HOW TO BE SAFE ONLINE

FOR TEENAGERS (11-18)

The internet is a brilliant place to connect with others, to be creative and to discover new things.

But we need to use the internet safely, responsibly and positively.

Privacy Settings

Privacy settings are the tools provided as part of an online account to protect the information and content you are sharing

Most social media services and online gaming accounts will provide some privacy settings. These may let you control who sees the things you share, who can send you messages and who can add you as a friend. If you're not sure whether an app you're using has privacy settings, try searching the name of the app and the term 'privacy settings' on a search engine.

Privacy Settings

What kind of privacy settings are available?

For some accounts the privacy settings are very simple, for example choosing between having a private or public profile. On other services there are many more options including settings around messages, comments, how your data is used and even facial recognition!

Why are privacy settings important?

Privacy settings are important because they can help protect you and the content you share. For example, you may want to share a photo but only with your friends – using privacy settings lets you do this. Privacy settings can also help protect your online reputation.

How do I turn privacy settings on?

On some apps privacy settings will be turned on as soon as you create an account, but on others your profile is automatically public, so it's always best to check. Privacy settings can often be found by clicking on these symbols:

Or looking for the words 'Privacy' or 'Security'.
If you're not sure how to use privacy settings, speak to an adult and use a search engine to help find useful instructions.

Privacy Settings

Should all my accounts be private?

It's always safest to have a private account and to only add people you know as friends. However, there are some situations where having a public account is helpful too, for example if you participate in online activism and campaign for a cause or if you are using your social media accounts to reach out to a particular company about their work. For this reason, some people choose to create two accounts: a personal, private one and a public one.

I have a private account – is everything I share safe?

Privacy settings and having a private account helps keep your content safe, but it's important to remember that they are not perfect. There are other ways the things you share can be seen more widely, for example if somebody screenshots something you have said or done online and shares it with other people. There are also parts of your profile that are often always public, e.g. profile picture, username and bio.

Privacy and Data

Personal data is information about you collected by the apps and websites you visit (like the things you like and open)

Privacy is the ability to keep certain things to yourself, for them not to be seen by or shared with others. When you go online, you may already be thinking about how to keep some things private. It's important to also think about the data apps and websites collect about you and what they do with this.

Privacy and Data

What should I keep private?

There are a few things that we would recommend you keep private like your phone number, location, your full name and the school you go to. These parts of your personal information should only be known by people you know offline.
The key is to take control of what you share online and who with. Think carefully about what you want to share and what you want to keep to yourself. Remember to be careful with your bios and the photos you share as you can give away key parts of your life in those too.

Why do apps and websites want to collect my personal data? What is my personal data used for?

There are two main reasons. The first is that they need some personal information to create an account. They need a way to contact you and many of them will ask for your age.

The second reason is to build up a profile of you, your interests and habits. This can be used to put things that interest you on your feed or to show you adverts for things you might want to buy. If lots of young people use a certain app or website, brands will pay a lot of money to advertise to young people on there.

Privacy and Data

Is my personal data safe?

Apps and sites should protect your personal data although it has been known for these to be hacked or lost in a data breach. To find out if your email address has ever been involved in a data breach please go to haveibeenpwned.com
If your email address has been breached it is a good idea to change all of your passwords on accounts that use that email address.

Is my phone listening to me?

It can seem that way when you start typing something into a search engine and it seems to know what you are typing. However, it is much more likely that your phone just knows you incredibly well. It knows where you go, what you like, how old you are and your search habits. Technology is learning and improving all the time, just like you.

How can I reduce the personal data that I share?

If you are online you will be sharing some data but there are steps you can take. We would recommend deleting accounts you no longer use and restricting the data you give away online by stopping sites collecting cookies. Some search engines collect a lot of data so you can also look for search engines that do not collect so much.

Social Media

Social media are apps and websites where you can connect and share content with friends

On these services you are often able to share and view a whole range of media such as video, photos, music and chat. Popular social media services include: Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok and Twitter.

How old do you need to be to use social media?

Although it can vary, for many of the most popular services you must be at least 13 years old to create an account. It's important to check the terms and conditions before signing up to make sure you are old enough. If you create an account before you reach the minimum age, it may be deleted.

Social Media

Someone is pretending to be me on social media, what can I do?

If someone has created an account pretending to be you, this is called 'impersonation'. You should be able to report this directly to the social media platform where it is happening but it is also a really good idea to talk to someone you know and trust who can support you.

What can I do if someone has posted something I don't like on their social media?

Generally people have freedom of speech on social media, just as they do offline. This means that just because you dislike what they have shared, it isn't necessarily wrong of them to have shared it. However, if the content they have posted breaks the law or the rules of the platform they shared it on, you may be able to report it and have it removed. For example, if it could be categorised as bullying or hate speech. If someone has shared something online which is upsetting you, it's important to talk to an adult you know and trust for support and help.

Who owns the pictures I share on social media?

You own any original content you share (e.g. photos you have taken or things you have written yourself). However, you may find that as part of the terms and conditions, you have also granted that social media service certain rights to reuse, distribute or modify your content for free, for any reason, anywhere in the world.
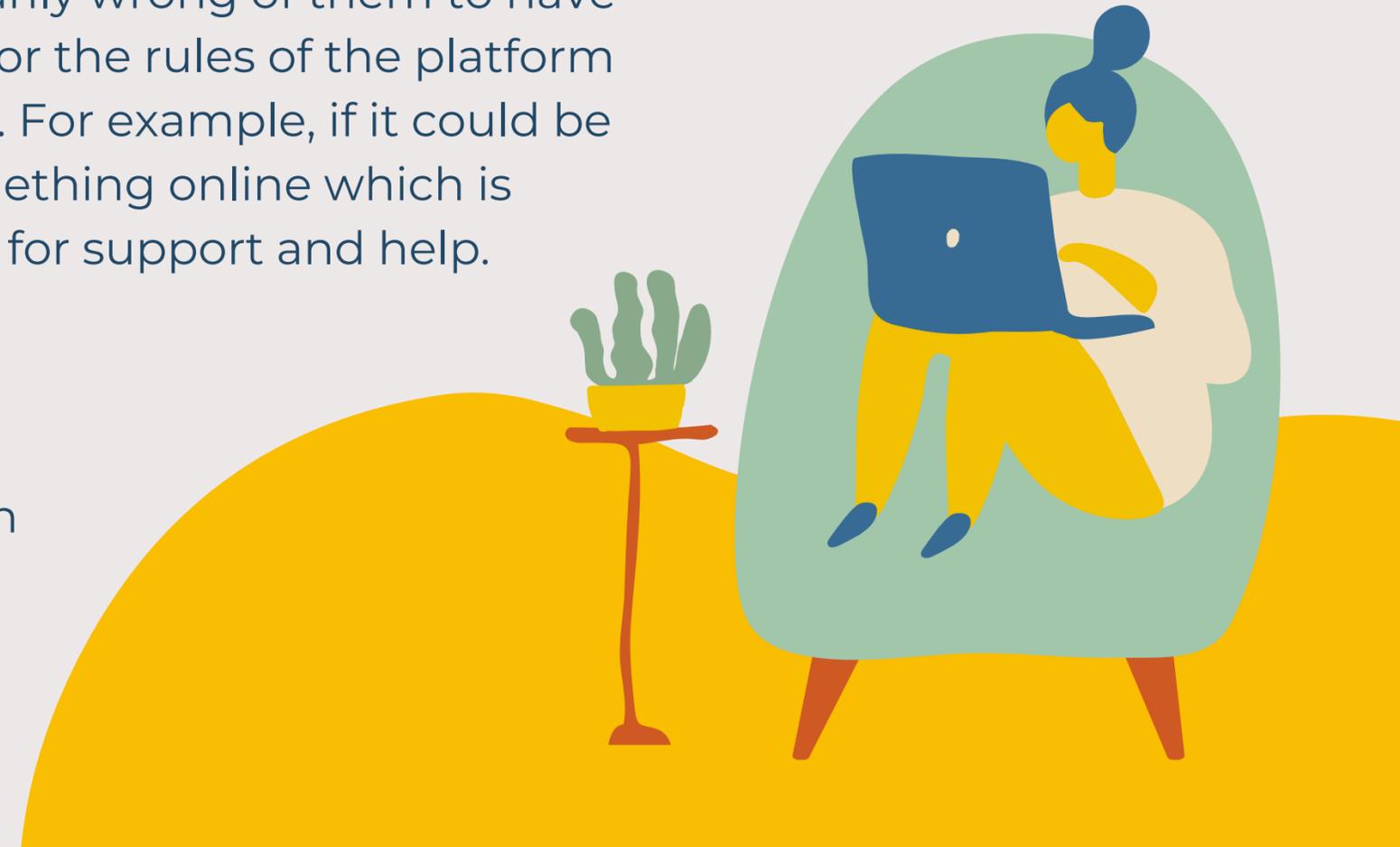
Social Media

What parts of my social media profiles can be seen by other people?

