

Online Safety Newsletter: April 2019

Instagram

Children should be over 13 years of age to access Instagram. According to the latest NSPCC research, there has been a 200% rise in recorded instances in the use of Instagram to target and abuse children in an 18 month period.

If your child does use Instagram, talk to them about how they can enhance the privacy of their account. For example, go to account settings:

- Set account to private
- Story control – either set allow message replies from ‘followers you follow back’ or turn off
- Don’t allow sharing of your photos and videos from your story
- Comment Controls – select hide offensive comments

Talk to your child about the ‘Search & Explore Tab’ and who is your child following. There are accounts set up on Instagram that can include graphic content and they may come across inappropriate content and language.

Ensure your child knows how to report posts and people as well as how to unfollow and block people, delete and turn off comments. More information can be found here:

<https://wellbeing.instagram.com/safety>. You are also able to report photos, videos, comments or profiles that are bullying or harassing through Instagram’s help centre.

Make sure your child understands that there is a risk that content they upload can never be removed (other users can screenshot it for example) so they must only share content that they are comfortable with you seeing. Ensure that they know that they should talk to you or another trusted adult if they have any concerns.



Online Challenges

There are lots of challenges that circulate across the Internet, some funny (do you remember the mannequin challenge?) but some can be frightening. We won’t mention the name of the most recent one (which some have suggested was now a hoax).

With challenges, the consensus is not to introduce your child to them by asking them about them so start with a general chat about being online. Ensure your child knows that if they do see anything they don’t like online then they should talk to you or another trusted adult.

It is so important to have regular chats with your child about their online life.

Further information:
<https://www.commonsensemedia.org/blog/viral-youtube-challenges-internet-stunts-popular-with-kids>

Does your child have a Playstation?

Trend Micro Kids Safety is a paid for subscription (30 day free trial available) that can prevent the internet browser from opening websites unsuitable for children. It will block websites that fall into the categories: adult (sexual), alcohol, tobacco, illegal drugs, crime, cults, gambling and racism. Further information:

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<https://esupport.trendmicro.com/en-us/home/pages/technical-support/ps3-ps4-security/home.aspx>

7 Cups – need somebody to talk to?

This service is available for 13-17 years old and gives teens the opportunity to chat online to somebody confidentially whenever they need to or to join teen community forums and chat rooms.

<https://www.7cups.com/>

What is 'sextortion'?

Sextortion is where a person is blackmailed online to pay a sum of money to prevent sexual information or images/videos of themselves being shared online.

Further information

<https://parentinfo.org/article/what-parents-need-to-know-about-the-online-blackmail-known-as-sextortion>

Apex Legends – PEGI Rating 16+

Apex Legends does have similarities to Fortnite but it is important to know that it has been rated by PEGI as 16+. This means children under the age of 16 should not play this game. "This game has received a PEGI 16 because it features sustained depictions of violence towards human characters and moderate violence." (Source: <https://pegi.info/>) *PEGI does not take into consideration the chat features.*

Apex Legends was released in February and has already hit over 50 million players worldwide. This is another multiplayer battle royale style video game whereby teams of 3 players compete against other teams to be the last team standing. It is available on Playstation 4, Xbox One and Origin for PC.

In-Game Currency

Whilst the game is free to play, players are able to make in-game purchases using 'Apex Coins'. These packs range from £7.99 to £79.99! They can be used to advance play so children may wish to purchase them. We'd recommend password protecting your account and/or setting up a child account to ensure your child can't make any purchases without your consent.

Chat

As players work in teams of 3, your child may be in a team with people they don't know and potentially at risk from explicit language or harassment.

Reporting Players

As with all online games, you must always ensure that your child understands how to report abusive players. Full instructions are available here:

<https://help.ea.com/uk/apex-legends/apex-legends/?category=report-concerns-or-harassment>

Further information

- <https://www.common sense media.org/blog/parents-ultimate-guide-to-apex-legends>
- <https://www.net-aware.org.uk/news/apex-legends-what-you-need-know/>

We would recommend that the age restrictions set by this game are adhered to. Chat to your child and explain why this game is not appropriate for them.

