ADVICE FOR PARENTS

TIPS TO HELP YOUR CHILDREN USE MOBILE PHONES AND THE INTERNET SAFELY.



www.ee.co.uk/digital-living

INTRODUCTION

For children, their mobile isn't just a phone, it's a portal to the world. And if they're not on their mobile they're glued to their laptops, iPods or tablets. The idea of living without Instant Messaging, Facebook or texting is almost inconceivable to them.

We've produced this guide to help you make sense of this world. And to offer you the information and insights you as a parent or carer need to help your child use their mobile or the internet in ways that are safe and age-appropriate.

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TOP TIPS

1. SET PARENTAL CONTROLS

Set parental controls on home computers and games consoles such as X-Box, Playstation and Nintendo Wii so your child can only access age-appropriate materials. And make sure adult content is locked on their mobile phones too.

2. ESTABLISH BOUNDARIES

It's all too easy for kids to fire off a text or Instant Message, or post a comment or photo on Facebook without really thinking about it. Discuss what's acceptable and what's not, and help them understand the need to respect others.

3. DON'T BLOCK & BAN

The digital world is an integral part of life for children and young adults these days, so even if you're concerned about the risks it's no use trying to block & ban. Talk to them about your concerns and get them to understand and agree on some ground rules.

4. KEEP TALKING

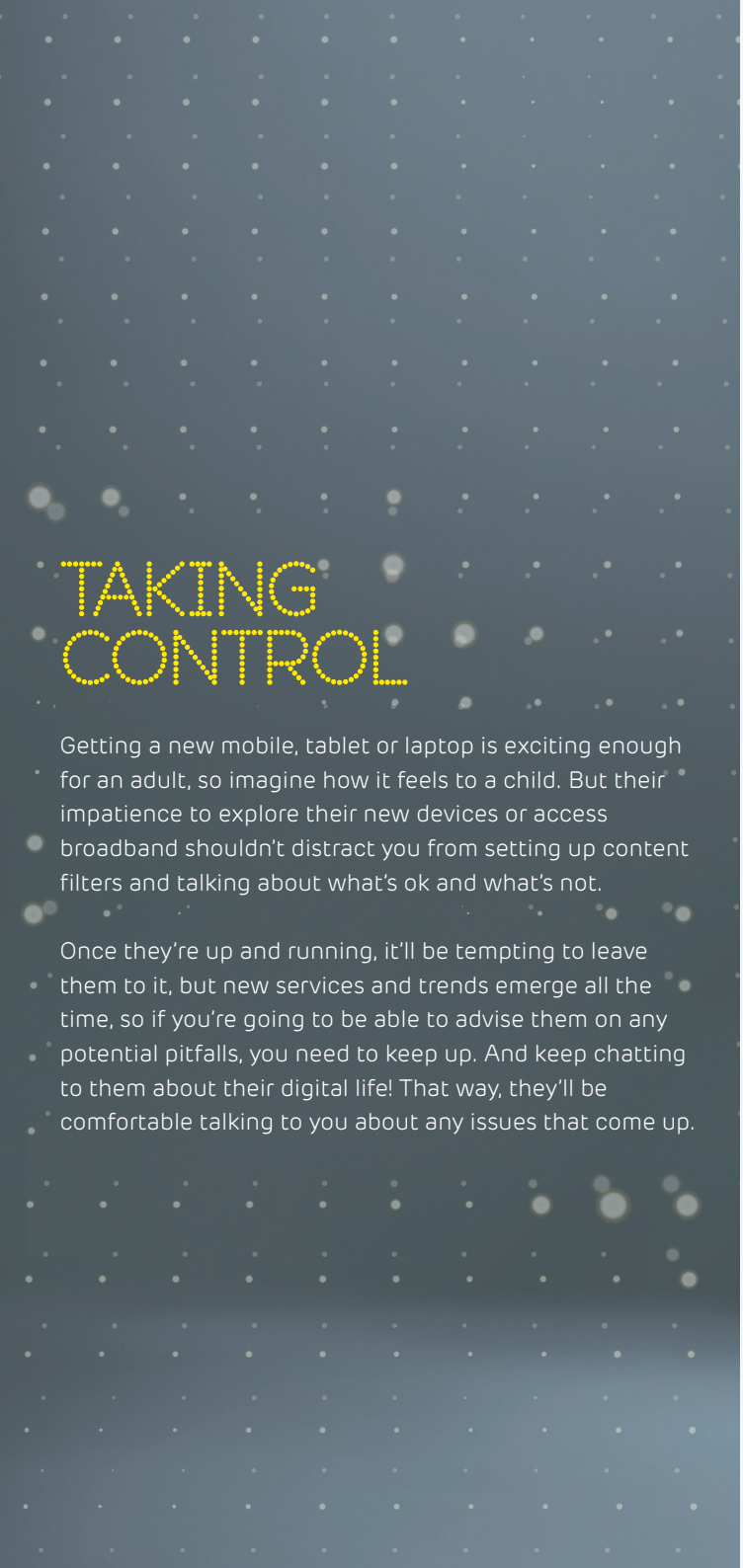
Children, especially teenagers, value their privacy, but don't let what happens online become a no-go zone. Normalise talking about it, so that it frequently comes up in conversation, giving you a better idea of what's going on and making them more likely to mention things that are bothering them.

