

Parent & Carer Companion Guide

Health, Wellbeing & Lifestyle Module: Introduction to Balancing Screen Time

Introduction

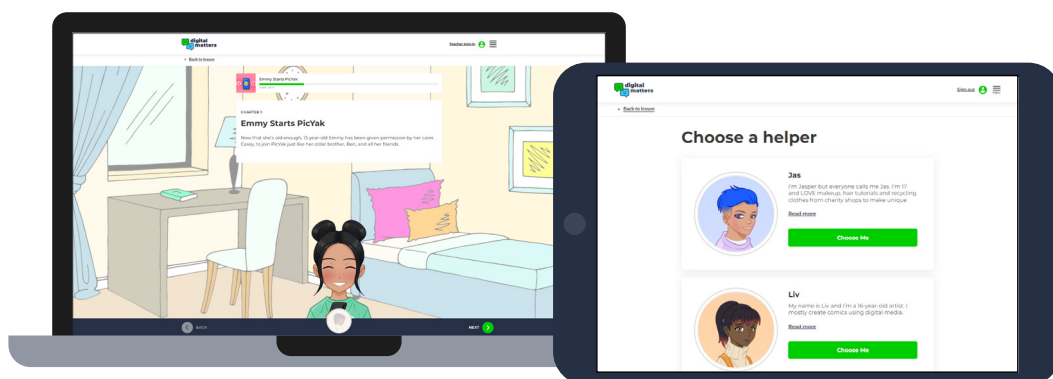
As the world becomes more reliant on technology, it's important for children to grow up understanding how the online world works and what positive interactions look like. The [Digital Matters platform](#) is designed to help children navigate online issues in a way that allows them to take risks and explore consequences without harm.

The platform is divided into two sections that help your child develop their understanding of each online safety topic.

The first is **Interactive Learning**, which is designed for use in the classroom. It features a range of quiz-based questions to encourage children to think about and discuss key points in the module. As a parent, you can also make use of this section to help introduce your child to the topics at home.

The second is **Once Upon Online**, a story-based activity where your child has to make choices to move the story forward. Users receive instant feedback on how their decisions impact the characters, helping children to understand that what they do online has real world consequences. The story allows them to make choices just to see where they go without putting themselves in harm's way.

Digital Matters is a great way to explore online safety in a realistic and engaging manner.



Take Home

As a part of the lesson, your child's teacher may assign take-home work to consolidate their learning. Teachers may choose from the following activities or may have their own activity for children to do.

Option 1: Your child might show you a printout of their Once Upon Online journey. With your help, they may be asked to consider what other choices the characters may have made and how those choices would have led to different results. Because the Once Upon Online story only allows children to select one of two choices, it's important to discuss other possibilities. It's unlikely that in real life children will only have two choices.

Option 2: Your child may share their Once Upon Online journey printout with you. There are also a selection of reflection questions for children to consider once they complete their journey. They can then discuss their journey and these questions with you. At home, you may want to do the journey on your own to see what ending you get and to compare the choices you each made. You may also wish to complete the journey a second time with your child and discuss the potential outcomes for each decision point.

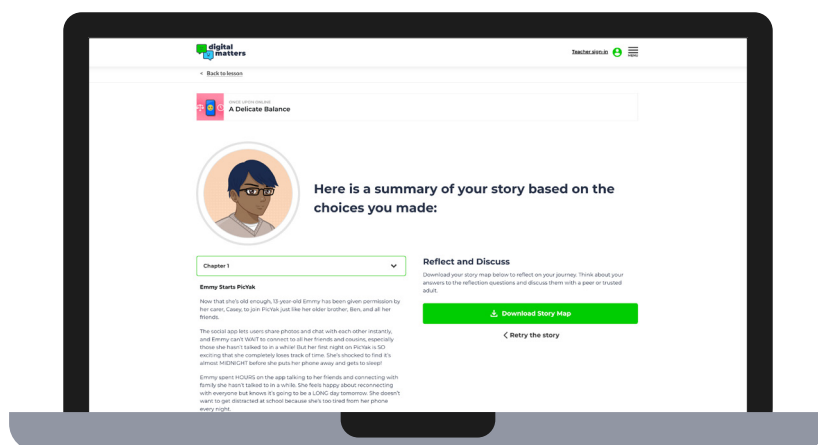
Managing Online Information

Fast facts you need to know

Use these facts to have informed conversations about the topic with your child:

- 53% of children aged 13-17 say that being online is good for their mental health
- Many children use online apps or online services to support their wellbeing
- 40% of parents struggle to manage their child's screen time
- 60% of children aged 8-11 have their own mobile phone - 64% use social media and 69% play videogames online
- On average, boys play around 4 hours of videogames per day while girls play around 2 hours
- Children aged 7-16 spend just under 3 ½ hours per day online
- 62% of 7-16s have access to their mobile phones at all times
- The average time spent watching video content by children aged 4-15 is just under six hours per week.

Source: [Children and parents: media use and attitudes report 2022 \(Ofcom\)](#)



Screen Time Quiz

How much do you know about screen time and wellbeing?

Keep your child's engagement with the lesson going by competing against each other on the quiz below. Who can score the highest?

Once finished, check out the answers at the end of the document to see how you did before learning a little more about each one.

