



Online Safety Newsletter

Safer Internet Day 2026 - 10th February 2026 -

This year's theme is:

Smart tech, safe choices – Exploring the safe and responsible use of AI

Everyone's talking about AI, and with many children and young people hearing about and using AI online, it's important they have the skills and confidence to make safe choices when they are using smart technology.

This Safer Internet Day we are exploring the impact of AI on all of our lives, looking at how AI can be used for good, and giving advice and guidance that empowers people to use AI safely and responsibly.

What is AI?

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is technology that allows computers or machines to learn and carry out tasks in ways that can seem human. AI is becoming increasingly common in everyday life. Examples include:

- Virtual assistants such as **Alexa** and **Siri**
- Chatbots like **ChatGPT** and **My AI on Snapchat**

Potential risks to be aware of

While AI can be helpful, there are some risks that parents should understand:

- **AI chat apps:** Searching for "AI chat" in app stores shows a wide range of apps, many of which are rated **17+** and are not suitable for children.
- **Image manipulation:** Some AI tools can be used to edit or alter images in harmful ways, including creating images that raise serious safeguarding and privacy concerns.
- **Deepfakes:** AI can be used to create realistic but fake videos or images, which may be used to spread misinformation or cause harm.

The Child Rescue Coalition provides more detailed information about these risks here: [The Dark Side of AI: Risks to Children - Child Rescue Coalition](#)

How can parents help keep children safe?

To support your child's online safety:

- Help develop their **digital literacy** by talking about AI and why it's important to question and check what they see online
- Use **parental controls** on devices, apps and home broadband where possible
- Keep communication open and remind your child to talk to you or another trusted adult if anything online makes them feel worried or uncomfortable

Further information and support

Useful guidance for parents is available from:

- **NSPCC:** <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/about-us/news-opinion/2025/artificial-intelligence-safety-tips-for-parents>
- **Internet Matters:** <https://www.internetmatters.org/resources/parent-guide-to-artificial-intelligence-ai-tools/>

A.I.—Top Tips for Parents and Carers

AI technology is becoming a normal part of everyday life. This Safer Internet Day, we want to start a conversation about how children and families can use it safely and responsibly. Below are some practical tips to help keep your family safe online.

Spend time online together:

The internet offers fantastic opportunities for learning, creativity and entertainment. Taking time to go online with your child can help you understand how they use technology and what they enjoy. Talk openly about both the positives and potential risks of being online, and share your own experiences too. Regular conversations – including discussing things seen in the news – help children feel confident about coming to you if they are worried or unsure about something they've seen online.

Understand how AI is being used:

AI is now built into many everyday tools, including search engines, voice assistants, games, filters and photo-editing apps. Some content online may be created or influenced by AI, and it's helpful for children to learn how to recognise this. While AI can make tasks easier and more fun, it may also collect data or share inaccurate information. Encourage your child to think carefully about how and when they use these tools.

Talk about safe and responsible use:

Using technology responsibly means thinking about how it affects ourselves and others. Encourage your child to reflect on questions such as:

- How does using this app or tool make me feel?
- Am I being kind and respectful to others online?
- Is this helping me learn or develop new skills?
- How might this affect me now and in the future?

These conversations help children build good digital habits that will stay with them as they grow.

Children often have exciting ideas about how they use AI, but they may also have worries – for example about deepfakes, the environment or future jobs. You don't need to have all the answers. Using free, trusted resources (such as those shared for Safer Internet Day) can help you stay informed and support open discussions with your child. Learning together can make new technology feel less overwhelming.

Know where to get help:

Like all technology, AI can sometimes be misused. Many AI tools and social media platforms include reporting features for harmful or inappropriate content. Some AI-generated content may also break the law. If you come across illegal images involving children, including AI-generated images, these should be reported to the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) and the platform involved. Images created using AI that target adults can be reported to Stop NCII, and images involving under-18s can be reported through Report Remove or Take It Down.

If something doesn't feel right, trust your instincts and seek help – support is available.

[Get advice for using artificial intelligence safely | Internet Matters](#)



Age Restrictions and AI tools: what parents should know

Many generative AI (Gen AI) tools are easy to access and often have few age restrictions in place. Some are built directly into web browsers, search engines or mobile devices and may respond automatically, meaning children can encounter AI-generated content without actively seeking it out.

