



### Welcome to our Safeguarding Newsletter for Spring 2023

Keeping children safe and well is our number one priority at Abbey Catholic Primary School. Every half term or term, we will be producing a newsletter based on a safeguarding theme. This newsletter is designed to help school and parents to work together to safeguard children's wellbeing. This term's topic is all about **what parents need to know about screen time and how to keep their child/children safe online.**

We understand some children are spending more time online, so we are asking for you to work with us in order to monitor children's use online and follows the tips given. If your child received a new device for Christmas, then please follow this link devised by the NSPCC on how to set the device up for your child/children safely—

<https://www.bbc.com/ownit/the-basics/correctly-set-up-childrens-devices>

#### What do we mean by screen time?

Screen time refers to any time spent looking at a screen. This includes:

- TV - including watching television programmes
- DVDs
- Playing games consoles
- Tablets
- Smart Phones
- Laptops or PCs



1 in 3 internet users are children



Almost 1 in 4 young people have come across racist or hate messages online



#### **Website links for parents:**



<https://www.childnet.com/parents-and-carers/>

<https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/>

#### Why should we limit screen time?

Children learn best from real life experiences and interaction, and time spent in front of a screen is time not spent interacting with those around them. There is also growing research that more screen time leads to the decline in a child and/or adults mental health.

Evidence shows that although from 15 months, children may copy actions or words from TV, they are not actively able to learn language from TV until they are around 2½ years old.

<p>2 to 5 years</p> 	<p>6 or older</p> 
<p>Limit screen time to an hour a day. Parents should watch as well to ensure understanding and application to their world.</p>	<p>Place consistent limits on the time spent and types of media. Don't let screen time affect sleep, exercise or other behaviors.</p>



### Why is Online Safety so important?

New data released by the Internet Watch Foundation shows almost **20,000 webpages** of child sexual abuse imagery in the first half of 2022 included "self generated" content of 7-10 year olds! We need to teach our children how to use the internet correctly. It can be such a powerful tool used to educate and connect when used safely.

Using video-sharing platforms (VSPs) such as TikTok are the most popular online activity amongst children aged 3-17 (95%). A Parents' Guide to TikTok has been made available for you.

# childline

ONLINE,  
ON THE PHONE,  
ANYTIME

childline.org.uk  
0800 1111



### Top Tips for Parents

- **Limiting screen time**

In today's digital age, technology can play an important part of a child's development so completely banning them from their device may mean they are missing out. Instead you can work out a screen time limit, by working out what you feel is a suitable and healthy amount of time for your child to be on their device each week.

- **Encourage alternative activities**

It may seem like an obvious solution, but encouraging children to play with their friends, read a book or play in the garden will help them realise they can have fun without their device. Playing football, outdoor games and going for a walk are all healthy replacements for screen time.

- **Mobile free meal times**

Children model their behaviour on those around them, so if adults are constantly on their device, they will see this as acceptable. Try and set good examples, if you have asked your children not to use their phones at the table, make sure you don't. Try setting house rules that the whole family abide by.

- **Remove devices from their bedroom**

Setting a rule about removing devices from bedrooms will help your child to get the sleep they need and be more focused the next day at school. Even if the device is left in their room but switched off, they still may be tempted to check for notifications.

- **Less time means less exposure**

As we are all aware there can be many risks associated with devices such as cyberbullying, grooming or viewing inappropriate content. Less time spent on a screen means that a child will be less exposed to these risks.



Should I make a report to CEOP? →

If you're worried about online abuse or the way someone has been communicating online, let CEOP know.



If you or your child witness or are subject to online abuse, then it must be reported. Please use this link to report -

<https://www.ceop.police.uk/Safety-Centre/>

# What Parents & Carers Need to Know about

# FORTNITE

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AGE RATING

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First released in 2017, Fortnite has become one of the most popular games in the world. It currently has around 350 million registered players. Developed by Epic Games, it began life exclusively as a 'battle royale' contest, where up to 100 online player characters would fight – with weaponry including rifles, handguns and rocket launchers – to be the last one standing. Today, it features multiple modes which each offer something different (although some modes, such as 'Save the World', are only available on certain platforms).