5. WARN THEM ABOUT THE DANGERS

While you don't want to scare them with the bogie man, it's important that you open your child's eyes to the potential dangers of life online, like cyberbullying and talking to strangers. And you should also tell them about the help that's available if they ever feel concerned or threatened.

6. STAY IN THE LOOP

Try and keep up with what's happening in the digital world, so you don't get left behind. Check out BBC WebWise for more information at www.bbc.co.uk/webwise or, for the latest gadget and technology news try BBC Click at www.bbc.co.uk/click



TAKING CONTROL

Getting a new mobile, tablet or laptop is exciting enough for an adult, so imagine how it feels to a child. But their impatience to explore their new devices or access broadband shouldn't distract you from setting up content filters and talking about what's ok and what's not.

Once they're up and running, it'll be tempting to leave them to it, but new services and trends emerge all the time, so if you're going to be able to advise them on any potential pitfalls, you need to keep up. And keep chatting to them about their digital life! That way, they'll be comfortable talking to you about any issues that come up.

CONTENT FILTERS ON MOBILE

Mobile phones have these clever things called content filters that block websites and commercial content that is inappropriate for under-18s, in line with approved standards. This content includes pornography, horror, excessively violent sites and adult chat rooms.

All the EE phones we sell come with the content filter on. If your child's been given an old phone or SIM card or bought the phone from another brand we recommend you check whether the filter is on. Over-18s can get the filters lifted by contacting customer services.

PARENTAL CONTROLS AT HOME

Your broadband provider will probably offer you a parental control option as part of a downloadable anti-virus software package, and when this is installed access to over-18 websites can be blocked.

But it's worth exploring the alternatives, as these could allow you to customise settings to suit your family. So, for example, if your 13-year old daughter is neglecting her homework because she comes home and goes straight on Facebook, or your 17-year old son is up till 3am gaming, you might want to set time limits for those websites, and block other sites altogether if you want to. And if you set up password-protected user profiles for everyone at home you'll be able to control who sees what.

If your child is younger, it's better to have the computer in a family area rather than their bedroom, so you can see what they're doing on the web. Obviously that's not going to wash with teenagers though, so it's vital that you set appropriate parental controls and agree some ground rules.

WORTH NOTING:

- Even if you've set parental controls up on your home network, these won't apply if your child uses your laptop outside your home, such as in a café that has a WiFi hotspot, for instance. They could also be exposed to adult content if they use someone else's phone, gaming console or computer. That's why it's so important that you discuss the issues surrounding adult content with them.

- EE doesn't have the right to police the internet – after all, what's appropriate to some people may be offensive to others – but we offer you tools that let you put filters in place that are right for you and your family.

CONTROLLING COSTS

Having a mobile phone is the norm for kids these days. But the freedom it gives could come with a price tag:

- Monthly price plans include an allowance for text, voice and data (which enables internet access) but once you exceed this monthly allowance, things could get expensive. EE plans include unlimited calls and texts and we'll alert you when you reach your data allowance and block further activity, so you can stay in control and avoid surprises.

