your child is added to a group that includes someone they have previously blocked, that person will still be able to read and send messages within the group.

**Tip:** Check your child's group privacy settings and show them how to leave chats or report inappropriate behaviour.

Find out more here: [How to stay safe in groups on WhatsApp](#) | [WhatsApp Help Center](#)

### Other Safety Considerations:

- **Inappropriate content:** Children may be exposed to material that is not age-appropriate.
- **Location sharing:** Discuss when (or if) it's ever appropriate to share their live location.
- **Chat lock / secret code:** WhatsApp allows users to lock chats or hide them using a secret code — be aware of this feature.
- **Blocking and reporting:** Teach your child how to block and report users if they feel uncomfortable. Learn more here: [How to block and report someone](#) | [WhatsApp Help Center](#)

### Further Information:

For more detailed advice, visit Internet Matters' parent guide: [What is WhatsApp? A safety guide for parents](#) | [Internet Matters](#)

## YouTube: What Parents Need to Know

**Age Requirements:** YouTube is intended for users **aged 13 and over**, but younger children can access it with **parental or guardian consent**. When giving your child access, you can choose from different options depending on their age:

- **YouTube Kids** – A separate app with a curated selection of videos. You can choose an age category: *Preschool* (ages 4 and under), *Younger* (ages 5–8), or *Older* (ages 9–12)
- **Supervised Accounts** – A parent-managed version of YouTube that lets you control which content your child can access. You can select from:
  - *Explore* – Generally for viewers aged 9+
  - *Explore More* – Generally for viewers aged 13+
  - *Most of YouTube* – Includes almost everything except videos marked 18+ and other content that may not be suitable for supervised users

Google provides a helpful guide comparing **YouTube Kids** and **Supervised Accounts** to help you decide which is best for your child: [Understand your choices as a family - YouTube Help](#)

### My Child Wants to Be a YouTuber

Many children dream of starting their own YouTube channel. If your child wants to post content, it's important they understand:

- **What personal information to keep private**
- **How to respond to negative or harmful comments**



YouTube has created safety tips specifically for teens when posting content: [Tips & resources for teens - YouTube Help](#)

When uploading videos, there are different visibility settings:

1. **Public** – Anyone can view the video
2. **Private** – Only users you select can view the video
3. **Unlisted** – Only people with the link can view the video

More information:  
[Parent Zone – YouTube Safety Advice](#)

### Benefits and Risks of a YouTube Channel

Before allowing your child to start a channel, it's helpful to **review the benefits and potential risks**. Consider privacy, online comments, and screen time. This article discusses pros and cons and provides recommendations to help reduce risks: [Should Your Kid Become a YouTuber? Pros and Cons for Parents](#)

## Smartphone Free Childhood

**Smartphone Free Childhood** is a **parent-led movement** that aims to protect children from the potential risks of having smartphones too early.

The idea is simple — parents and carers within a class or community **agree together** to delay giving their children smartphones until a certain age. By making this a shared commitment, it helps to **reduce peer pressure** and makes it easier for families to set healthy digital boundaries.

### Are you ready to join the movement?

Find out more and access helpful resources here: [Smartphone Free Childhood](#)

## Positively Online: Supporting Your Child's Digital Wellbeing

The NSPCC has published **six practical tips** to help families improve their online wellbeing. Their guidance also includes a **helpful conversation guide** so you can talk to your child about what they do online, and a **fun quiz** that you can play together to explore safe and positive online habits.

Find out more and access the resources here: [Supporting children's wellbeing online](#)



## Understanding Age Ratings: Keeping Your Child Safe Online

Age ratings exist to help **protect children** by showing whether games, apps, films, or social media platforms are suitable for their age. It's always worth taking a moment to **check the age rating** of what your child is accessing online.

Most popular apps and games have age restrictions for good reason — they may include communication features, in-app purchases, or content that isn't appropriate for younger users. The **PEGI (Pan European Game Information)** system also provides **content descriptors**, which highlight themes such as violence, fear, or bad language, helping you make informed decisions about what's suitable.

### What Else Should I Review?

While age ratings offer useful guidance, they don't always tell the whole story. It's important to **review the content yourself** to decide whether it's appropriate for your child. Ask questions like:

- Does it allow communication with strangers or other players?
- Are there in-app or in-game purchases?
- Does the content promote healthy behaviour and attitudes?

By checking these details, you can decide whether extra **parental controls** or supervision might be needed.

### What Else Can I Do?

- **Talk to your child** about why age ratings matter and how they help keep them safe.
- **Go online together** to see what your child is watching, playing, or using.
- **Set up parental controls** on your broadband, devices, and apps to help block inappropriate content.
- **Check in regularly** about your child's online activities, and remind them they can always talk to you or another trusted adult if something worries them.

Find out more about how age ratings can help your family here: [How Age Ratings Help Families](#)

