

Your child's screen time

If there's a school closure or self-isolation due to coronavirus (COVID-19), your child will likely be spending more time on devices than usual, especially if doing remote learning. Know the risks, and what you can do to keep your child safe.

What's the problem?

Spending time online and on devices can be a positive thing. But, higher screen time can put your child more at risk of:

- Being bullied online
 - Abuse and grooming (when someone builds a relationship with a child to exploit or abuse them)
 - Seeing inappropriate content
 - Not getting enough sleep and exercise
-

5 steps you can take to protect your child

1) Set parental controls on devices

Use parental controls to restrict access to in-app purchases and explicit or age-rated content, and, on some devices, how long they can spend on the device.

You'll likely need to set a password. Make sure it's different from the password used to access the device, and that your child doesn't know it.

Parental controls are usually located under 'Settings'. See below for more detailed instructions for different devices.

2) Make sure they're doing school work when they should be

Try to keep an eye on what they're up to on devices during school time – make sure they're actually using them for any work they've been set.

Some virus protection software packages include monitoring features, so check to see if yours has this.

You can also buy standalone monitoring apps. See this guide for more:

<https://www.internetmatters.org/resources/monitoring-apps-parents-guide/>

3) Talk to your child about staying safe online

Tell them:

- They should only talk to people they know and trust in real life – anyone can pretend to be a child online
- If they do talk to people they don't know, don't give away personal information – like what street they live on or where they go to school, or share their location with them. Say no to any requests they get for images or videos, and stop talking to the other person

- Set their profiles to private, to limit what others can see
- Be 'share aware' – think carefully about what they share and with who. Once it's out there, they've got no control over what the other person does with it. Remember, it's illegal to take, share or view sexual images of under-18s, full stop
- If they see something that upsets them, or someone bullies them, tell an adult they trust

Don't feel confident starting a conversation with your child about what they're up to online? Read this advice from the NSPCC: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/talking-child-online-safety>

4) Agree rules on screen time

There's no recommended 'safe' amount of screen time, but you should try to avoid screens an hour before bedtime.

Agree some limits to stop screen time interfering with your child's sleep or family activities:

- Make a plan together, and stick to it. You could set media-free times and zones, like during meals or in bedrooms
- Model the behaviour you want to see – which may mean no screen time for you at the times agreed with your child. Children are more likely to learn from example
- Try to minimise snacking during screen time
- Turn not using screens into a game, using apps like [Forest](#), where not using devices is rewarded

5) Encourage off-screen activities

- Get your child active for the recommended 60 minutes a day:
 - See www.nhs.uk/change4life/activities for free ideas for activities and games
 - Try an app that's designed to get children active – see the examples at www.internetmatters.org/resources/apps-guide/apps-to-help-kids-get-active/
 - Build in screen breaks if they're doing school work at home. 5 to 10 minutes every hour should help. They could take a break to get a drink of water, look out of the window for a few minutes, or do some easy exercises like neck rotations and forward bends
- Develop your child's communication and reading skills with the activities (for 0 to 5 year-olds) recommended here: <https://hungrylittleminds.campaign.gov.uk/>



How to set parental controls on your devices

Please note: when following the instructions below, the exact steps you need to take may be a little different depending on the device and software version you're using.

Microsoft devices (Windows computers and Xbox)

You'll need to have a family account set up, with 'child' profiles for your children. Learn more here: <https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/help/12413>

You can't change existing adult accounts to child accounts.

Set screen time limits

- Go to <https://account.microsoft.com/family> and sign in to your Microsoft account
- Find your child's name and select 'Screen time'
- Switch 'Use one schedule for all devices' to 'On' to use the same schedule for all devices. Or scroll down and switch on screen time for different devices individually if you want to have separate schedules

You can set time ranges for using devices, and how many hours per day, for each day.

