How to keep your child safe online

The internet is like a magician's hat. It's full of exciting things to discover and kids love it. But while they seem to know what they're doing, sometimes their parents don't – and that can be a worry.

That's why the NSPCC and O₂ have partnered to help parents keep their kids safe online. Here are some of the things you can do, and some of the ways we can help – every step of the way.

So what can you do?

1. **Explore**
   Explore and understand the apps, games and sites your child uses and get to know your child's online world better.

2. **Talk**
   Chat to your child about their online world, just as you'd ask about their day at school.

3. **Agree**
   Set out the family rules to live well online. Discuss and agree ground rules and make sure you're a good role model.

4. **Manage**
   Make the technology work for you. Adapt privacy settings and use parental controls where necessary.

O₂ ☺ **NSPCC**
Let's keep kids safe online

Other places to get advice, support or report a concern:

Know It All for Parents – an interactive guide to protecting your family online

www.childnet.com www.getsafeonline.org www.theparentzone.co.uk

www.internetmatters.org www.nspcc.org.uk/onlinesafety www.net-aware.org.uk www.commonsensemedia.org

Just one thing

If you could give parents one piece of advice to keep children safe online, what would it be? **Megan Rose** asked the experts

"There are no set guidelines for how much screen time is appropriate for children, but there needs to be a balance. Don't be afraid to have rules, like 'no tablets at the dinner table'. For younger children, use tech to help; the Forest app lets you grow a beautiful forest the longer you leave your device alone. And lead by example – make time to be a gadget-free family."

Carolyn Bunting, CEO, Internet Matters, an independent, not-for-profit e-safety organisation
www.internetmatters.org

"Be curious and ask your children to talk about, or better still, show you, the services they are using and why they love them. Starting the conversation is key, both to help ensure that children know how to stay safe and respect others online, but also so they turn to you if someone or something online is making them feel uncomfortable."

Will Gardner, CEO, Childnet International, and a Director of the UK Safer Internet Centre
www.childnet.com

Here are some highlights and useful advice regarding current issues around information technology from the most recent edition of the Digital Parenting magazine. You can view the whole magazine online or download it yourself at:

http://www.vodafone.com/content/digital-parenting/parents-and-carers/digital-parenting-magazine.html

Quality is key

As part of a research project for the London School of Economics and Political Science, **Sonia Livingstone** and **Alicia Blum-Ross** have been speaking to parents about the controversial issue of screen time. Here's what they've learned

In our research with parents, we've been struck that, no matter how different their family circumstances are, parents nearly all watch the clock when it comes to their children's screen time. Whatever the activity, be it chatting with friends, downloading music, doing homework or Skyping Granny, parents lump it together as 'screen time' – and then worry about it.

Today, many experts agree that it isn't the amount of time with media that's important, but the quality of the time spent.

Nor do they agree that digital media is always harmful and needs to be restricted, or that allowing children screen time makes someone a bad parent.

How much is too much?
Rather than timing how long your child spends on screen, consider their screen use in the wider context of their life.
Ask yourself, is your child:
● Eating and sleeping enough
● Physically healthy
● Connecting socially with friends and family – whether with technology or not
● Engaged in and doing well at school
● Enjoying and pursuing hobbies and interests – again, whether with technology or not

What you can do

Ask yourself the following questions:

1 Do you think what your child is looking at on their screen is imaginative, or provides opportunities for them to learn or be creative?

2 Does it affirm your child's own culture or, perhaps, introduce them to other lives and experiences?

3 Is your child responding positively – perhaps with concentration, or play, or social interaction, or thoughtful questions?

Screen 'time' is not created equal, but varies enormously by the context of how it is used, the content that is engaged with, and the connections it fosters (or fails to). Helping parents keep sight of this, and helping them balance their hopes and fears, is what really matters.