- From buying ringtones, games and lottery tickets to voting on their favourite TV talent shows via premium priced text and voice messages, it's all to easy for kids to run up a big bill on their mobile.

That's why it's good to set some limits on phone use and agree these with your child, and also agree on what you're prepared to pay for and what they'll find coming out of their pocket money.

By discussing the use of data and the internet and warning your child about premium rate services in advance, you can avoid those surprises when it comes to their bill. And at the same time help your child learn valuable lessons about money management and taking responsibility.

HELPFUL HINTS:

- **Choose the right plan:** Be aware of how your child uses their phone. If they mainly use it for texting, you'll need to choose a monthly plan that offers unlimited text bundles. If they have a smartphone, they're likely to spend lots of time online, surfing the web, checking Facebook or watching videos on YouTube, so get a monthly plan with a generous internet allowance.

- **Agree a monthly spend:** If your child is on a pay monthly contract under your name, agree in advance what you're prepared to pay for, and let them know that anything else will come out of their pocket money.

- **Opt for pay as you go:** As credit and top ups are purchased in advance, your child can only use what's been pre-paid for.

- **Bar premium rate calls:** Contact your provider's customer services, and get them to bar expensive international calls or calls to premium rate numbers.

- **Read the small print:** Some services, such as sports or celebrity updates, may have weekly or monthly charges. Others may ask you to send a reply text with a word or code, and these often come at a cost.

- **Report lost or stolen phones immediately:** Report lost or stolen phones at once, to stop someone else running up a huge bill that you may have to pay for. If you have a smartphone you might want to consider getting insurance.

TOP TIP:

Make sure you understand the ins and outs of your price plan and what it includes. Always look for plans that allow you to control the cost.

UNDERSTANDING THE DIGITAL WORLD

Kids' uncanny ability to find their way around computers, laptops, smartphones and TV remotes can make the rest of us feel inferior. But the confidence this intuitive mastery gives them has a downside...

Many kids feel invulnerable, and in their digital lives this feeling is magnified. In that parallel universe, they are the masters. Unfortunately, this can make them over-confident. And without the life experience that's taught the rest of us to exercise caution, respect boundaries, guard our privacy and act responsibly, it's easy for them to get into trouble or put themselves at risk.

That's why it's so important that you discuss their digital life with them from the get-go, and help them avoid its potential pitfalls.

A-Z OF TERMS

You'll lose all credibility with your child if you're out of touch with their online world, so here's some essential background info:

Acronyms & abbreviations:

BRB	Be right back	**KPC**	Keep parents clueless
Rents	Parents	**LMIR**	Let's meet in real life
Noob	New user	**LOL**	Laugh out loud
OMG	Oh my god	**POS**	Parent over shoulder
T+	Think positive	**ROFL**	Roll on floor laughing
WTF	What the f%*@!	**ASL**	Age, sex, location
LMAO	Laugh my !*rse off	**IMHO**	In my humble opinion

3G & 4G
Third and fourth generation: technical standards common across the mobile industry that allow faster data transfer enabling a range of new services like HD video, high speed internet access and interactive services.

Apps
Computer or mobile phone applications or programmes. 'App' often refers to a mobile app, something that runs on a smartphone, letting the user access specific information and services easily.

Avatars
Graphical alter egos used in chat rooms, on message boards or on the internet.

Blogs (short for Web Log)
Instantly updatable online journals used for publishing short, informal comments and ideas. If you write a blog you're a blogger, and what you do is blogging.

Bluetooth
A form of direct device-to-device radio communications system that allows phones to communicate when in close range of each other, without using mobile phone networks.

Bluejacking
Used with Bluetooth® mobile technology to send anonymous text messages to strangers.

Chatrooms
These are websites where people from all over the world exchange messages with others. There are thousands of these sites catering for every imaginable hobby or interest. A chatroom can be a great place to talk to people with common interests, and share your experiences and opinions.

Cookies
Small data files installed to a user's computer, laptop or mobile by a web server, enabling individual preferences, ID, passwords etc to be recalled when the user re-visits a site.

Dongles
Small devices you can plug into your laptop to access broadband internet on the move.

Emoticons (aka Smilies)
Text-based icons used to express emotion in online communications :o)

Flaming
Being nasty to other chatroom users in order to start an argument or debate.