Set age limits for apps, games and media

Online:

- Sign in to your Microsoft account, as above, and find your child's name
- Select 'Content restrictions'
- Go to 'Apps, games and media' and switch 'Block inappropriate apps, games and media' to 'On'. Under 'Allow apps and games rated for', select the age limit you want to apply to your child

On Xbox:

- Sign in with an adult account
- Press the Xbox button on the controller to open the guide, and then select System > Settings > Account > Family
- Select the child account you want to put controls on, select 'Access to content', then select the age limit you want to set

Block inappropriate websites

Online:

- Sign in to your account, find your child's name, and select 'Content restrictions'
- Scroll down to 'Web browsing' and switch 'Block inappropriate websites' to 'On'
- To block specific sites, add links to them under 'Always blocked'
- To make it so your children can only access websites you've explicitly allowed, check the box next to 'Only allow these websites'

Xbox:

- Sign in to an adult account, press the Xbox button and follow the steps to get family settings above
- Select the child account you want to put controls on, then select 'Web filtering'

- › Select the dropdown to see the available options, and choose the level of filtering you want

Manage purchases in the Microsoft Store

Online:

- › Sign in to your account, as above, find your child's name and select 'Spending'
- › Under 'Ask a parent', switch 'Needs adult approval to buy things' to 'On'

Xbox:

- › Go into your family settings, as explained above, and choose a child account
- › Select Privacy & online safety > Xbox Live privacy > View details & customize > Buy & download and then select 'On' in the 'Ask a parent' box

Read more here: <https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/hub/4294457/microsoft-account-help#manage-family>

iPads and iPhones

Set a screen time passcode

- › Go to 'Settings' (a grey icon with a circular pattern on the home screen) and tap 'Screen Time'
- › Tap 'Continue', then choose whether it's your device or your child's
 - If it's your device and you want to stop your child changing your settings, tap 'Use Screen Time Passcode' to create a passcode. Re-enter the passcode to confirm
 - If it's your child's device, follow the prompts on the device until you get to 'Parent Passcode' and enter a passcode, then re-enter it to confirm

Block in-app purchases

- › Go into Settings > Screen Time > Content and Privacy Restrictions. Enter your passcode if asked
- › Tap 'iTunes & App Store Purchases'
- › Choose a setting (for example, in-app purchases) and set to 'Don't allow'

Block explicit content and set controls on apps

- › Go to Settings > Screen Time > Content & Privacy Restrictions > Content Restrictions
- › Choose the settings you want for each feature or setting under 'Allowed Store Content'

Filter website content

This sets restrictions on what websites children can access (e.g. you can limit access to adult content).

- › Go to Settings > Screen Time > Content & Privacy Restrictions
- › Enter your screen time passcode
- › Tap 'Content Restrictions', then 'Web Content'
- › Choose 'Unrestricted Access' (access to any website), 'Limit Adult Websites' (to block access to adult content in Safari) or 'Allowed Websites Only' (to set specific websites as 'approved websites' and limit access to only these websites)

Read more here: <https://support.apple.com/en-gb/HT201304>

Fire Tablet

Set a parental controls password

- › Swipe down from the top of the screen, then tap 'Settings' (a cog icon)
- › Tap 'Parental Controls'
- › Tap the switch next to 'Parental Controls'
- › Enter a password, confirm it, then tap 'Finish'

Restrict apps, features and content

- › In 'Parental Controls', tap 'Amazon Content and Apps' to choose which content or apps you want to block
- › You can set your device so that you can only play videos and Twitch (a live streaming platform), and access WiFi and location services, by entering your parental controls password. Go into 'Password Protection' in 'Parental Controls' to toggle these on
- › To block access to Amazon, go to 'Parental Controls' and press 'Amazon Stores (excluding Video)', and tap to block

Block in-app purchases

- › Go to the Amazon Appstore on your device
- › Select Account > Settings > Parental Controls
- › Tap 'Enable Parental Controls', and then enter your account password. Once you've done this, your child won't be able to buy anything in the app without your Amazon password

Restrict available content

- › Go Parental Controls > Amazon Content and Apps
- › Toggle categories to 'Blocked' to block access to relevant apps and games

Set times when your child can use the tablet

- › Go to 'Parental Controls'
- › Tap the switch next to 'Set a Curfew', then tap 'Curfew Schedule'
- › Set the day and time limits you want

To unlock a device during a curfew, enter your parental controls password.

Read more at <https://www.amazon.co.uk/gp/help/customer/display.html?nodeId=201357720> and <https://www.laptopmag.com/articles/parental-controls-fire-tablet>

See here for more information on settings for specific devices, as they can vary: <https://www.amazon.com/gp/help/customer/display.html?nodeId=200127470>

Android phones

Set up parental controls

- › Open the Play Store app, tap the 3-lines button in the top left > Settings > Parental controls
- › Toggle Parental controls to on
- › Create a PIN. Make sure to choose a PIN your child doesn't already know

You can then choose the highest age rating you want to allow for apps and games, films, TV, books and music. Go into each option and choose the age rating you want.