This will depend on your privacy settings as if your profile is not set to private, it may be visible to anyone in full. Generally, if your account is private there will still be parts that people not following you can see. These include: your profile picture, username (or handle) and bio.
Some social media platforms have tools that allow you to see what your profile looks like to the public, but another easy way to check is to have someone you know look up your account before you have added them as a friend or follower.

How do I stop people/accounts I don't know contacting me through social media?

Using the privacy settings you may be able to limit how easy it is to find your account, who can send you messages and what parts of your profile are public. If a particular individual is repeatedly trying to contact you, then you should speak to an adult you know and trust. You may also want to consider using the report button or blocking them.

Location Services

Location-based services are found on most smart devices including phones and use technology to pinpoint the location of your device

Your location refers to where you are and devices often track this in the background even when you don't have internet or reception. These location-based services are found on most smart devices including phones and use technology to pinpoint the location of your device, and therefore you!

Location Services

How can my device work out my location and how does it use it?

This can be done in several ways. Most commonly, phones use GPS which means they use satellites to work out where you are even if you don't have data or phone reception. Your phone also uses systems like the internet to learn your exact location.
Your location can be used in lots of different ways. On social media, people often check in to places to show their followers where they are and what they are doing. If you've ever used maps to find somewhere, this uses your location to give you directions. Online searches for things nearby such as shops, cinemas, bowling alleys, etc, will also use your location to show you options near to you.

What are the risks?

Some apps and social media accounts allow you to share your location with other people- your friends, your family or even strangers, who you only know online. Be very sure you are only sharing your location with people you know offline.

Even if the location isn't an important one, there are always risks involved with sharing your live location (where you are at that exact moment), especially when that information can be seen by strangers. If you often check in to the same locations, it could give someone a clear picture of your usual movements, which could lead to safety concerns.

Location Services

So are location services always bad?

There are lots of great ways to use location services! These include finding things near you or getting directions. Your location can even help when checking the weather!
Just be sure you are very clear on why and how your location will be used, how long for and who can see it. Always ask an adult you know and trust for help if you are unsure.

What can I do to keep my location private?

You can manage how location is used and shared in your privacy or general settings on your device and on some apps. In your device settings you should be able to completely switch off location services or you can manage whether individual apps have permission to know your location. Some apps, like map apps, will need to know where you are to work properly, but others (social media and most games) do not need this information.

My friend has tagged us all somewhere publicly. What do I do?

The best thing you can do is to politely ask your friend to take down the post or delete the location information from it. Often, people don't realise they are being pinpointed at an exact location. Another good idea is to set up your privacy settings so you have to approve anything before it appears on your profile or account. You can also remove tags on social media sites.

Online Bullying

Sometimes called cyberbullying. Any behaviour that uses technology and devices to deliberately target or upset someone.

Online bullying, sometimes called cyberbullying, is any behaviour that uses technology and devices to deliberately target or upset someone.

The internet is a tool, but how we use it is up to us. Some people choose to deliberately target or harass others, with the intention of upsetting or humiliating them. This is never okay and, for the victims, can be incredibly difficult and damaging.
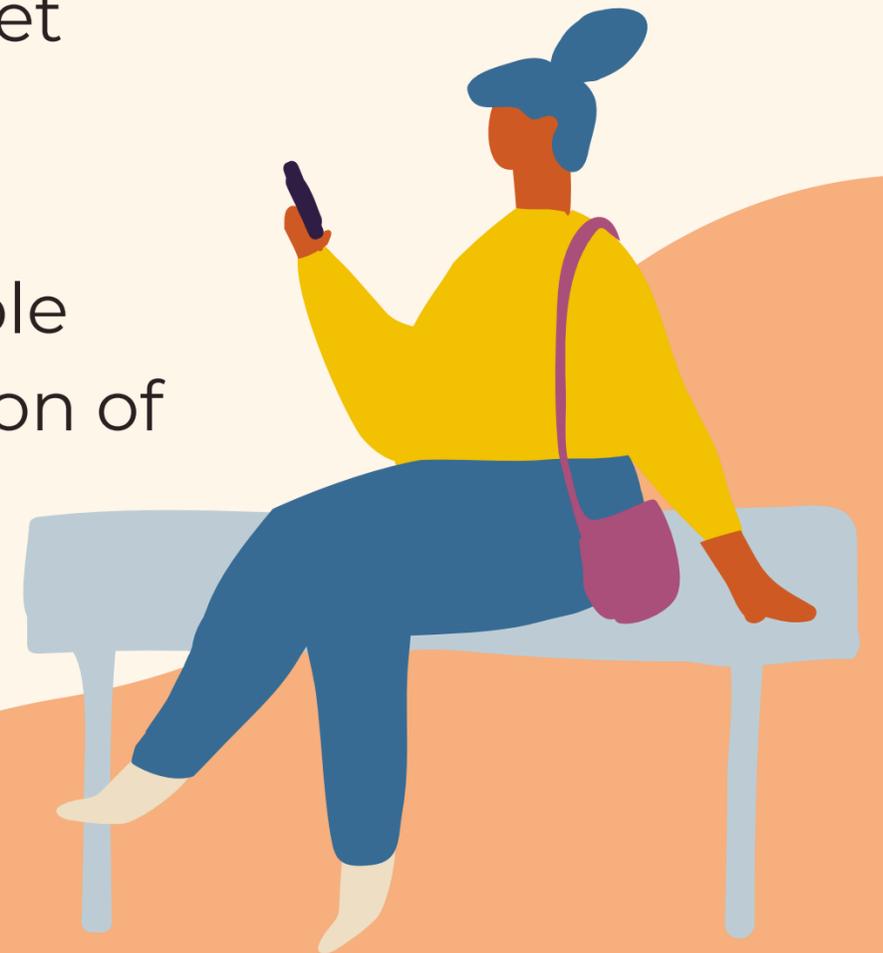
Online Bullying

What's the difference between banter and bullying?

It can be difficult to tell the difference between a message sent online to bully someone, and a message sent online as a joke between friends. However to the recipient, the difference is clear. A joke (or banter) is something that everyone understands and finds funny. Nobody feels like they are being unfairly singled out or targeted. This behaviour becomes bullying when the target does not find it funny, it's non-consensual or it hurts people's feelings. Some bullying can be unintentional but this does not make it okay. The hurt and pain caused is still real and what was meant as a joke may still be deeply upsetting or offensive.

Why is online bullying harmful?

IOnline bullying can take place at any time and can happen anywhere. This can make it hard for the victim to feel safe or like they can escape their bully, who may even be able to reach them in personal safe spaces, like at home. Online bullying can also quickly reach a large audience as messages, pictures or videos can be shared publicly, over a long period of time, through group messages or on social media.

Online Bullying

I'm being bullied online, please help.

Online bullying is never okay and the most important thing to do is to tell someone. That might be a friend or classmate initially, but speaking to an adult you know and trust is really important. This could be a parent, carer, other family member, teacher, school staff, youth worker or social worker. You could also contact Childline or The Mix. In the meantime, try to save any evidence you have of what's been happening – take screenshots if you can, or keep a record of any behaviour which forms part of the bullying including times and the people involved. You can also use the report and block buttons to stop the bullies from continuing to contact you.

Someone I know is being bullied online, what should I do?

The most important thing is to be there for them. Make sure they know that they've got a friend in you and that they can come to you for support. You could also encourage them to speak to an adult about what's been happening, or show them how to use the report and block buttons to stop any further contact.

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Online Bullying

I have bullied somebody online, how can I get help?

Firstly, well done for admitting that you were in the wrong. If you know that you have upset someone online recently, then it may be worth reaching out to offer an apology – never underestimate the power of saying sorry. If the bullying happened a while ago, then the victim may have moved on and hearing from you could make them feel worse, not better. Talk to an adult about what's happened and work together to think of ways to prevent it from happening again in the future. You can also reach out to Childline or The Mix who are always there to listen and support, whatever the issue.

I was told to ignore my online bully and that they'd stop eventually, is there anything I can do?

"Bullies do it for attention, ignore them and they'll stop" is well-meaning advice, but you should never have to put up with someone being unkind to you. If it was an adult who gave you that advice, see if there is someone else you can speak to. For example, if a teacher told you to ignore it, could you talk to a parent or carer? Remember you can also reach out to Childline or The Mix too.

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Online Reputation

The things online that you have liked, shared and commented on may shape your online reputation

The things online that you have liked, shared and commented on, as well as what others have shared about you, may shape what other people think about you; this is your online reputation.

Your online reputation could affect how people think about you or even behave towards you. In particular, your online reputation may play a part in big decisions about your future, for example whether someone will offer you a job you apply for..

Online Reputation

What is a digital footprint?

Your digital footprint is the mark that you leave behind when using the internet and can shape your online reputation. Your digital footprint is made up of the content you create, post and share; as well as the content that others post, and share, with you and about you.

How do I see my own digital footprint?

The best way to see your digital footprint is to search your name online. Using a search engine, find out what information about you is visible to the public. If you have a common name, you may find it helpful to add other key words, such as the place you live or the name of your school, to the search.