## IN-APP PURCHASES

Not all of Fortnite is free. Save the World mode, for example, can become quite costly. An in-game currency called V-Bucks is used to buy items such as cosmetics, which are not a necessity to play the game. It can feel like buying them is essential, however – even for adult players. Making sure no payment methods are linked to the game's store is a good idea when children are playing Fortnite.

## REPEAT SUBSCRIPTIONS

Fortnite now offers a monthly repeat subscription which costs £9.99 (or equivalent). This package offers different non-essential benefits every month – including fancy cosmetics, rare weapons, V-Bucks and special bonuses. Signing up, therefore, can be tempting for dedicated players. However, subscriptions cannot be paid for with V-Bucks earned in the game, only with real-world money.

## COMPETITIVE COMMUNITY

Fortnite isn't purely a competitive experience (some modes prioritise cooperation), but the rivalry aspect remains central. Battle Royale is an especially ruthless mode, where the last player or squad left standing wins. Games can become heated, and players' desire to win can often cause excessively aggressive or "toxic" behaviour towards others – via the game's audio chat, for instance.

## POSSIBILITY OF SCAMS

Popular games like Fortnite are often targeted by unscrupulous individuals trying to trick or exploit genuine fans. In Fortnite, scammers have been known to offer children free V-Bucks or vast amounts of V-Bucks in exchange for rare items – often asking the player to click a particular link. These scammers are seeking access to your child's account, personal information and payment details.

## USER-CONTROLLED CONTENT

Some elements of online video games can't be rated for age appropriateness because the developer doesn't have control over them. In Fortnite, for instance, things like voice or text chat, usernames, trades and other player-generated content may not always be suitable for children. It also means that the makers aren't liable for anything a stranger might say to young Fortnite players online.

## Advice for Parents & Carers

### STAY AWARE OF SPENDING

Free-to-play games (that is, ones without up-front costs) can still be big financial drains. In Fortnite, for example, the Battle Pass – a set of rewards to improve players' experience in the game – can be either earned through playing or bought with real money (with additional incentives for the latter). With supervision, however, this can be a great lesson in money management for young people.

### ENCOURAGE BREAKS

Gaming sessions can reach marathon lengths, especially when your child is on a winning streak and doesn't want to stop. Sitting in the same position for hours isn't healthy, of course, but it's an easy habit to form. Encouraging young ones to break regularly for drinks and so on will help them stay hydrated, rest their eyes and release some of the tension from competitive gameplay.

### TALK ABOUT TALKING

Communication is key in the squad-based Fortnite modes, and children will quickly realise that talking with team-mates online helps to increase their win rate. It's a good idea, therefore, to chat with your child first about speaking to strangers online, trading, scammers and other potential risks. Remind them that they can always come to you for help if they run into problems online.

### DISCUSS OTHER APPS

Games like Fortnite can lead on to third-party apps (Discord, for example) where players can join a voice, text or – in some cases – video chat about the game. Certain add-ons also let children talk with other players from their local area, which clearly presents a potential risk. When discussing Fortnite with your child, you might also want to ask them about other apps they use while playing.

## Meet Our Expert

Clare Godwin (a.k.a. Lunawolf) has worked as an editor and journalist in the gaming industry since 2015, providing websites with event coverage, reviews and gaming guides. She is the owner of Lunawolf Gaming and is currently working on various gaming-related projects including game development and writing non-fiction books.



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Online  
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#WakeUpWednesday

# What Parents & Carers Need to Know about

# TIKTOK

AGE RESTRICTION  
**13+**

(certain features are restricted to over-18s only)

TikTok is a free social media platform that lets users create, share and watch short videos ranging anywhere from 15 seconds to 10 minutes in duration. The app gained notoriety for its viral dances, trends and celebrity cameos and can be a creative, fun platform for teens to enjoy. Now available in 75 languages, it has more than a billion active users worldwide (as of spring 2022) and is most popular with the under-16 age bracket. In fact, a 2022 Ofcom report found TikTok to be the most-used social media platform for posting content, particularly among young people aged 12 to 17.

## WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

### AGE-INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

While TikTok's "Following" feed only displays videos from users someone follows, "For You" is a stream of clips based on their previously watched content. Most videos on a child's "For You" feed will therefore be light-hearted and amusing, but it could potentially surface something unsuitable. TikTok's guidelines prohibit the sharing of illegal or inappropriate content, but the sheer volume of uploads mean they aren't manually monitored and vetted.

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CENSORED

### DANGEROUS CHALLENGES

Due to TikTok's immense popularity, some young people have unfortunately been influenced by videos challenging them to perform harmful, criminal or even deadly acts. One extreme example was the 'blackout' trend, which encouraged users to hold their breath until they passed out from a lack of oxygen. It led to two families filing lawsuits against TikTok over the tragic deaths of their children.

### CONTACT WITH STRANGERS

With around 1.1 billion users globally, the potential for contact from strangers on TikTok is high – especially as accounts created by over-16s (or youngsters using a false date of birth) are set to public by default. This not only means that someone's profile is visible to everyone else on the app; it also lets their videos be suggested to others and enables anyone to comment on them or download them.

### IN-APP SPENDING

TikTok is free, but users have the option to buy TikTok coins, which can be used to purchase emojis in the app. These emojis are then sent as rewards (retaining their monetary value) to other users for videos they've created. Coin bundles range from £9.99 to an eye-watering £99; TikTok's policy is that they can't be bought by under-18s, but it's possible to bypass this with a fake birthdate.

### ADDICTIVE NATURE

Like all social networking platforms, TikTok can be addictive: figures show that young people are investing increasing amounts of time in it. In the UK, children with TikTok spend an average of 102 minutes per day on the app, versus 53 minutes on YouTube. This compulsive repeated use can interfere with their sleep patterns – leading to irritability – and distract them from other activities.

### TIKTOK NOW

Introduced in late 2022, the 'TikTok Now' feature lets users post a daily video or photo at the exact same time as their friends. Users receive a synchronised notification at a random time of day, giving them three minutes to take a video or real-time photo. This addition can not only be a distraction to young people but could lead to them inadvertently sharing private content such as their location.

## Advice for Parents & Carers

### ENABLE FAMILY PAIRING

Family Pairing allows parents to link their TikTok account with their child's and control their settings remotely. Parents can then, for example, turn on Restricted Mode (reducing the chances of a child seeing inappropriate content); set screen time limits; and manage their child's ability to send messages (and to whom). Children can't alter these settings without parental approval.

### MAKE ACCOUNTS PRIVATE

Although under-16s will have their TikTok account set to private by default, bypassing this setting is relatively easy. However, parents have the ability to manually set their child's account to private – meaning that their videos won't be visible to strangers and they won't be able to exchange messages with people who aren't on their friends list.

### LIMIT IN-APP SPENDING

If your child is using an iPhone or Android device to access TikTok, you can alter the settings to prevent them from making in-app purchases. We'd recommend that you enable this feature, as it's quite easy for a young person – without realising what they're doing – to spend a significant amount of real money buying TikTok coins so they can unlock more features of the app.

### DISCUSS THE DANGERS

If your child wants to use TikTok and you're happy for them to do so, it's crucial to talk about the potential risks in this type of app. For example, ensure they understand not to share any identifying personal information – and that they realise they could be exposed to inappropriate content. Thinking critically about what they see on TikTok can help children become generally more social media savvy.

### READ THE SIGNS

If you're concerned that your child might be spending too much time on TikTok, or that they've been emotionally affected by something inappropriate or upsetting that they've seen, it's important to know how to spot the possible signs. Increased irritability and a lack of concentration are potential red flags, as are failing to complete homework or regularly not eating meals.

### Meet Our Expert

Carly Page is an experienced technology journalist with a track record of more than 10 years in the industry. Previously the editor of tech tabloid The Inquirer, Carly is now a freelance technology journalist, editor and consultant.



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