Frape (Facebook rape)
To hijack another user's Facebook page and post a comment under their name.

Grooming
Gaining a child's trust through manipulation in order to engage in sexual contact.

IM or Instant Messaging
Technology similar to that of chat rooms, enabling real-time text-based online communication. A user is informed when one of their 'contacts' or 'buddies' is online, allowing them to 'talk' by exchanging text messages and files via special software. Popular IM applications include AIM and Facebook Messenger.

MMS
Multi media messages/photo messages are messages sent or received on a mobile phone, containing pictures and video.

Mods
Most sites are monitored for key words and mods, or chatroom moderators, respond to requests for intervention where needed.

Netiquette
The conventions of politeness recognised on the internet.

Pop-ups
Unsolicited online ads that appear in new browser windows, often age-appropriate.

Posts
Messages sent to a discussion group or other public message area on the internet. The person who sends it is 'posting'.

Sexting
Taking and sending of explicit images via MMS.

SMS
Text messages sent between mobile phones.

Social networks
Facebook, MySpace, Twitter and Google+ are all social networks, valued by young people in particular, because they allow them to forge links with friends and express themselves online. Users can publish their own home page or 'profile', make friends with others on the site, post pictures, share information about what they're up to, chat in real time with friends and tell others about their likes and dislikes.

Trolls
Social networking or message board users who post deliberately mean, incorrect, harmful or controversial messages to upset others. Trolls are normally anonymous and often inflict attacks on strangers.

WiFi
Wireless broadband that enables access to the internet from any room in your home and also in 'hotspots' in public places such as cafés.

Wiki
A web page that allows anyone to contribute and edit pages with out the need for web design programmes.

KEEP TALKING

Now you know a bit more about digital living, it should be easier to discuss this with your child. Children, especially teenagers, value their privacy, but don't let what happens online become a no-go zone. Normalise talking about it, so that it frequently comes up in conversation, giving you a better idea of what's going on and making them more likely to mention things that are bothering them.

THINGS TO FIND OUT ABOUT:

Who are they socialising with?
People online are not always who they say they are. Are their friends really friends?

How much personal information are they sharing?
Things they say or pictures they post could lead people to figure out where they live, go to school, socialise etc.

How do they respond to requests?
Who's the chat or friend request from? And why are they making contact?

Have they applied privacy settings?
Most social networks have privacy settings that you can use to control the information people see.

Have they considered meeting up with people they've met online?
It's vital that your child understands the dangers of doing this. They should never arrange / agree to meet up with people they've met online. (The only time this might be acceptable would be if they were accompanied by a parent, carer or other trusted and responsible adult.)

Could this be embarrassing?
Remind them that it's not just about staying safe. An offensive post, thoughtless remark or photo showing them falling down drunk could prompt ridicule or bullying, and upset or shock friends and relatives. And they wouldn't want a potential employer to see elements of their 'digital shadow' in future that will embarrass or show them in a negative light.

WHAT TO WATCH OUT FOR IN THE DIGITAL WORLD

Children and young adults are the biggest users of social networks, chatrooms, blogs and forums. This can lead to others being able to identify them in photos; learn about their movements, social groups, where they live and where they go to school; and discover their innermost thoughts and feelings, their tastes, allegiances and preferences.

You need to help your child understand how vulnerable this makes them, not only to embarrassment and bullying but also to strangers.

STRANGER DANGER

Unfortunately, the anonymity of life online makes it highly attractive for strangers, who can target children using information they find online.

There are a number of ways for strangers to gain a child's trust. They might do this is by developing an online 'friendship' with the child, masking their own age, personality, name and even gender, so that they appear to be a friendly, appealing and attractive child or young person, of a similar age to their target, with lots of interests in common. This process is called grooming, and it can result in extremely dangerous and inappropriate contact.

It is essential that you explain to your child about grooming, and warn them of the dangers of taking what they see and read online on trust.

HELP & ADVICE

The Child Exploitation Online Protection (CEOP) www.ceop.gov.uk has lots of information that will help you spot signs of grooming and give you all the contact information you need in order to report abuse. You should contact CEOP immediately if you're concerned that your child may be being groomed.