How can I remove negative things appearing when people search my name online?

If you have shared something online that you regret (e.g. an embarrassing photo or offensive joke) the best thing to do is delete the original post.
If someone else has shared something negative about you, start by removing any tags that link directly to your account and asking the person who posted the content to delete it. If they refuse, there may be options to report it and have it deleted that way. Sometimes you may find that lots of people have shared something, making it difficult to remove completely – in this situation it's important to speak to an adult you trust
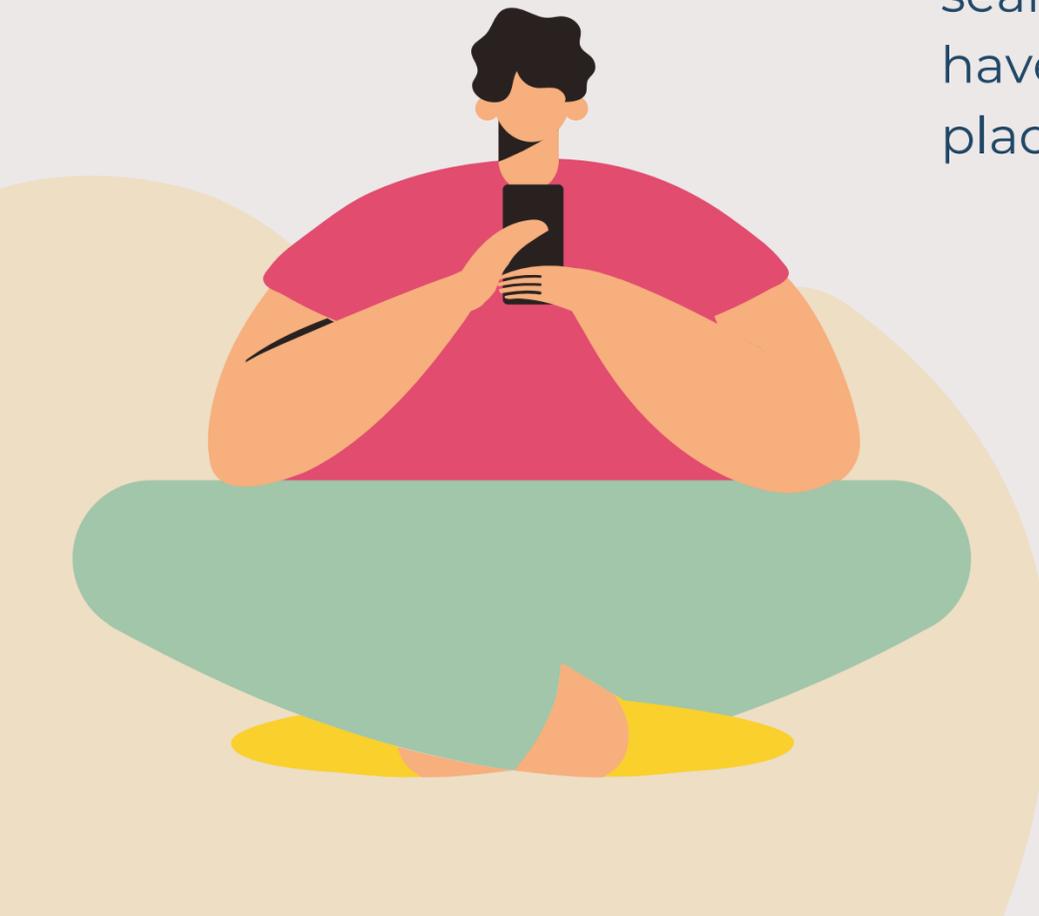
Online Reputation

Will privacy settings protect everything I share online?

Privacy settings are a really useful tool to help protect the things you share online, but they are not a guarantee that your content is secure. Your friends or followers can screenshot your content and share it on, or they may show other people using their device.

What should I do before sharing or posting something online?

Take time to think – how will this reflect on you now and in the future? Be careful not to share personal information, content that might upset or offend others, or content that you may be embarrassed by in the future.

I've posted something online that I regret, what can I do?

Firstly: don't panic. Take it down as quickly as possible, to limit the possibility of it getting shared on. If you think you might have upset somebody with what you shared, reach out to them and remember that saying sorry can be really powerful! If it does come up in the future, be honest and acknowledge what you've learnt from your mistake. Remember, nobody is perfect and people will always make mistakes – it's just that yours happens to have been recorded on the internet!
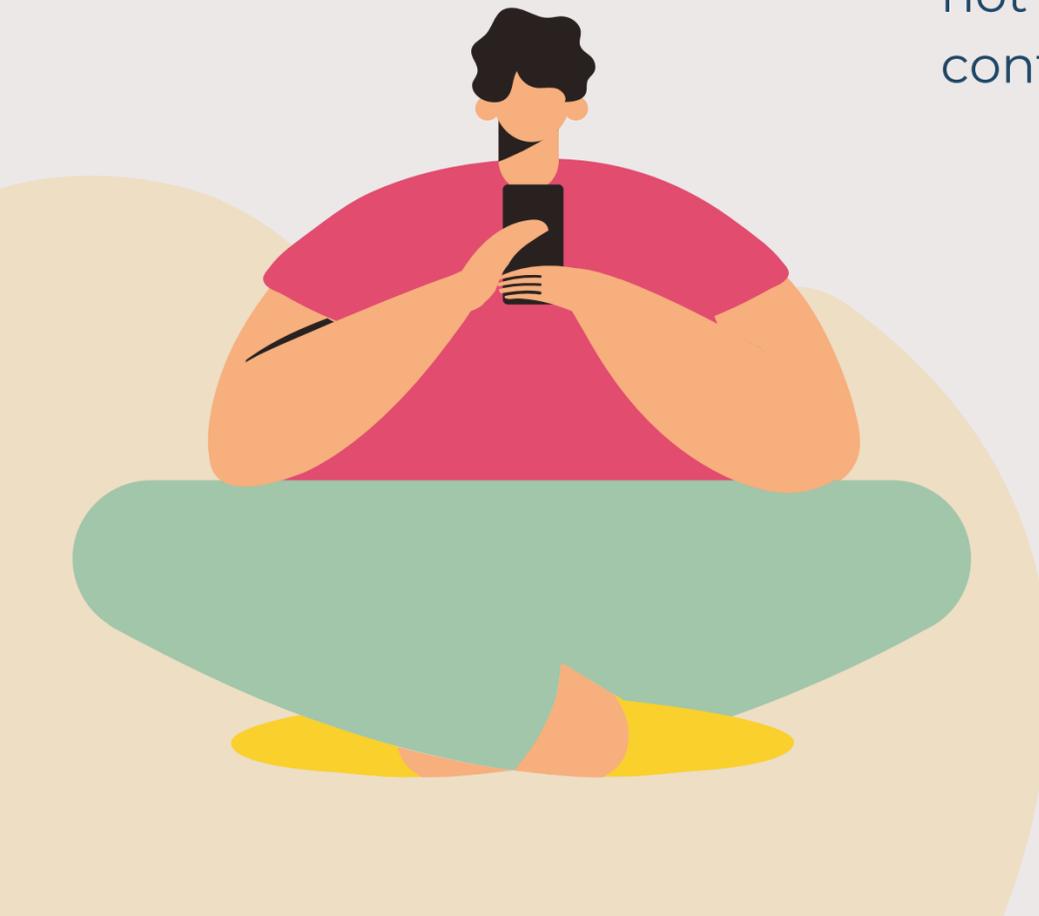
Online Gaming

Tips and advice on playing 'video games' on a games console, a PC or mobile games on a smartphone or tablet

Gaming involves playing 'video games' on a games console (such as a PlayStation 4, XBOX One or Nintendo Switch) a PC or mobile games on a smartphone or tablet.

How do I know if a video game is suitable for me?

Games are rated 3, 7, 12, 16 and 18 so you can easily see which ones are suited for your age. You can also look at the game's content descriptors. These tell you more about the kind of things that you will see in a video game, such as violence and fear (horror).
Games with a higher age rating are more likely to contain bad language, violence or other adult content.
In the UK it is against the law to sell games with the highest age ratings (PEGI 12, 16 and 18) to anyone younger than those respective ages but it is not illegal for you to play them.

Online Gaming

Are video games bad for my health?

There is no strong evidence to suggest that playing video games is bad for your health. In fact, some games can give you great experiences because of their exciting storylines or through puzzles that engage your brain. They can also be a good way to take a break from schoolwork or things that are causing you stress.

However, it is important to think about how playing video games makes you feel – if playing a game is causing you to worry, feel frustrated or stressed, then it might be time to take a break. It's also important to balance the time you spend gaming with more physical activities away from the console.

Finally, you should think carefully about what time of the day you play games – playing games late at night could interrupt some well needed sleep.

Is it safe to talk to someone I don't know when playing a game online?

