# EJS Parents Guide to Online Safety

## Cyber Safety

Cyber safety is an important parent-child discussion that requires revisiting frequently, from Early Years through Upper School. Experts warn that children are most vulnerable to online dangers whilst in their own home. The following suggestions are drawn from a wide variety of professional sources and may aid you in effectively guiding your child’s use of a tablet or other technology devices.

Outside school, parents bear the responsibility for providing guidance for safe use of the Internet in the same way as they do with information sources such as television, telephones, radio, movies and other possibly offensive media. Parents should be monitoring their child’s use of different technologies, including the Internet, if the student is accessing it via electronic devices from home or through other remote locations.

## Common Sense Media Agreements

The Common-Sense Family Media Agreements (See Appendix 1) are checklists that parents can use to guide conversations with their children about media use. They are designed to help parents establish guidelines and expectations around media use and behaviour that are right for their family. Some families are comfortable using them as signed agreements. Others prefer to use them simply as checklists to guide conversations. Either way, they can help parents and their children get on the same page about media and technology use.

## Put the tablet to bed, but not in the bedroom

Parenting experts suggest parking all technology devices, from mobile phones to tablets, in a common family room overnight to discourage late night, unmonitored use and sleep disruption (this is possibly good practice for adults too!). Don’t allow your child to sleep with a tablet, laptop or mobile phone. Remember to model appropriate use and balance of technology in your own life also.

## Filter Access

Outside of school, children often have complete, unrestricted access to inappropriate sites on other devices such as home computers, tablets and personal mobile phones. Experts strongly suggest contacting your Internet Service Provider to filter and block inappropriate content on your wireless home network. For example ‘Talk Talk’ have a product called ‘Home Safe’ (<https://community.talktalk.co.uk/t5/Articles/How-to-use-HomeSafe/ta-p/2205196>) which can be used to filter your home network and even restrict access to social media and gaming at specific times. Google sells an additional product called Google Wi-Fi, which allows control over your home network.

## Set Expectations

Regularly share your expectations with your child about accessing only appropriate sites and content, as well as being a good person when online (even when parents aren’t watching). Outside of school it is possible that your child has already been confronted with multiple opportunities to access content that parents wouldn’t approve, such as pornography, hate sites, celebrity gossip, reality TV, personal blogs, web literature and more, all of which may influence your child’s beliefs, values and behaviour.

Understand that your child’s use of many technologies (such as tablets, video game systems, and mobile phones) is likely to give your child the ability to connect to unfiltered public wireless networks (such as in a library or coffee shop, by picking up a neighbour’s wireless signal, or connecting to the Internet through a mobile service). It is important therefore to maintain regular, open dialogue about Internet use and access. Discuss your expectations for appropriate use and behaviour.

## Monitor & Limit Screen Time

Experts suggest only allowing children to surf the Internet in a central place at home, such as the kitchen or family room, rather than away from adult supervision or behind a closed door. Know what your child is doing with technology and how his or her time is being spent. Technology can be a great tool and resource, but also has the potential to be a distractor. Help your child learn to focus on completing tasks or assignments first before spending time on games, shopping and social networking. Teaching today’s children how to manage multiple sources of information and potential distractions is a critical life skill - one best learned before heading off to college or the workplace. For children it is recommended that, if using for long periods of time, iPads are used on a table or desk and not held close to the lap or body due to the low emission of electromagnetic radiation.

## Online Gaming

Online Gaming can be a really fun thing to do and is a very important part of young people’s culture. However, it can lead to age-inappropriate gaming, screen-addiction and intrusive social media, these in turn are connected to a decline in children’s emotional and mental wellbeing. With economic and social connectivity online becoming increasingly ubiquitous, today’s young people will inevitably need to develop skills and levels of awareness that could cause us concern. It is therefore important for parents to consider giving guidance to their children.

