

With many of us now locked down and at home most of the day, it's likely we're all spending much more time online, so we've put together a few tips to support you with healthy and safe internet use at this time.



New apps & livestreaming

You might be using some of the new apps that have become popular, such as Zoom, Houseparty, or Hoop. If you'd like to know a bit more about these new ways of connecting, check out [Net Aware](#). Livestreaming is also becoming more popular too. If you're watching, there is a risk of seeing something distressing or unsuitable; if you see something that upsets you, you can report it through the reporting tools on each app. If you're broadcasting live yourself, be aware of your online reputation and remember that your content may still be around for a long time, so make sure you're only livestreaming to those you wish to broadcast to.

Unfortunately, a rise in the amount of time people are spending online right now may lead to an increase in people trying to target young people and seek child abuse material. Be alert to signs of grooming, such as attempts to draw you into private internet spaces, asking you for personal information, or making attempts to build your trust, threaten or blackmail you. If you have any concerns, talk to a parent or trusted adult; you can also have a look at [Childline](#) or the [NSPCC](#) for further advice.

Scams and misinformation

Criminal scams, particularly those related to Covid-19, have increased with people spending more time online at the minute; check out [Google Safety Centre](#) for tips on how to spot and avoid scams. If you receive a suspicious email, you can forward it to report@phishing.gov.uk, and if it's found to be malicious, the National Cyber Security Centre will take it down and you can help protect others from falling victim to scams.

Most false claims about Covid-19 appear on social media. People may be unintentionally sharing misinformation because they haven't thought about whether it's accurate and the source can be trusted. Misinformation can be harmful, misleading and dangerous; however social networks are working hard to combat misinformation. You can support this by being extra careful when sharing news that might cause a strong reaction, by checking other sources online to see if they're reporting the same thing, and by reporting misinformation to the platform where you found it.

Your privacy

If you're trying out some new apps bear in mind that privacy settings on most social media platforms are normally turned off by default, so you may wish to make your account **private**, or make specific changes depending on the platform; for example, controlling comments on Tik Tok, or blocking random users from approaching you on Snapchat. If you're learning at home, be careful when uploading work; don't upload photos which include your face, or anything that could identify where you live, as these details may be visible



to other users.

Screen use

We're all spending more time online at the minute; keeping in touch, doing school work and watching entertainment such as Youtube and Netflix. Being thoughtful about how we spend our time online can help us to avoid the "mindless scrolling" and be aware of how it impacts on our wellbeing. This can help us to achieve a healthy balance between passive screen time (e.g. watching a film) and interactive screen time (e.g. playing games). You might find it helpful to give yourself screen-use boundaries such as putting your phone on 'do not disturb' when doing important activities such as homework. Try to

develop an awareness of when you have had 'too much screen time'; if you're struggling to sleep or feeling anxious when you're disconnected or separated from your devices, you may need to take a break from the screens.



Gaming

Gaming is a great way to relax and to stay in touch with friends online; just remember that people may not be who they say they are, and be careful about sharing personal details. Some games are aimed at those aged 18+ too, so the content may be upsetting or distressing to someone much younger; check out [Childline](#)'s really useful page of tips and advice on issues such as bullying or what to do if you think you are spending too much time gaming.

Safe and respectful contact online

Whether through text messaging, sending pictures, or live video chats, virtual dating can be a great alternative when it's difficult to see each other in real life. Just make sure you consider **the law, privacy and consent**. Remember that sending or receiving a nude when you're under 18 is against the law, and it's also against the law to have a naked picture on your phone, even if it's of yourself. Never share pictures or videos without the person's permission, and remember that once you hit "send", your posts or messages are no longer in your control; think to yourself "would I want my teacher or employer to see this?"



Over to you....think about what you would do if:

1. You discovered that someone had set up a fake account in your name and was telling lies about you
2. You receive an intimate picture from a friend—it's of someone you know
3. A friend of yours is spending increasing amounts of time playing a game online and cutting themselves off from their "real-life" friends

Support and Information:

[Childline - Online and Mobile Safety](#)

[Brook—Staying Safe Online](#)

[UK Safer Internet Centre](#)

[Think U Know](#)