CYBERBULLYING

Unfortunately some bullies now use mobile phones and the internet to intimidate and harass others, using voice or text messages, video clips or posts on social network sites and chatrooms. Cyberbullying may involve:

- abusive or threatening comments on the victim's websites, profiles or blogs or posting pictures or videos of cruel or humiliating incidents
- threatening or abusive texts / voicemails
- hacking the victim's online profile to impersonate them and post comments
- anonymous online bullying by so-called 'trolls', who may not know the person they are targeting, and whose aim is to antagonise and cause upset.

Cyberbullying can reach a child anywhere, anytime, even at home, where you'd like to think you could keep them safe. It can also spread rapidly, with the danger of cruel or humiliating video clips going viral exacerbating the feelings of embarrassment and helplessness.

Guarding against cyber bullying on mobile

Advise your child not to leave information about themselves on their voicemail message or to an unknown caller. They should also let callers identify themselves before saying anything – particularly if no number is displayed.

If they're being bullied...

Tell them to divert calls from a problem number to voicemail, rather than answering them. Encourage them to tell you, a teacher or another family member if they receive a bullying text, and to not reply to the message and get them to keep such messages as evidence.

And if the bullying persists...

You can ask for their phone number to be changed. As cyberbullying is an offence under the Communications Act, your network provider can supply caller information to the police if necessary (data protection law means we can't provide this information directly to you). It's not just children who can be harassed in this way – if you are receiving calls or messages contact your provider quickly and they can take steps to stop it.

Online bullying

Most social network sites and forums have a 'report abuse' button and will act quickly to remove abusive content. (More information can be found in the 'Reporting harmful material' section towards the back of this booklet.) It may be possible to block the sender: many websites allow you to do this via your privacy settings. Retaliating only makes things worse: encourage them not to respond to abusive comments online. Get them to talk to someone they trust, as cyberbullying may well be part of a wider pattern of bullying.

HELP & ADVICE

For more information visit
www.beatbullying.org
or
www.cybermentors.org.uk

PICTURE AND VIDEO MESSAGING

Many of us will have read about 'happy slapping', where an assault on someone has been recorded and shared among peers or online. 'Happy slapping' can involve slapping another child or an elderly or vulnerable adult, stealing something from them, taking clandestine footage that has the potential to humiliate or embarrass them, or even sexually assaulting them.

You need to let your child know that participating in any such activity or recording such an assault is a criminal offence; and also that laughing at, sharing or passing on the resulting images is in itself a form of bullying. If they'd be embarrassed for people outside their friendship group to see an image, or they wouldn't want others to see a similar image if they were its subject, they shouldn't take, keep, share or watch it.

If they're even sent an image of an assault on another individual, they should show it to a trusted adult straight away, in order to limit the audience that sees it.

SEXTING

It's becoming dangerously common for teenagers to send sexual images of themselves to a boyfriend or girlfriend over a mobile phone. Young girls especially can feel pressured into doing this, and unfortunately once such images are sent, they can't be got back.

Partners may promise to keep images private, but in fact want to show them off to their friends, and when a relationship finishes there's even less control over who sees them – in some circumstances they may be a source of continuing humiliation and embarrassment.

While it is against the law for anyone to possess or distribute indecent images of children under 18, teenagers may not realise that this applies to them.

Advice to offer your child

Think before they send any images of themselves, or share images of others. This is personal stuff: would they be happy to find that picture on the front page of the newspaper? If not, it's probably not appropriate to send it to anyone else. Encourage them to act responsibly and with empathy, and not share sexual images of others. You can also remind them that it's illegal to share indecent photos of under-18s.

MUSIC, MOVIES AND GAMES

Music, movies and games often feature over 18 content, such as explicit lyrics or sexual images and your parental control settings won't necessarily restrict access to this. Check that the website you're downloading from has its own policies and checks in place so your children can only access age-appropriate content.

ILLEGAL DOWNLOADING

Copyright law applies to online as well as offline materials, and it's illegal to upload or download copyrighted material without the copyright owner's permission.

There are lots of websites from which movies, music, books and TV shows can be downloaded or streamed. It's worth checking that your child is using one of the many legal sites to get their entertainment from, as copyright infringement is illegal at any age, so there's no 'free pass' for children.

