

Parental Controls & Safety Settings Guide



Created in partnership with online
safety experts **Digital Awareness UK**



vodafone

We all want children to be able to enjoy exploring the internet safely. Parental controls and safety settings can help parents with this by giving them the ability to put limits on what their child can do and see when they're on screens.

We've developed [Digital Parenting Pro](#), one of the UK's largest parental controls and safety settings resources which helps parents discover what settings are available across some of the most popular apps, games and devices.

And our Parental controls & safety settings checklist gives parents 5 key questions to ask themselves before using these features.

Parental controls & safety settings checklist

1. Is my child aware of how to use the internet safely?

Talking regularly to your child about some of the risks of being online can help them understand why parental controls and safety settings will help keep them safe.

There is lots of information about some of the risks and opportunities children face online at [Vodafone's Digital Parenting website](#) to help guide these conversations.

2. Have we talked about setting boundaries as a family?

Sitting down as a family to agree on how technology should be used to help ensure everyone has a positive experience online can be incredibly helpful.

This conversation could also cover how parental controls and safety settings will be used to help set boundaries. For example, setting screen time limits on devices will can family members to switch off before bedtime and support healthy sleeping habits.

3. Am I using parental controls and safety settings in all the right places?

(see most popular below)

- Broadband service provider e.g. Vodafone Broadband
- Tablet or smartphone e.g. iPhone
- Games console e.g. Xbox
- Game e.g. Minecraft
- Social media app e.g. TikTok
- Search engine e.g. Google
- Video streaming service e.g. Netflix

4. Do I know what apps or games are age-appropriate for my child?

Check the age rating for games by looking for their **PEGI rating**. With apps such as social media platforms, you can find out the age rating in their community guidelines.

It can also be helpful to research the apps or games your child wants to use to decide for yourself if they are age-appropriate.

The [Digital Parenting Pro resource](#) can help you find out what the age restrictions are for some of the most popular apps, games and devices.

5. Am I having the right conversations with my child about being safe online?

By talking to your child about the benefits and challenges of using technology, it can help you understand what experiences they are having. Creating a safe space for them to feel comfortable opening up to you about their digital lives is key. Here are some conversation starters:

- **Ask them what they enjoy doing online and if there is anything that they don't like or find upsetting.**

Tip: Approach the conversation positively with interest and listen as much as possible.

- **Ask them what issues their friends come across online.**

Tip: Children often find it easier to talk about issues others might be having. Subject prompts – online bullying, scams, excessive screen time, seeing upsetting content, coming across nasty comments or people.

- **Ask them what more you could be doing as a family to make their experience online happy and healthy.**

Tip: This is an opportunity to praise what they are already doing and bring some solutions to the table.

Parental controls tips



For more advice on using parental controls and safety settings [watch this video!](#)

Parental Controls Jargon Buster

Common terms you may come across when reading information about parental controls and safety settings.

Administrator	A user who can manage the access rights of other users and perform computer management tasks. For example, administrators in the game Roblox can ban other users from being able to play
App (application)	A computer programme or software application designed to run on a mobile device e.g. WhatsApp
App blocking	The ability to stop your child from being able to access specific app
App purchasing	The act of buying an app
Authentication	A process for confirming that someone or something is who or what it claims to be e.g. confirming via email that your child is old enough to play a specific game
Broadband	A type of internet connection supplied by an internet service provider e.g. BT Broadband
Browser	A software program that lets users access websites and webpages e.g. Google's Chrome
Chat	A software program that allows users to communicate with each other instantly via the internet e.g. sending a text message to someone
Community guidelines	A set of rules for a specific platform e.g. YouTube that outlines how users are expected to behave
Cyber attack	An attempt to damage or destroy a computer network or system, usually to try and steal someone's personal information

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Data Protection Act	The Data Protection Act 1998 controls how personal information can be used and a person's rights to ask for information about themselves
End-to-end encryption	The process of encoding information to ensure that only the sender and the receiver of a message can read or listen to it, nobody in between
File sharing	Making files available to other people over the internet e.g. sharing a video file
Filtering	The process by which content is analysed before it is presented to the user or blocked. For example, parents could use parental controls to block their child from seeing violent video content
Harmful content	Content (such as a video or image) that could cause someone to become distressed or harmed if they saw it e.g. a child seeing a sexual image
In-app purchasing	A feature that allows people to buy extra content, goods or subscriptions when using apps e.g. buying TikTok Coins when using the social media app TikTok
In-game purchasing	A feature that allows people to buy extra features, content, goods or subscriptions when playing games e.g. buying V-Bucks when playing the game Fortnite
IP (Internet Protocol) Address	A unique set of numbers that identify a device that is on the internet or a computer network
Location sharing	A feature that allows users to share where they are with apps, websites or other users
Network	A set of two or more computers that are connected to each other in order to share information (data) and/or resources
Multi-player	Playing games with other players online
Online grooming	This occurs when someone uses the internet to develop a relationship with someone else with illegal or immoral intent e.g. tricking or pressurising them to do something of a sexual nature
Online scam	An online trick that usually encourages someone to share their personal information, for example their bank details

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Parental controls	Settings that parents or carers can use to control what their child can do and see when they are using technology e.g. set time limits when they are playing a game
Passcode	A combination of numbers and/or letters and/or symbols that are used to log into an online account or access a device
Password	A secret word or phrase that is used to log into an online account or access a device
PEGI (Pan-European Game Information) rating	PEGI (Pan-European Game Information) rating A video game content rating system created to help people make informed decisions when buying video games or apps through the use of age recommendations and content descriptors
Personal data/ information	Information that is related to you e.g. your email address or bank details
PIN	Personal Identification Number, often used to log into an account or access a device
Privacy settings	Settings on an online account or device that allow users to decide who can see or share their information e.g. their social media posts
Private account	When an account is set to 'private' it means only approved people whom the user has chosen can see their profile and/or communicate with them e.g. just friends and family
Router	A device that provides Wi-Fi and sends information from the internet to other connected devices such as smartphones or laptops
Safety settings	Settings that allow people to use digital products and services like games consoles or social media apps safely e.g. block harmful content
Security settings	Settings that are designed to protect a user's account from unauthorised access
Server	In the context of gaming, a server often refers to a computer or device that hosts multi-player games
Smartphone	A portable computer that provides mobile telephone functions (e.g. makes phone calls) and computing functions (e.g. downloads apps)

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Social media	Interactive media technologies that allow users to create and share information e.g. share images with other people
Time limits	Setting restrictions on how much time a user can spend using digital products or services e.g. they can only use Instagram for 20 minutes per day
User account	An identity that someone creates in order to use a digital product or service. This often requires a username, password and other information related to the user
User profile	The information people see when they view someone's user account e.g. their profile picture
Verification	A process for ensuring that a user has provided the information required (e.g. passport information to verify their age) in order to access a digital product or service
Virus	A computer virus is an illegal, harmful or malicious computer program that stops a computer from doing what it is designed to do
Wi-Fi	The process by which a broadband connection is wirelessly distributed to devices e.g. laptops

Help your family stay safe online with Digital Parenting magazine



We've gathered brilliant people from across the digital landscape - doctors, researchers, teens, and plenty of busy parents – to explore the different ways we can build happy digital lives.

The latest issue of Digital Parenting magazine is available [here](#).