## Setting Allotment of Time

The first consideration is setting a healthy allotment of time that enables your child to take part in:

* Seeing friends and interacting with them in real life
* Participating in extracurricular activities they’re excited about
* Keeping up with academic classes and doing homework
* Building positive relationships with family members
* Getting enough sleep

You might like the idea of allowing video games to be played only at the weekend, or you might agree that a smaller amount of time every day — maybe half an hour in the evening — is fine, as long as homework or chores are done first. Your expectations may not be those of your child! Try to negotiate a middle ground rather than imposing a set of draconian rules that may not be followed and prove impossible or detrimental to enforce – the object is for your child to learn responsibility online safety not to have their devices removed. Whatever you decide, do continue to monitor how your child is doing and don’t be afraid to modify the schedule as needed.

## Enforcing Limits

As with any discipline you enforce as a parent, setting clear limits is important. Setting limits from the beginning is ideal, but things aren’t hopeless if you haven’t done this yet. Make sure whatever limits you do decide to establish are made clear to your child, and make sure that you stick to them. Children will learn that you relent and give them an extra 20 minutes of screen time when they throw a tantrum pretty quickly, even if you only give in one out of every four times. Remember that with an online video gamer or proto-YouTuber you’re up against a potent competitor, you have to stick to your own boundaries and hold firm.

## Behavioural Issues

It is recommended parents should also monitor their children’s behaviour when they are playing video games, especially social ones like Fortnite. The advice usually given is to start by explaining the difference between good-natured everyday talk, which is fine, and bullying, which isn’t. Warn children that the things they are saying while they are playing can have real life consequences. Someone could take a screen capture of what your child is saying in chat, or record audio, or a friend’s parent could even be in the room overhearing what they are saying. Then things can escalate. There are a few lessons here. The first is that children shouldn’t feel like the rules are different in games or online. In video games when children are feeling competitive and their adrenaline is boosted, it can lead to them saying things they wouldn’t normally say face-to-face; the ordinary rules of conduct should still apply. This is also important because the habits children develop while playing video games can generalise into other settings for example: school.

## Here are some additional things to review:

* Anything you do or post online creates a digital record, often called a “Digital Footprint.” Nothing online is totally private, even if it is intended to be. Once digitised, it can be saved, sent and re-posted.
* A good rule of thumb: If you don’t want a parent, teacher, principal, future employer or University/college admissions officer to know something, don’t post it online.
* “Friends” aren’t always who they say they are; undercover police and paedophiles pretend to be children online. Encourage your child to be friends online only with friends they know in person.
* Use caution when posting personally identifiable information online. This includes: full name, address, phone number, email, where you are meeting friends or where you hang out. Discuss with your child how easy it is for someone to find you based on what you post online.
* Regularly check your privacy settings on all commonly used sites and networks. Ignoring privacy settings on sites like Instagram, Snap Chat, WhatsApp, Twitter and Facebook means your photos, contact information, interests and possibly even mobile phone GPS location could be shared with more than a billion people.
* Cyberbullying (threatening or harassing another individual through technology) is a growing concern. It takes many forms, such as forwarding a private email, photo or text message for others to see, starting a rumour, or sending a threatening or aggressive message, often anonymously. Report any forms of cyberbullying to the relevant authority.

## Making a Report

* www.ceop.police.uk
* Criminal sexual or obscene content on the internet, report it to the Internet Watch Foundation: [www.iwf.org.uk](http://www.iwf.org.uk)
* <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/online-reporting/>
* <https://saferinternet.org.uk/guide-and-resource/need-help>
* <https://www.gov.uk/report-terrorism>
* <https://www.report-it.org.uk/your_police_force>
* <https://www.police.uk/pu/contact-the-police/report-a-crime-incident/>

## Links:

* <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/>
* <https://saferinternet.org.uk/guide-and-resource/parents-and-carers>
* <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/child-safety-online-a-practical-guide-for-parents-and-carers/child-safety-online-a-practical-guide-for-parents-and-carers-whose-children-are-using-social-media>
* <https://www.internetmatters.org/resources/online-safety-guide/>
* <https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/>
* <https://swgfl.org.uk/resources/online-safety-guidance-for-parents/>
* (American but…..) <https://www.commonsensemedia.org/>

Appendix 1 – Family Media Agreement –

<https://saferschoolstogether.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Common-Sense-Media-Digital-Contract.pdf?x89820>

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