HELP & ADVICE

The Child Exploitation Online Protection (CEOP) www.ceop.gov.uk and www.thinkuknow.co.uk have lots of information and guidance on the subject of sexting. Or check out www.childnet.com for more information about staying safe online.

ONLINE GAMING

Many of the games on popular consoles such as X-Box, Playstation or Nintendo Wii, allow players to chat to other gamers through the internet, get involved in role plays and build social networks.

Social networking through online gaming is becoming increasingly popular: you may have heard of Mindcraft and World of WarCraft, examples of 'Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Games' (MMORPGs), which let a large number of users interact within a virtual world. Games consoles are also used for chatrooms and instant messaging, whether engaged in game-play or not.

There are also websites that allow you to build characters, create an avatar (a second identity) and live in a virtual world.

Keeping your child safe

Apply the same ground rules to gaming as you do to any other internet use. Some online games have a facility that lets you report anything suspicious, so encourage your child to be aware.

PHONE THEFT

The latest mobiles and smartphones are both valuable and highly desirable, so they're often targeted by thieves.

Recommend that your child:

- doesn't show off a new phone to anyone except close and trusted friends
- doesn't make calls in highly visible and public places – make them discreetly. (Most phone thefts take place while you're making a call)
- is extra careful while listening to music
- makes a note of their phone's IMEI number – the unique identifier for the handset, which can be found by pressing *#06# on the keypad
- registers the IMEI number free of charge on www.immobilise.com, the Mobile Phone Register. This service also allows police to identify the rightful owner of recovered phones
- backs up data so that pictures, numbers, texts and other information won't be lost, even if the phone is stolen: networks normally offer this service

If your child's phone is stolen...

- Call your operator's customer services immediately, so that they can bar the SIM card, block calls from the account and immobilise the phone using the IMEI number. You may also need to contact the police to get an incident report number for any insurance claim.
- Consider insuring your phone against theft.

CONCERNS

Mobile phones and the internet are brilliant but as parents you may also have some concerns, so here's some information you might find useful

MOBILE PHONES AND HEALTH

Mobile phones are basically small two-way radios that work in the microwave area of the radio spectrum, which is also used by baby monitors, TV transmitters and various remote control systems.

There's been significant research into health risks associated to mobile phones, and the World Health Organisation has stated that there's no evidence that the use of mobile devices and masts pose health risks. All mobile phone base stations and mobile phones are required to meet the International Commission for Non-Ionising Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) safety guidelines endorsed by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the UK government.

However, if you're still concerned...

- Talk to your child about limiting the amount of time they spend talking on their phone.
- Encourage them to use headphones, which come as standard with many new phones.
- Choose a phone with a lower Specific Absorption Rate (SAR) – a measure of the amount of energy absorbed by your head when using a particular handset.

HELP & ADVICE

Information about SAR values can be found at www.mmfai.org Further information on mobile phone health and masts can be found at www.mobilemastinfo.com

REPORTING HARMFUL OR ILLEGAL MATERIAL

Most websites offer ways to report abuse next to the content or profiles themselves. If you're not sure how to report abuse on a service, use the site search engine to search for links. The service provider should review the content if a complaint is made, and if there is a breach of the terms and conditions such material could be taken down and in some cases further action taken against the poster.

What about illegal websites?

Content that is inappropriate to some people may be acceptable to others, so it's best to set Parental Controls on your computers at home so that you can limit the sort of sites your child can visit. If you believe that a website or images you have encountered online may be illegal, or you'd like guidance on what constitutes an illegal website or image, visit the Internet Watch Foundation (see below).

HELP & ADVICE

You can find clear guidelines on what constitutes illegal material, and also submit reports on sites you believe to be illegal at http://www.iwf.org.uk
You can also email your concerns to them at report@iwf.org.uk

PROLONGED COMPUTER USE

Children may end up glued in front of a computer for hours, and this can have an adverse affect on their health. Government guidelines suggest that those using computers take a break every 40 minutes.

Visit our website at www.ee.co.uk/digital-living for more information on staying safe and see our thought provoking films and activities for young people.

Find out more about online safety:
www.ee.co.uk/digital-living

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