A PARENT'S GUIDE TO:

Moving to secondary school

Online safety tips to support children

What are kids doing?

- It's a time when children are beginning to **make deeper social connections** for the first time and learning how to **interact with each other online** which can be overwhelming.

- **The Smartphone becomes a status symbol** and an important tool to stay connected to their friends but it also puts them under **pressure to interact**.

- School interactions with friends **cross over into the online world** and at times it can be challenging to balance this with school work and other activities.
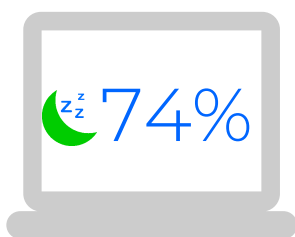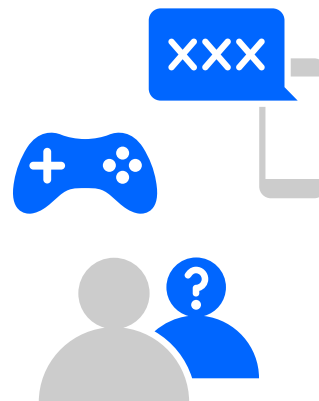
Online activities

- **Socialising online** on a range of social apps

- **Watching TV online** through YouTube

- Building their digital footprint by **sharing details about their day to day life** with friends and family or people they've met online

- **Gaming online** with friends online regularly

- **Doing homework** through video chats with friends

- **Taking part in online challenges** with friends

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What risks and challenges do they face?

As they become more active online, the probability that they will face an online issue increases.

81% of children (12-15) had potentially harmful online experiences in the last 12 months. *

Source: Ofcom-ICO research 2020: Online Nation 2020

Screen time

74%

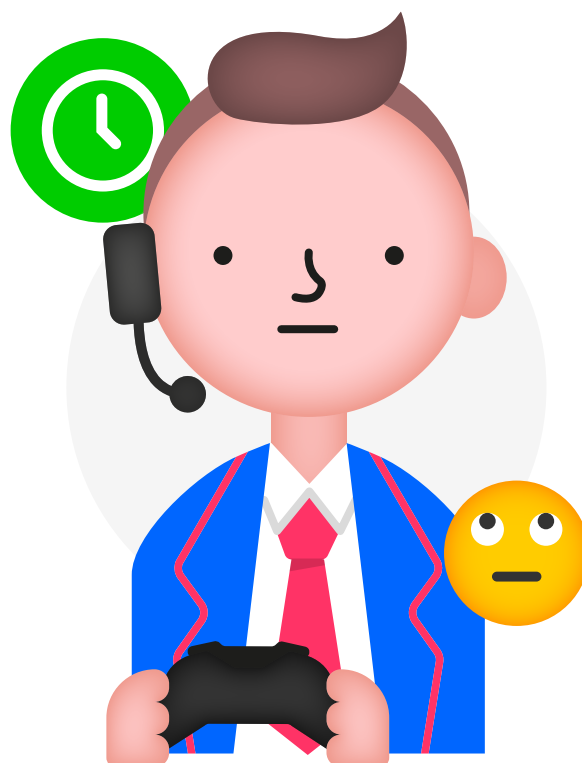the amount of 12 - 15 year olds who take mobiles to bed with them

'Everything in moderation' applies to the screen time debate when it comes to 'how much is too much screen time'.

Research tells us that children, brains, behaviour and sleep can be affected by how much time they spend on screens.

What can you do to help?

Having regular conversation about children's screen use will help them learn how to reach a good screen time balance.

- **Discuss how** screen-time is affecting their overall wellbeing

- Set some **digital boundaries** to help them stay in control of their tech and make use of the tools that are available on phones and tablets

- **Make them aware** that most apps, games and devices are designed to keep them watching and playing