Many young people tell us that playing and chatting with other people is an important part of their gaming experience. To stay safe, keep chat focussed on the gameplay, avoid sharing personal information and keep in mind that not everyone online is who they say they are. Remember that you can choose to stop talking to another player if they are making you feel uncomfortable in any way.

Online Gaming

What should I do if I experience bullying or harassment when playing video games?

If someone is trying to offend, humiliate, threaten, harass or abuse you when playing a game online, then this is a form of bullying and is never your fault. 'Banter' can quickly turn into something more hurtful and many young people tell us that this can ruin their gaming experience.

You shouldn't respond to the bully. If it has happened on a chat feature, take a picture of the hurtful comments and, if you are able to, report the harassment to the game's administrators. If someone is harassing you through your headphones, you can usually mute them.

Make sure you also block that player and tell someone that you trust about what has happened. When you feel ready to, go back to playing the game that you love – a small few try to ruin gaming for people but there are plenty of other players who will play with you respectfully.

How can I stop myself spending too much money on gaming?

There are extra features in games that can be bought with real money and many young people tell us that these can make their gaming experience more enjoyable. However, it can be easy to spend more money than you should or want to. Remember that games are often designed to encourage players to spend money and can be very clever at tempting you with small purchases. Always ask yourself "Do I really need this?" before making a purchase and give yourself time to make a decision before buying.

Online Grooming

Online grooming is when someone builds a relationship online because they want to trick or pressure someone.

Online grooming is when someone builds a relationship with a young person online because they want to trick or pressure them into doing something that may hurt or harm them.

Any young person and even some adults can be at risk from grooming, regardless of age, gender, race or location. Online grooming is wrong and never the fault of the victim.
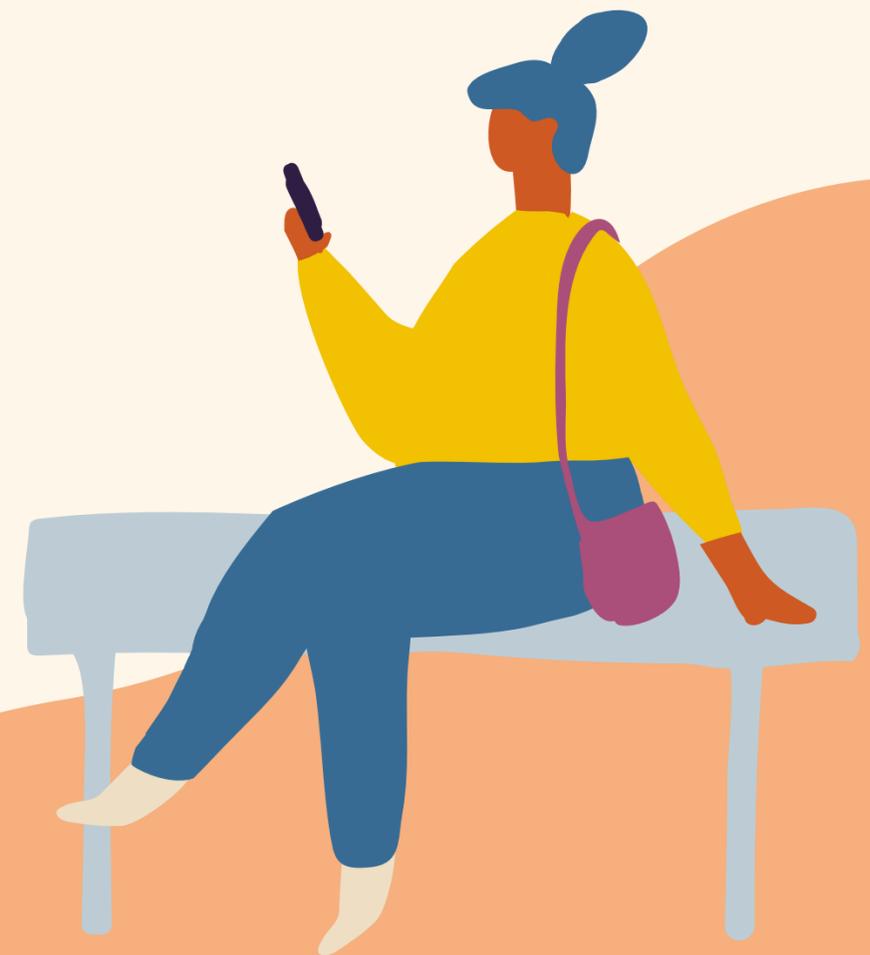
Online Grooming

How do groomers trick people?

Online groomers use many different methods. They may use fake accounts and photos or say they enjoy the same hobbies and interests as the young person they are grooming. Others may pretend to be modelling scouts, sports coaches, celebrities or influencers. However, not all groomers will choose to hide who they really are and some may try to build a connection or develop a 'mentor' type relationship based on their true identity.

How can I tell if someone I know is being groomed?

If you are worried that someone online is trying to groom you or someone you know, talk to an adult straight away. The following signs are things which you should look out for.
Someone suggesting or pressuring you or another young person to:

- meet up offline
- share personal information about yourself or others
- send images and videos of yourself
- share sexual messages, images or videos
- keep contact private or to keep secrets
- not talk to friends or family
- always be available and reply straight away to messages

Online Grooming

What can I do if I'm worried about online grooming?

If someone online is making you or someone you know feel uncomfortable then tell an adult you trust like a parent, carer or teacher.

You can also make a report to the police on the **ThinkUKnow** website by clicking on the 'report abuse' button. All reports are taken seriously, and they will contact you to advise you on the next steps and provide support.

What is CEOP?

CEOP stands for the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command. They are part of the police who investigate and deal with cases of online grooming. Their Child Protection Advisors are fully trained to offer support and guidance to any young people who are worried about online grooming. You can find more information and contact CEOP directly on their website ThinkUKnow.

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Nudes

Sometimes referred to as 'sexting', taking or sharing naked or sexually explicit images of yourself or others.

Sending nudes, sometimes referred to as 'sexting', means taking or sharing naked, partially dressed or sexually explicit images of yourself or others, using technology.

Nudes may end up being shared online in a number of different ways, for example:

- a person sharing their own nude with someone else, because they want to;
- a person sharing their own nude with someone else, because they feel pressured to do so;
- a person receiving the nude of someone else, and sharing it with one or lots of other people, without the original sender's permission; or
- a person using a nude of someone online and sharing it with other people, pretending it is a person they know.
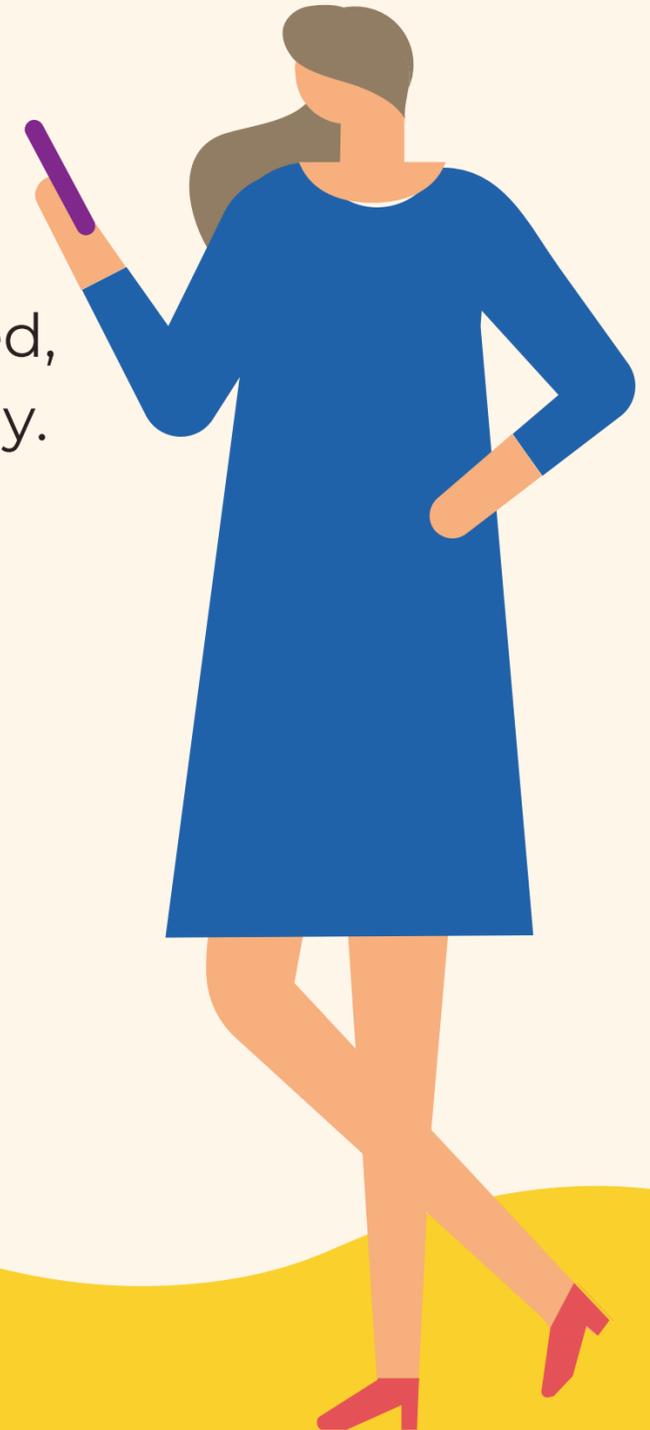
Nudes

Why do people send nudes?