Restrict purchases

- Open the Play Store and tap the 3-lines button in the top left
- Select Settings > Require authentication for purchases > For all purchases through Google Play on this device

Manage screen time

You'll need to set up Family Link to do this (see this page for more: <https://support.google.com/families/answer/7101025?hl=en>). Family Link is an app that lets parents set "digital ground rules" for their children.

Then, in the Family Link app, select your child and follow the steps below.

To set a daily limit on a device, on the 'Daily limit' card, tap 'Set up' or 'Edit limits' > follow the instructions on the screen.

To set time limits for specific apps (only for devices running Android Nougat or newer), on the 'Today's activity' card, tap 'Set limits' > next to app you want to limit, tap the sand timer icon > Set limit (an icon with the top half of the sand time filled) > set a daily time limit for the app > tap 'Set'.

To set a bedtime, on the 'Bedtime' card, tap 'Edit schedule', then follow the instructions on the screen to set a bedtime.

PlayStation

You'll need to set up accounts for family members, with adult and child accounts, and make sure you and other adults have family manager or parent/guardian status. Read more about how to do this here: <https://www.playstation.com/en-gb/get-help/help-library/my-account/parental-controls/family-management/>

Set a login passcode and system restriction passcode

A login passcode means that only you can log in to the 'family manager' user on the system.

To do this:

- Go to Settings (this should be shown by a toolbox icon) > Login Settings > Login Passcode Management
- Set a 4-digit passcode using the controller, then re-enter it to confirm

Using a system restriction passcode will prevent your child from changing parental control settings. To do this:

- Go to Settings > Parental Controls/Family Management > PS4 System Restrictions
- Enter the existing system restriction passcode (if you haven't set one before, the default is 0000)
- Select 'Change System Restriction Passcode'
- Enter a new 4-digit passcode using the controller, then re-enter it to confirm

The PlayStation website also explains how to disable new user creation and guest login: <https://www.playstation.com/en-gb/get-help/help-library/my-account/parental-controls/ps4-parental-controls/>

Set spending limits

- Go to Settings > Parental Controls/Family Management > Family Management

- Select the user you want to set a spending limit for
- Select 'Applications/Devices/Network Features' under the 'Parental Controls' section
- Select 'Monthly Spending Limit' and press X

Restrict access to network features

- Go to Settings > Parental Controls/Family Management > Family Management (you may need to enter your account password)
- Select the user you want to set restrictions for
- Select 'Applications/Devices/Network Features' under the 'Parental Controls' section
- Under 'Network Features', you can choose whether to allow a child user to communicate with other players on the PlayStation Network, or view content created by other players

Set age rating levels for games, Blu-ray Discs and DVDs

- Go to Family Management, as above (you may need to enter your account password)
- Select the user you want to set the age level for
- Select 'Applications/Devices/Network Features' and select the content you want to restrict

Sources used in this guide

This factsheet was produced by [Safeguarding Training Centre from The Key: www.thekeysupport.com/safeguarding](http://www.thekeysupport.com/safeguarding)

- [Manage devices, apps & screen time, Google for Families Help](https://support.google.com/families/topic/7336331?hl=en&ref_topic=6149867)
https://support.google.com/families/topic/7336331?hl=en&ref_topic=6149867
- [Should visual display unit \(VDU\) users be given breaks?, HSE](https://www.hse.gov.uk/contact/faqs/vdubreaks.htm)
https://www.hse.gov.uk/contact/faqs/vdubreaks.htm
- [Guidelines issued on activity and screen time for babies and toddlers, NHS](https://www.nhs.uk/news/pregnancy-and-child/who-guidelines-screen-time/)
https://www.nhs.uk/news/pregnancy-and-child/who-guidelines-screen-time/
- [Physical activity guidelines for children and young people, NHS](https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/physical-activity-guidelines-children-and-young-people/)
https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/physical-activity-guidelines-children-and-young-people/
- [Share Aware resources for schools and teachers, NSPCC Learning \(scroll down to the parent's leaflet in the grey box\)](https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/schools/share-aware-teaching/)
https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/schools/share-aware-teaching/
- [The health impacts of screen time: a guide for clinicians and parents, Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health](https://www.rcpch.ac.uk/resources/health-impacts-screen-time-guide-clinicians-parents)
https://www.rcpch.ac.uk/resources/health-impacts-screen-time-guide-clinicians-parents
- [Sexting in schools and colleges, UK Council for Internet Safety](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sexting-in-schools-and-colleges)
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sexting-in-schools-and-colleges