Online Pornography

In the UK around 78% of parents and grandparents were concerned of their child's exposure to pornography and sexually explicit material when using the internet.

(Source: <https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/blog/online-pornography-uk-parents-most-widely-shared-worry>)

“By the age of 15 children are more likely than not to have been exposed to online pornography so, talking to them early on can equip them with the right coping strategies to deal with it.”

(Source: https://www.internetmatters.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/OnlinePornParentsGuide-17Jan_Final.pdf)

It is important to have regular chats with your child so they understand that pornography generally doesn't show what sex is like in real life and that they understand the importance of consent. Internet Matters have produced this great document which contains advice on what to talk about based on your child's age. https://www.internetmatters.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/OnlinePornParentsGuide-17Jan_Final.pdf

This document also recommends that you use parental controls to block adult content and for mobile phones, contact their network provider to apply a Content Lock. In addition, you can set filters on some search engines such as Google.

This document also contains four key messages that you need to communicate with your child and language you could use when you're talking about porn with them: https://amaze.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/KeyMessageScripts_Porn.pdf

Does your child have a Nintendo Switch?

Did you know that you can download an app to give you additional parental features and settings? This article shows you how to do this as well as how to use the existing parental controls:

<https://www.commonsemmedia.org/blog/parental-controls-nintendo-switch>

What's App – group messaging

You must be at least 16 years old to register for and use WhatsApp.

WhatsApp is a free messaging app that allows you to send messages and videos. WhatsApp has a Group chat function which allows up to 256 people to be added. Groups are set up by one person (who is the admin) and everybody in the group, even if they're not one of your child's phone contacts will be able to see all messages sent. If your child is added to a group with someone they have previously blocked, that person can still see their messages and send them messages through the group.

WhatsApp has been used in instances of online bullying, for example sending nasty messages or sharing images of other children without their permission in order to embarrass them.

WhatsApp does offer the ability to block and report contacts.



Sexting and Nude Selfies

Sexting is sending an explicit image or video of yourself to somebody else. It can also be called 'pic for pic' or 'nude selfies'.

The risks

Once you send an image/video you no longer have control of it, it could be posted online or shared with others. Remember that even if you use a webcam or an app like SnapChat to share it, somebody could take a screenshot of it. Sexting can also leave you exposed to potential bullying and blackmail.

Start a conversation

We understand that some conversations can be awkward but it's important to chat to your child about the potential risks of sharing explicit images, the law and where they can get help. Perhaps start the conversation by relating it to something in the news. Ensure that they know they can talk to you if they need to.

The law

Whilst sexting can be seen by teenagers as harmless fun it is actually **illegal** to create or share an explicit image, even when the person doing so is a child themselves. It's important to remember that whilst the age of consent is 16, the age in relation to explicit images is 18. **You are breaking the law if you:**

- **take** an explicit photo or video of yourself or a friend.
- **share** an explicit image or video of a child.
- **possess, download or store** an explicit image or video of a child.

If under-18s are found to be engaging in sexting, then whilst the matter will be investigated, police can choose to record that a crime has been committed but that taking formal action isn't in the public interest.

Need help?

If you need help in getting a sexual image of your child removed from the internet, you can get in contact with Childline or the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF).

Further information

There's lots more advice available online about sexting, for example what to do if you get asked to send a nude selfie or what to do if your child has been affected by this. Here are some additional links for further guidance.

- <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/sexting/>
- <https://www.esafety.gov.au/education-resources/iparent/online-risks/sexting> (Office of the eSafety Commissioner website for Australia - please note the law section is not applicable to the UK)
- <https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/online-mobile-safety/sexting/>

5 Tools for Using Your Phone Less

Commonsense Media have created this short video and article showing you some of the tools available on the most popular platforms to help you use your phone less:

<https://www.commonsensemedia.org/blog/use-your-phone-less-with-tools-from-apple-google-snapchat-and-more>