Some young people tell us that taking and sending nude images makes them feel more confident about themselves and about their bodies, and can be a way to explore new relationships with others. However, sometimes people send nudes without the permission of the original sender, maybe for a joke, a dare or because they think it's cool. This can make people feel betrayed, embarrassed, upset and disrespected, which is never okay.
It might sound like everyone is doing it, but that's not usually the case. The private nature of nude photos can mean lots of gossip and rumours get shared about them, which might make it sound like sending nudes is more common than it is.

What is the law for young people sending nudes?

In England and Wales, there is a law called the Protection of Children Act 1978. This Act states that anyone who creates an indecent image of someone under 18 (e.g. a nude or nearly nude photo) breaks the law. Sending an image on like that, or saving an image like that, also breaks the law.

How would someone whose nudes are leaked feel?

It can be really upsetting for someone if their nude image is 'leaked' and shared beyond the person they intended it for. Others who see the image may think it's okay to blame, embarrass, or bully the person in the nude photo, which of course, it is **not**. The person in the photo may feel a negative impact on their self-esteem and their emotions.

Nudes

What will the police do if nudes are reported to them?

The National Police Chiefs' Council of England, Wales and Northern Ireland have stated that young people engaging in sexting should not face prosecution, especially for first time incidents, but should receive help and support. In Scotland, local forces may also use their discretion when deciding on what action to take, to avoid unnecessarily criminalising young people.
The situation will still be investigated to ensure that the young people involved are not at risk of further harm. Repeat offences and more extreme cases are reviewed differently, still with a focus on avoiding prosecution unless absolutely necessary.

Could nudes damage my online reputation?

Images and videos can be shared very far, very quickly when online. It can be difficult to know for certain where an image goes, where it is saved and where it might reappear in the future. People such as future employers, universities, colleges or friends may make an unfair judgement about someone if a nude image is linked to their online reputation. On the other hand, if someone's involvement in sharing someone else's nude forms part of their online reputation, this does not show them to be a trustworthy person.

I've seen a nude being shared around, what should I do?

If you see a nude being shared around, it's important not to share it on further. This is breaking the law and could be hurtful for the person in the image. Instead, you should report the image by telling an adult you know and trust about what's happening. Alternatively you may be able to report it online.
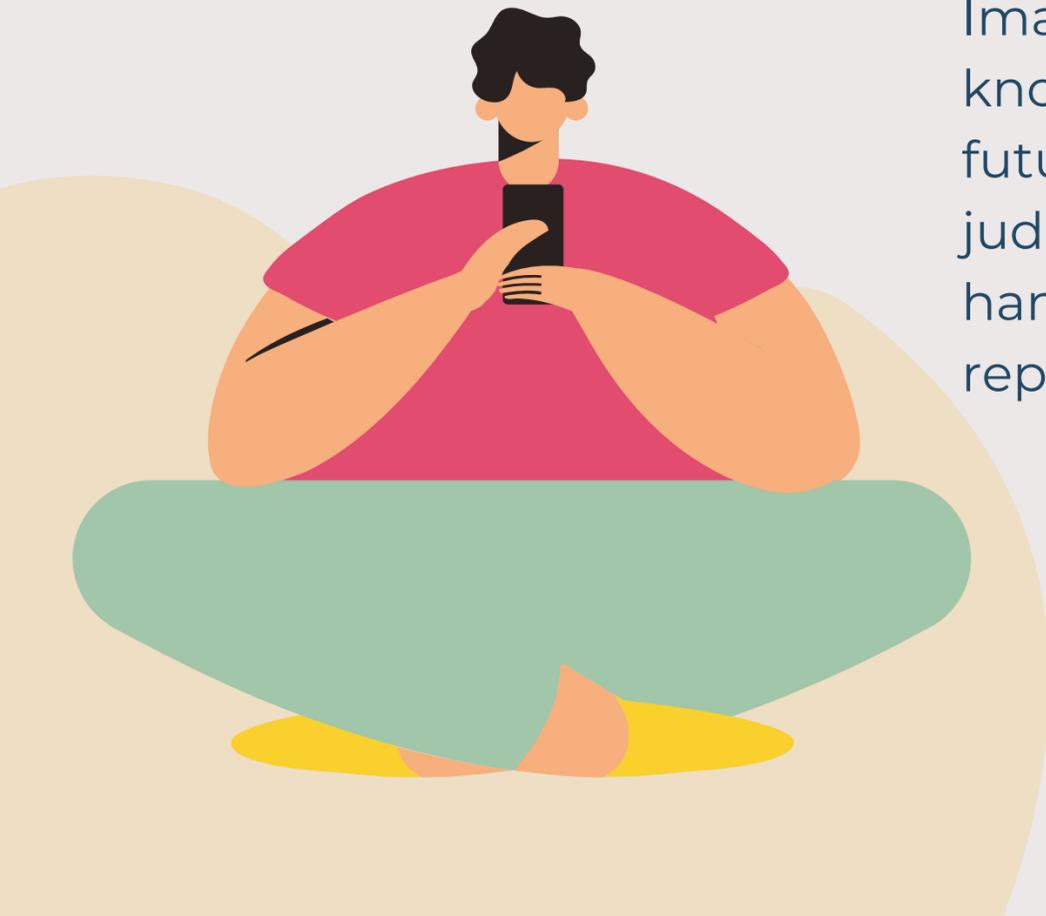
Nudes

Someone has sent me a nude, what should I do?

If someone has sent you a nude as part of a relationship you're in, because you asked for it or because you're comfortable together, then remember they have trusted you with something very personal. Respect that trust and don't share it on or show other people. It's important to remember that a nude of someone under 18 breaks the law, even if it was sent with consent and both people involved liked doing it, so it may be helpful to talk to the person who sent it and agree to delete the image and wait until you're older to do this again.

If someone has sent you their nude to upset you, embarrass you, or pressure you into sending them yours, that's a form of sexual harassment, and is not acceptable. Delete the image and talk to an adult you trust for their support. There are ways you can block others from contacting you or sending you things online. Remember it's not your fault.

If an adult has sent you a nude image then delete the image, talk to an adult you know and trust for support and report the incident on the ThinkUKnow website.

Someone is pressuring me to send them nudes, what should I do?

Pressuring someone for this type of image is not okay – it's a form of sexual harassment. Healthy relationships are not built on pressure, they are built on trust and if that person won't take no for an answer, they are not showing they respect or trust you. Remember you are not at fault and that saying no is the right thing to do. You may also find it reassuring to block the person so they can't contact you again. Speak to an adult you know and trust for help or contact a helpline like Childline or The Mix. They can help you deal with the pressure, and offer support.

A nude I took has been leaked online, what can I do?

Firstly: don't blame yourself. This is not your fault. Secondly: get some support. It's never too late to get help, even if it feels like the damage has already been done. Speak to an adult you know and trust, or reach out to a helpline for advice. They can support you in deciding what to do next and can help get the image taken down. Even if this feels like the end of the world, remember that you have lots of people who care about you and there are lots of positive steps you can take to move forward from this.
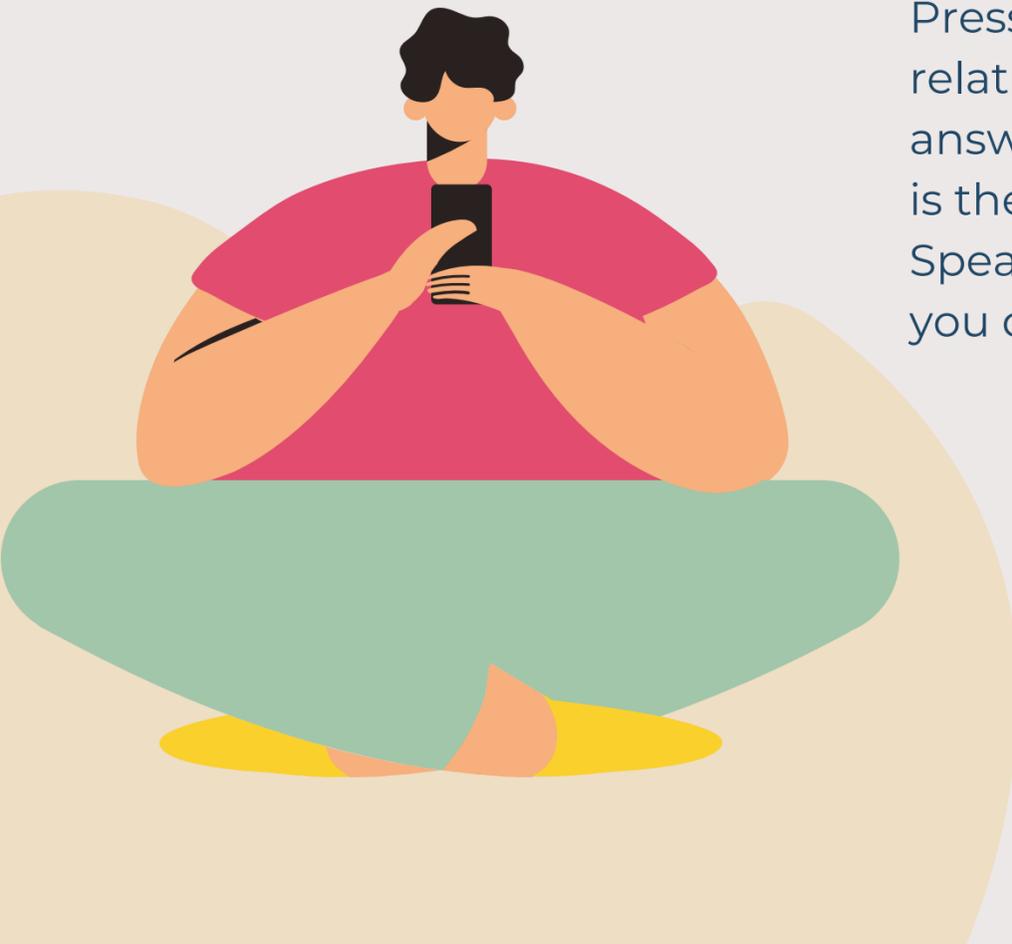
Online Sexual Harassment