- **Stay engaged** in what your child is doing to help them use a wide range of media from safe sources
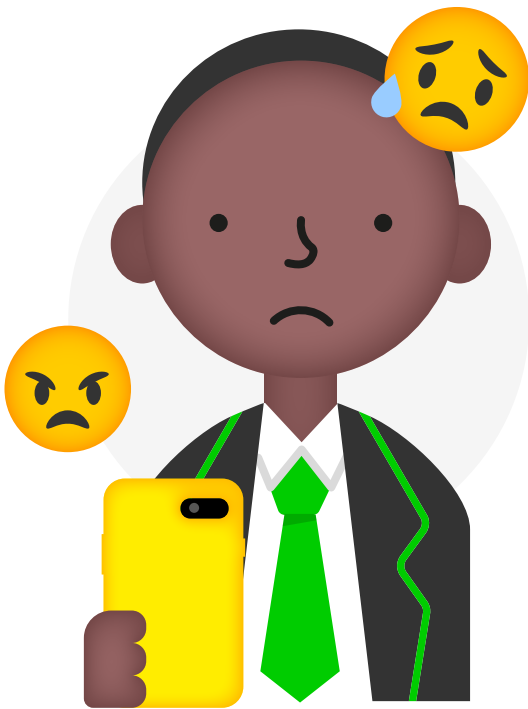
Support from schools

Schools can follow a framework that guides children on issues around wellbeing, health and as part of this they give strategies to manage screen time to avoid negative the affects. As of September 2020 the new **RSE curriculum** will be compulsory for all schools.

Peer pressure

From chasing likes on social posts to taking part in risky online behaviour, at this age children are starting to learn about what is acceptable behaviour to follow in order to be accepted.

Peer pressure can change their behaviour in a positive or negative way depending on who is influencing them. According to Ofcom (2020) 66% of 8-11 year olds and 73% of 12-15 year olds say that there is pressure to be popular on social media.

Also people they've only met online or YouTubers can have the same influence on them as people they know in real life.

What can you do to help?

- **Stand your ground** & apply rules to counter any negative peer pressure

- **Use a news story or something they can relate to** discuss potential risks of peer pressure

- **Help them build the confidence** to say no if they are asked to do something that puts them or others at risk

Support from schools

Many schools promote an inclusive school culture and take the time to celebrate diversity to help form positive social norms.

Sexting

Exploring sexuality has always been a part of a child's development so it's important to have age appropriate discussions about healthy sex and relationships so they have the right advice.

Children take part in sexting for a range of reasons; to fit in, as a joke, to express feelings in a relationship, to flirt, in search of validation due to low body image or as a result of peer pressure or coercion.

Recent research (2020) from Internet Matters and Youthworks found that 4% of 13 year olds had shared nudes rising to 17% of 15-17 year olds.

When sexting goes wrong, it can affect a child's emotional wellbeing, reputation and can lead to blackmail or legal consequences.

What can you do to help?

- **Discuss the risks of sexting** and what to do to resolve the situation if it does happen and it goes wrong

- **Encourage them** to think carefully about people's intentions or motivations

- Make sure they can **come to you or a trusted adult** if they need support without judgement

- Create **potential responses** if they are asked to share a nude – **Try Zipit app** for support

Support from schools

PHSE and Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) lessons help children explore and discuss subjects such as relationships, respect, consent, risk taking, exchange of sexual messages and images between peers and bullying. The government has made the teaching of relationships and sex education compulsory from September 2020 and the new curriculum covers the online aspects of relationships including sexting.

Sexting guidance helps schools to determine how they should deal with incidents and when external agencies should be involved. In cases where the image as shared as a joke or without intended malice then the school may deal with it themselves however if there was intended malice and it was shared without consent then the police or social care may be involved.

Cyberbullying

Research shows that 3% of 8-11 year olds and 14% of 12-15 year olds have been bullied on social media - with 5% and 12% respectively saying that they are bullied on text or messaging apps.*

As they are new to the social world online, it can be tricky to see how their words and online actions can impact others. A video created by BBC Own it showing students reading the nicest and nastiest comments shared by others online brings to life how words can have a real impact on children's wellbeing.

Cyberbullying can affect children's mental health, learning and can lead to legal consequences in some extreme cases.

*Ofcom (2020) research

What can you do to help?

Getting to grips with 'netiquette' of what is acceptable to post and having coping strategies are essential to help children make smart choices online.

- **Discuss the difference** between banter and bullying

- Discuss the **influence of school culture** in how friends relate to each other

- **Teach them** how to report or block people

Support from schools

All schools should have a child protection and or safeguarding policy that guides their response to incidents, they may have mentors who can help or carry out 'Anti-bullying programmers' to raise awareness.

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 InternetMatters   internetmatters   @im_org