

# Your child's screen time guide

## What's the problem?

Spending time online and on devices can be a positive thing. But, high levels of screen time can put your child more at risk of:

- Being bullied online
- Abuse and grooming (when someone builds a relationship with a child to exploit or abuse them)
- Seeing inappropriate content
- Not getting enough sleep and exercise

## 4 steps you can take to protect your child

### 1. Set parental controls on devices

Use parental controls to restrict access to in-app purchases and explicit or age-rated content, and, on some devices, how long they can spend on the device.

You'll likely need to set a password. Make sure it's different from the password used to access the device, and that your child doesn't know it.

Parental controls are usually located under 'Settings'. See below for more detailed instructions for different devices.

### 2. Agree rules on screen time

There are mixed views on 'safe' screen time, but you could agree some limits to stop screen time interfering with your child's sleep or family activities:

- Make a plan together, and stick to it. You could set media-free times and zones, like during meals or in bedrooms
- Try to avoid screens an hour before bedtime

- Model the behaviour you want to see – which may mean no screen time for you at the times agreed with your child. Children are more likely to learn from example
- Try to minimise snacking during screen time
- Turn not using screens into a game, using apps like [Forest](#), where not using devices is rewarded

### 3. Talk to your child about staying safe online

Tell them:

- To be aware that anyone can pretend to be a child online
- If they talk to people they don't know, not to give away personal information – like what street they live on or where they go to school, or to share their location with them. To say no to any requests they get for images or videos, and stop talking to the other person if they are asked for these things
- To set their profiles to private, to limit what others can see
- To be 'share aware' – think carefully about what they share and with whom. Once it's out there, they've got no control over what the other person does with it. Remember, it's illegal to take, share or view sexual images of under-18s, full stop
- If they see something that upsets them, or someone bullies them, to tell an adult they trust

Don't feel confident starting a conversation with your child about what they're up to online? Read this advice from the NSPCC: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/talking-child-online-safety/>

### 4. Encourage off-screen activities

Help your child get active for the recommended 60 minutes a day:

- See [nhs.uk/change4life/activities](https://www.nhs.uk/change4life/activities) for free ideas for activities and games
- Try an app that's designed to get children active – see the examples at [internetmatters.org/resources/apps-guide/apps-to-help-kids-get-active/](https://internetmatters.org/resources/apps-guide/apps-to-help-kids-get-active/)

### Sources

[Physical activity guidelines for children and young people, NHS](#)

[Covid-19: Lockdown measures and children's screen time](#)

[The health impacts of screen time: a guide for clinicians and parents, Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health](#)

[Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people, GOV.UK – Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and UK Council for Internet Safety](#)