Unwanted sexual behaviour that occurs online and how to get help

Online sexual harassment is any unwanted sexual behaviour that occurs online. It can happen on any online platform and could include content such as photos, videos, posts, webpages, messages or fake profiles.

Even if the harassment was intended as a joke, or was a misunderstanding, it is the experience of the victim that defines whether it is sexual harassment or not.

Online Sexual Harassment

Where does online sexual harassment take place?

Online sexual harassment can take place anywhere online and on any device. You might see or experience it in a game chat or on social media for example. The online sexual harassment could be shared publicly or privately.

How can it make people feel?

Sexual harassment that happens online can make a person feel any of the following:
- Threatened or scared
- Exploited or coerced
- That their dignity is violated
- Humiliated or degraded
- Shamed or judged
- Upset
- Sexualised
- Discriminated against because of their gender or sexual orientation
- Feel guilty or that they are to blame

Online sexual harassment can affect different people in different ways. There is no 'right' or 'wrong' way to feel. People who have been a target of online sexual harassment may also be worried about the threat of content resurfacing online in the future.

As well people who experience online sexual harassment, anyone who witnesses it happening to someone else online may also be affected.

Online Sexual Harassment

Who can I talk to?

We know it can be difficult to tell someone and that some people worry about getting into trouble for reporting. It is important to remember that you are trying to help the situation and that support is there for you and anyone else involved. There are adults around you that care about you and want to help you.

Trained counsellors - You can speak or chat online with trained counsellors at Childline and The Mix. Trained counsellors can listen and offer advice on what to do next. You may speak to a trained counsellor first but it is also a good idea to talk to a parent and carer too.

Parents and carers - It can be difficult but in order for them to support you they need to know something has happened. Let them know how you are feeling – you may feel worried or embarrassed at first, but all they want to do is help you.

A trusted adult - You might find it easier to talk to a trusted adult like a youth worker or teacher. They can listen to you and help you plan out your next steps. This could include help with reporting and blocking as well as arranging any counselling and support.
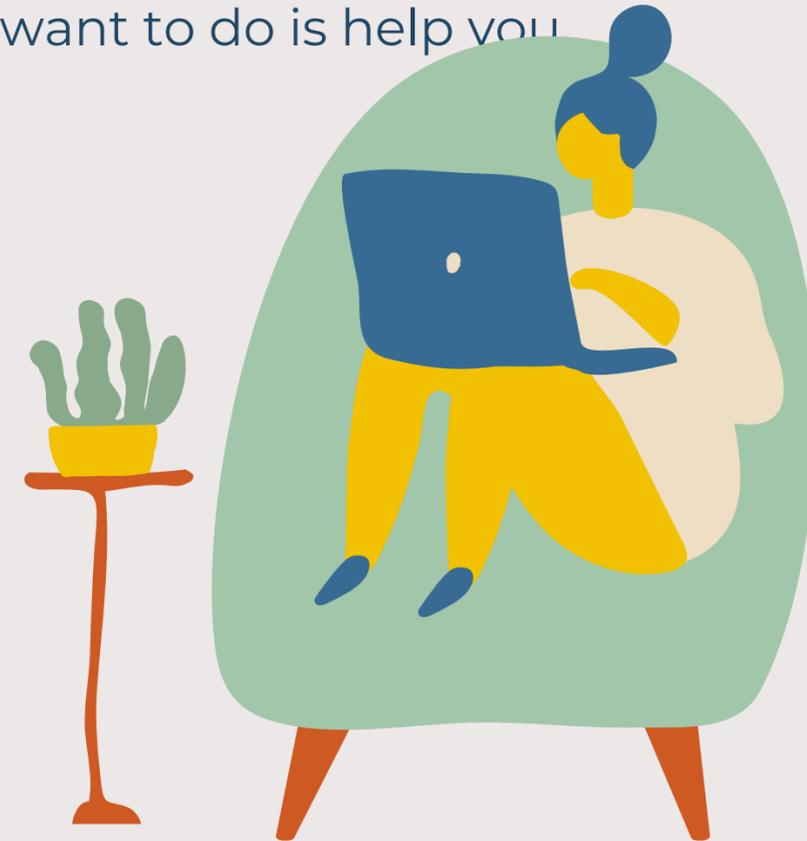
Online Sexual Harassment

It has happened to me...what should I do?

Sexual harassment is never acceptable – online or offline. Here are some steps that you can take straight away:

1. Block them – Blocking stops that person being able to message you or see what you are sharing online.
2. Report them – Reporting is anonymous and lelts online platforms such as social media and gaming networks know what has happened and who did it. If it still online you can tell them where it is and that you want it removed. If the content breaks terms and conditions, it should be taken down.
3. Talk to someone – It can be hard asking for help, but in a situation like this it is really important. Family members, school staff and your friends all want to make sure you are safe. In order for them to help you they need to know the whole story. Let them know what has happened, what you are worried about and what you need help with. You may want to talk to trained counsellor from organisations such as Childline and The Mix first but it is also a good idea to talk to a parent and carer too.

A stranger has made sexual requests to me online, what can I do?

If you or someone you know is being sexually harassed online by a stranger, tell a trusted adult and report them to CEOP.
CEOP are specialist police officers and part of their role is to protect young people from unwanted contact like this.

Online Sexual Harassment

What can I do if I see someone else experiencing online sexual harassment?

To put an end to online sexual harassment it is important that you don't ignore it. You should report what you have seen to the site, app or game. Please do not worry about the person finding out because reporting is anonymous.
It is also important to talk to someone too, this could be a friend, a teacher or someone at home. You might be upset by what you have seen or want to talk things through. If the harassment is going on between people you know it can be very difficult to know what to do so talking to someone can really help.

When does online sexual harassment break the law?

Not all online sexual harassment will be illegal or a crime but is important to remember that this is unwanted sexual behaviour. Whether the incident is illegal or not, any unwanted behaviour that affects someone else in a negative way is never acceptable.
Some instances of online sexual harassment may break the law.
Impersonating other people online, sending threatening messages and re-sharing other people's nude images are some types of behaviours that can break the law.
If the police became involved, they would need to know all the details of the incident in order to decide how to proceed with the case.

Video Calls

Video calling allows us to speak to our friends and family, and see their faces, which is especially valuable when we are unable to see them in person.

Most phones and devices have video calling options built in, such as Apple's Facetime. Apps such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams have also been designed especially for video calling. Additionally, lots of social media platforms have developed video calling features, including Instagram, WhatsApp, and Snapchat etc.

Video Calling

Do video calling services have age limits?

The age limit for both Zoom and Microsoft Teams is 16+, as they are designed mostly for workplace environments. If you would like to use either of those services for a video call, it is advisable to set these up with an adult's help. WhatsApp is also intended for those 16 & above, but we know that it is used by many young people. Most social media services, including Instagram and Snapchat, require you to be 13 years old and up to create an account.

How can I make sure video calling is safe?

Firstly, it's a good idea only to call people that you know and trust and have already met face-to-face. Whilst you may feel that you can trust friends made solely online, they are still strangers, and it's important to keep your personal information protected. If friends of yours want to invite people that you don't know to join a call with you, don't feel pressured to say yes – they are still a stranger to you and it is always OK to say no. If you receive a video call from an unknown number or email address, don't answer it. If calls persist, you can always block the number.