Some platforms do have age limits. For example, ChatGPT and other OpenAI tools require users to create an account and confirm they are over the age of 13. However, it is important for parents to be aware that these checks are usually self-declared and do not involve robust age verification.

Other apps that include AI features follow the age guidelines of their platform. For instance, Snapchat includes an AI tool called "My AI" and has a minimum age requirement of 13 for users.

Research by Common Sense Media has raised serious concerns about "social AI companions" such as Replika. Their findings suggest these tools pose unacceptable risks for children and young people and should not be used by anyone under 18. Parents may wish to explore Common Sense Media's AI risk assessments for more detailed guidance. [AI Risk Assessments | Common Sense Media](#)

As always, talking openly with your child about the apps and tools they use, and checking age ratings and settings regularly, can help ensure they use technology safely and appropriately.

Are children using AI?

The Ofcom Children's Media Literacy Report 2025 states "Half of children say they use artificial intelligence (AI) tools, an increase since last year. And more children are using these tools for learning and/or schoolwork: Half (50%) of 8- 17s say they have used AI, up from 46% last year. This increase has been primarily driven by 13-15s. AI users are now more likely than last year to say that they use these tools either 'to learn' or 'for school'."

Image and information taken from: [Children's Media Literacy Report 2025](#)

What is Generative AI (gen AI)?

Generative AI (often called *Gen AI*) is a type of technology that can create new content, such as text, images and videos, by learning from large amounts of existing data. Because it can produce content that looks and sounds very human, it is becoming increasingly popular with children and young people for learning, creativity and hobbies.

Potential Risks

Misinformation and false content

Gen AI can sometimes produce information that sounds convincing but is not accurate. This can be particularly risky if children use AI for homework or research without checking facts from reliable sources.

Bias and ethical concerns

AI tools do not understand truth or fairness. They rely on the data they have been trained on, which means they may unintentionally produce biased, misleading or inappropriate information. This could give children a one-sided or inaccurate view of certain topics.

Over-reliance on AI

There is a risk that children and young people may become too dependent on AI tools for thinking, writing or creating. Over time, this can limit the development of important skills such as creativity, problem-solving and critical thinking.

Talking regularly with your child about how they use AI, encouraging them to question information, and supporting independent thinking can help them use these tools safely and responsibly.

ChatGPT for children: safeaikids

[safeai4kids](#) | [AI learning tools for children](#)

Parents and carers naturally want their children to explore, ask questions and learn in spaces that are safe and age-appropriate.

SafeAI4Kids is a child-friendly version of ChatGPT that has been designed for children and young people aged **5–18**. The platform aims to support learning aligned with the **UK curriculum**, encourage independent thinking and curiosity, and help children develop understanding rather than simply providing direct answers.

The service also offers parental oversight, allowing adults to see how their child is using AI tools. SafeAI4Kids is presented as a secure and engaging option for families who wish to introduce AI in a controlled and supportive way as children begin to navigate an increasingly AI-driven world. There is a monthly subscription option with a cost of £4.99.



AI Chatbots and Digital Companions

Searching for "AI chat" in app stores shows just how many AI chatbots and digital companion apps are now available. Many of these apps have higher age ratings, often **18+**, which highlights the importance of talking with children about what they are accessing and the potential risks involved. Children may already be aware of platforms such as **Character.AI (18+)** or **My AI on Snapchat (13+)**.

What should parents be aware of?

AI chatbots and companion apps can present several risks, including:

- Children becoming overly reliant on AI instead of developing real-life friendships or independent problem-solving skills
- Exposure to content that may not be suitable for their age
- Privacy and data protection concerns
- Inaccurate or biased information being presented as fact

How can parents help?

- Check the age ratings of apps and websites your child uses
- Talk openly about AI chatbots and why they may want to use them
- Use parental controls on devices, apps and broadband where available
- Keep regular conversations going and remind your child to speak to a trusted adult if anything online worries them.

Further information:

[AI chatbots and companions – risks to children and young people](#) | [eSafety Commissioner](#)