1. What kinds of features are used to persuade people to use an app or game? Select all that apply.
 - a. bright colours
 - b. endless scrolling
 - c. challenging
 - d. easy to use
2. What is an effective strategy to manage time spent on devices?
 - a. use the device until you're sick of it
 - b. check the time regularly to make sure it isn't too late
 - c. set controls to put a time limit on apps and devices
 - d. get rid of devices that are causing problems
3. Discuss with your child: what are positive things someone can do on their devices?
4. Why might someone spread misinformation?
 - a. trouble sleeping
 - b. lack of focus in school
 - c. eyes hurting
 - d. all of these
5. Discuss with your child: Why is it important to create a balanced lifestyle?



Recommended Resources

This list of resources will help you learn more about managing children's personal information online so that you can be prepared for online information issues that might come up.

Internet Matters

[Screen Time Advice Hub](#)

Screen time can offer children opportunities to learn and develop new skills at a touch of a button but like anything, too much of it can have a negative effect on their wellbeing. Learn more about screen time and how to create a balanced digital diet.

[Top tips to support children 7-11](#)

Our age guide to screen time specifically covers screen time use for children aged 7-11.

[Balancing screen time](#)

This quick guide to screen time can help you manage your child's screen time at home.

[Digital family agreement](#)

Set rules on when and how your child and your family can use devices at home to help manage screen time.

[Skill-building apps for kids](#)

This guide to skill-building apps can introduce children to new interests and help them use their devices in meaningful ways.

[Apps to help kids get active](#)

To help balance screen time, we have created this guide to apps that help encourage more active lives.

[Wellbeing apps guide](#)

Children can use their devices to practise mindfulness, meditation and behaviour awareness with the apps outlined in this guide.

[BBC Own It: Do you spend too much time on your phone?](#)

A resource for children to help them manage their own screen time along with further guidance for teachers.

[Childnet: Screen Time and Healthy Balance QuickActivities](#)

Quick activities to use with children aged 7-11 to help them explore the concept of screen time.

[Common Sense Media: How Much Screen Time Is OK for My Kid\(s\)?](#)

Learn about the different types of screen time and what the research says. Pass on proactive tips to parents to help them stay involved at home.

[SWGfL: Young Children and Screen Time](#)

This guide to share with parents and carers outlines the steps they can take to help their child balance their screen time.

[Young Minds: Gaming](#)

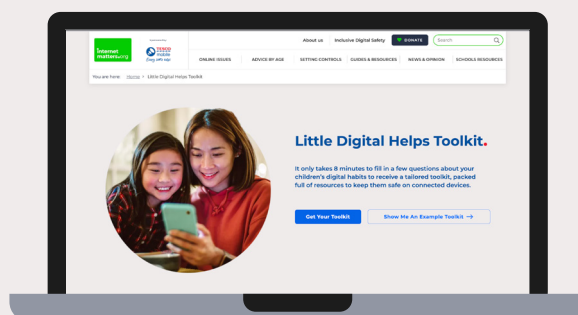
See young people's thoughts on how video gaming benefits them and what they wish their parents and carers knew about the time they spend online.

Little Digital Helps Toolkit

Stay on top of your child's online safety

Fill in a few questions about your children's digital habits to receive a tailored toolkit, packed full of resources to keep them safe on connected devices.

[CREATE YOUR TOOLKIT](#)



Answers to the Thinking Critically Quiz

See how you did on the screen time quiz.

Discussing the answers with your child will help them consolidate the information they learnt from the lesson. These conversations are vital to keeping your child safe online.

- 1. The answer is A - bright colours, B - endless scrolling and D - easy to use!** Persuasive design is used to encourage people to continue using an app. It needs to be user-friendly and encourage long use. Bright colours capture a user's attention, endless scrolling keeps them engaged and easy use means people are unlikely to get frustrated and leave. Persuasive design is a big cause of increased screen time without purpose.
- 2. The answer is C - set controls to put a time limit on apps and devices!** It can be really difficult for anyone to control their screen time simply by looking at the time or listening to your body's hints. Children are at particular risk of getting lost in the time they spend online. Taking devices away is much like taking away a bike to keep them from getting hurt; without the device, they won't learn the techniques to manage their time online. Instead, setting controls and having conversations about time spent online will give them the tools they need for independence later on.
- 3. Time spent on devices can be just as positive as it could be negative.** Teaching children to use their device for a variety of activities can help them ensure they learn the positives too. Learning new skills, doing schoolwork, revising, writing and reading are just some of the positive things people can do with their devices.
- 4. The answer is D - all of these!** Although screens can be used in many positive ways, spending too much time on them can still lead to negative effects. Some of these include eye problems because screens cause users to blink less and strain their eyes more; the blue light from screens can interfere with sleep, which may affect performance in school. In some cases, children could become dependent on their devices and become irritable when they're not allowed access.
- 5. Because of the issues that can arise with too much screen time, it's important to create a balanced lifestyle.** This means using a range of apps instead of just ones that use persuasive design to keep users engaged. Apps that help children build skills like Maths and Reading or learn new skills like coding and music production help create this balance. Additionally, taking breaks from screens to spend time with family, go for walks outside or do offline activities help children learn valuable ways to keep themselves entertained without the use of devices.