Apps like Zoom use links and passwords, which will help to make sure that only people you know, are allowed on your call. If you are the host, you can usually create a waiting room which allows you to moderate who can join – even if they have the link. If you are using social media to host your video call, you can adjust the settings to control who can contact you.

Video Calling

Is it possible to share too much personal information when video calling?

Video calls can let someone else see into your home, so it is important to check your physical surroundings before starting a call. Make sure that you are happy for anything in your background to be visible on camera. Although you are most likely to be video calling someone you know, there may still be personal information visible in your home that you do not want to share, such as family photos etc.

What should I do if I experience bullying or harassment on a video call?

If you are on a video call with someone and they begin to say or do anything that upsets you or makes you feel uncomfortable, it is okay to end the call immediately. If this happens again or continues, then you can block them to prevent further contact. If you are using an app or service such as Zoom or Instagram, it is also possible to report them. You should also tell a trusted adult what has happened.

Is taking screenshots of a video call OK?

You may want to take screenshots of entertaining moments from a video call. However, it's important to have consent from everyone in the video call before taking it and / or sharing it.
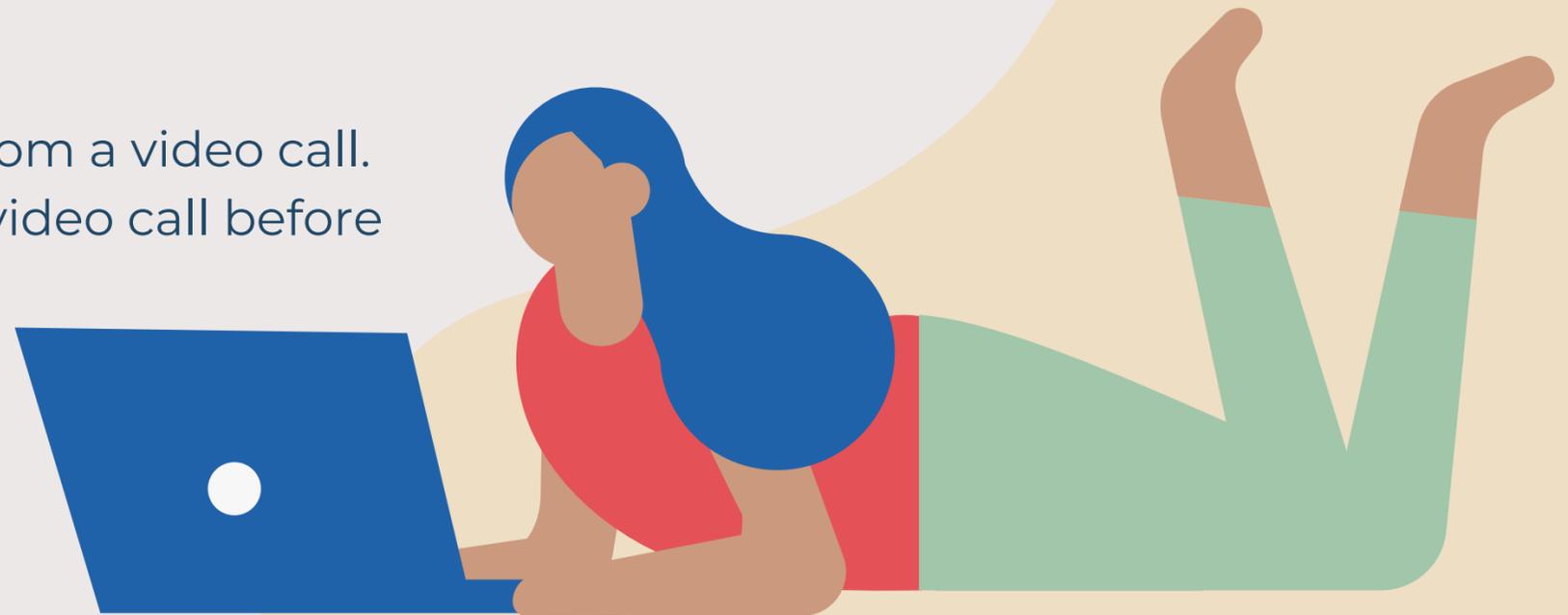
Livestreaming

People use livestreaming to broadcast live video footage of themselves to others, usually their friends/family or the general public

Livestreaming is a way for people to broadcast themselves online. Apps such as Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, Twitch and YouTube all offer livestreaming services.

Why do people use livestreaming?

People use livestreaming to broadcast live video footage of themselves to others, usually their friends/family or the general public. This could be something specific such as playing an online game alongside a voiceover or a more general day-to-day run through of their lives.
Celebrities, influencers or vloggers may use it to communicate with their fans or to spread messages, including advertising and marketing.
Livestreaming is also used to communicate to the world what is happening at a specific moment in time. For example, to document breaking news stories on large media channels.
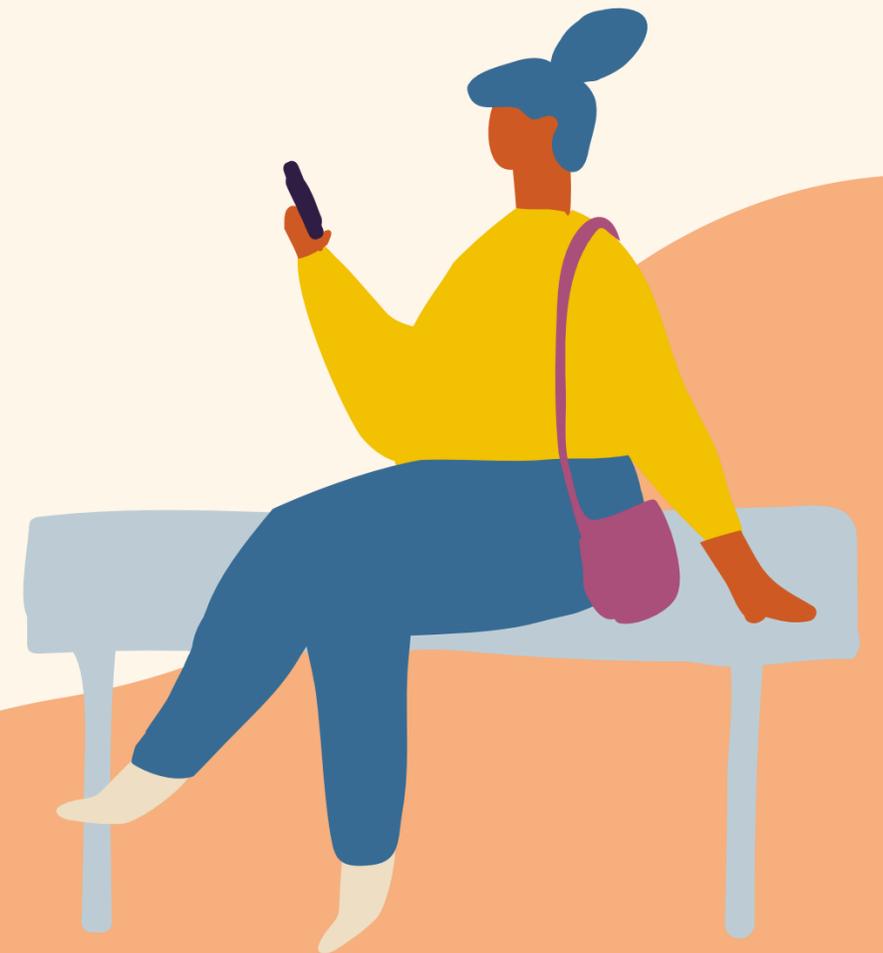
Livestreaming

What are the positives of livestreaming?

Lots of people enjoy watching livestreams from their friends as well as celebrities and popular online personalities. They can be exciting and help you feel like you are a part of something. Some people host their own livestreams, which can be an easy way to broadcast live video footage to their friends and followers.

What are the risks of hosting a livestream?

Hosting your own livestream can be a really enjoyable experience, however there are a few things to consider to make sure you are safe:

- Remember to not share any personal information through what you say, the things you show or even clues in the background.
- Think about who can view your livestream and remember, even if you do use privacy settings, people are still able to take screenshots or recordings.
- Always think carefully before you livestream. Even though you might be able to edit content afterwards, whoever was watching it live will have seen the original version. While you can remove a livestream after it has ended there is still the chance that someone else may have made a copy of it.

Livestreaming

What are the risks of viewing a livestream?

When something is live you can never know exactly what you will see or hear – always talk to an adult you know and trust if you see or hear something upsetting. Lots of livestreaming services also have a chat function for interaction and you could be talking to people who you do not know. It's important to be aware of what you are sharing, making sure you don't reveal any personal information. Another risk to consider is how reliable the content is. Vloggers and celebrities may use livestreams to advertise products or share opinions. Always think about the motive behind what you are being told.

I said or did something I regret during a livestream, how can I take it back?

Accidents happen and if you do reveal something personal during a livestream then it is important to delete this footage straight away. This doesn't mean that this has now disappeared as whoever was watching at the time would have seen this and it could have been recorded. However this is unlikely if you only shared with your friends, family and people that you know. Talk to an adult you know and trust about what happened and try to use this as a learning curve. Think carefully about what you are going to share in any future livestreams.

If you know that you have upset someone or feel you may have been offensive in any way, then it could be worth reaching out to offer an apology.

It would be a good idea to delete the livestream to avoid upsetting anyone else who may view it. Talk to an adult about what's happened and work together to think of ways to prevent it from happening again in the future.

Livestreaming

Someone has taken a copy of my livestream and is now sharing it around. What can I do?

Unfortunately, livestreaming can be used by online bullies to deliberately target or harass others to upset or humiliate them. Please remember this is not your fault and there is support out there. Try to get a copy/screenshot of what is being shared around as evidence and most importantly speak to an adult that you trust. If preferred, you can also reach out to Childline or The Mix who are always there to listen and support, whatever the issue. Bullying is never okay and, for the victim, can be extremely difficult.

I saw something upsetting whilst watching a livestream, how can I get help?

If anything in a livestream is abusive, offensive or makes you feel uncomfortable then make sure you report it. You can report the livestream itself, plus any comments too. As well as reporting, it is a good idea to tell someone you trust about what you have experienced. This may initially be a friend, however it's important to tell an adult you know and trust too. You could also contact Childline or The Mix if you'd prefer.

Apps

You can personalise your device by downloading 'apps' which carry out fun and useful functions, from checking train times, using your favourite social networking site on the move to caring for a virtual pet!

You can get apps via a 'shop' or 'store' on your mobile device, for example Apple's App Store, Google Play. You are able to download some apps for free and others will be paid for apps, normally paid for via an online account or charged to your monthly phone bill or to your pay as you go credit.

Apps

Are all apps okay to download?

It's important to remember that apps can contain content that may be inappropriate for your age; for example it could contain violence or sexual content. Make sure you check the age ratings and content descriptions on apps before you download them, to make sure the app is age appropriate. These are assigned by the app developer so check out the reviews as well to make sure it is an app that you are happy to download onto your device. If you are unsure if it's ok to download you can always check with an adult first.

Also make sure you are downloading an app from a reputable site. It is possible for apps to contain viruses and some smartphones are more prone to malicious apps. Smartphones run on an operating system (much like a computer), the three main ones are Google Android, Apple iOS and BlackBerry. Apple approve every app that gets to their store so there is some degree of quality control. Android and BlackBerry phones use software that allows developers to produce and upload any app. It is always worth reading reviews of the app on the relevant app store to check that other users have not had problems with it.

What is in-app purchasing?

While many apps are free, sometimes you may also decide to pay for apps, which commonly cost around 99p to £2.99, (though some can cost more). In-app purchases are not always obvious; you may have downloaded a free game app, but then to upgrade to the next level you are asked to make an "in-app purchase". By doing this you will be asked to pay an additional sum of money, we have heard stories where young people have got into difficulty and have ended up running up huge bills!

If you are worried you will be tempted to buy things in app then why not turn off in-app purchases? On some smartphones it is possible to block in-app purchases and downloading apps by going into your phone settings.

Digital Wellbeing

Going online and using technology can impact our emotions and mental health.

Digital wellbeing is about recognising the way going online makes us feel and knowing how to manage this.

Is going online good for me?

It can be! There are loads of positives to going online and using technology, like being able to stay in touch with friends and family, or learning about what's going on in the world. Unfortunately there are also negatives – sometimes the time we spend online can leave us feeling stressed, anxious, upset or alone. It's important to recognise how time online makes you feel, whether it's good or bad.

Digital Wellbeing

Why does going online sometimes make me feel bad?

As amazing as the internet is, unfortunately there's always the possibility that you might see something that you didn't want to. A particular type of content might be triggering for you and make you feel anxious or upset. Perhaps the way other people are behaving online is upsetting or unkind. Sometimes even seemingly harmless content can affect the way we feel – for example if you find yourself comparing your own life to the images and videos shared by others. However it happens, our emotional responses to things we see and hear are part of what makes us human. If something online upsets you, it's important to remember that it's not your fault, but there are steps you can take to prevent it from happening again.

How can I make my experience online more positive?

The first step is to try to identify the particular things you see or hear that make your online experience a negative one. Once you've identified what is upsetting you, consider: can I or should I cut this out of my online experience completely? For example, you could unfollow or block an account that shares things you don't want to see. You may decide that it's important you still engage with the content to some extent e.g. breaking news stories. In this case, can you control how it appears to you or limit the number of times you come across it? This could be achieved by turning off notifications, so the content doesn't 'pop-up' when you're not expecting it.

Digital Wellbeing

What is self-care?

Self-care is about actively taking steps to protect your own wellbeing. This could be:
- limiting the negative impact of the things you see online by unfollowing or blocking particular types of content,
- seeking out more positive experiences online,
- balancing your time online with offline activities that help you recharge, get some space and feel better.

Self-care is different for everyone but lots of young people have told us they enjoy: going outside and getting some exercise, spending time with friends and family, taking a long bath, listening to music, reading, baking or other similar hobbies.

What tools exist to help me manage my digital wellbeing?

Many social media services now provide specific tools designed to support with digital wellbeing. Most of these tools focus on monitoring and managing the amount of time you spend on a device and using a particular service. For example by allowing you to set a time limit, after which an app is temporarily locked. Other tools include the notification settings on your device and reporting or blocking tools.

Turning off push notifications can have a real impact on what content you see throughout the day, whilst being able to report upsetting content online means the safety team can investigate and prevent similar content being posted in the future.

Where Can I Get Help And Advise If Needed?

- Talk to your parent/carer if you are comfortable in doing so

- Talk to a trusted adult e.g. teacher, youth worker

- You can contact Childline on 0800 1111, they are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

- You can contact The Mix on 0808 808 4994, they also have online chat services which you can access using this link https://www.themix.org.uk/get-support
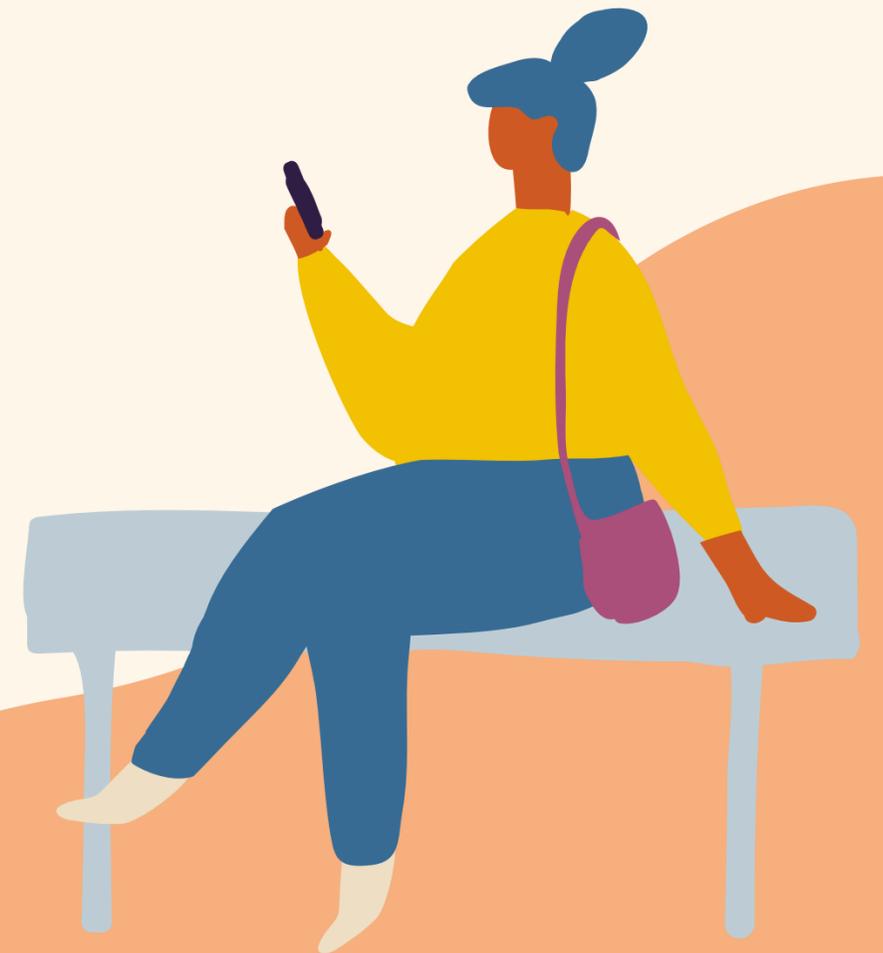
Helplines And Advice Services

- Brook - sexual health and wellbeing advice for under 25's

- Report,Remove - report a nude image online

- Young Minds - support with mental health and wellbeing

- Stonewall - advice about LGBTQ+ rights

- Reportharmfulcontent.com - guide through the reporting process

- CEOP -report inappropriate online contact

- Fearless.org - report crime anonymously