A guide to help your family live a better digital life

Digital Parenting

Vodafone Foundation

parentzone
The experts in digital family life

Welcome to Digital Parenting: a guide to help your family live a better digital life.

As a busy working parent, I know first-hand how hard it can be to keep pace with the latest devices, apps, games and the way young people use them. I also know, if used right, the digital world brings exciting opportunities that can enrich family life.

Digital Parenting is the go-to guide for parents to get up to speed on the latest digital technology and wellbeing issues, so families can get the most out of the online world and navigate it safely.

Along with this guide, we've launched the Digital Parenting hub where you'll find even more practical advice, top tips and expert views to help you have important conversations with your children about their digital life.

The Vodafone Foundation (UK registered charity number 1089625) has been working with our expert partner, Parent Zone, on Digital Parenting for over five years. Over that time, we're incredibly proud to have reached over six million parents and carers across the UK with our digital wellbeing advice.

We hope you find this guide useful. Keep an eye on @VodafoneUK and vodafone.co.uk/digitalparenting for more updates throughout the year.

Visit our Digital Parenting hub! As well as this guide, you'll find lots more advice and resources online at vodafone.co.uk/digitalparenting

Helen Lamprell
Vodafone's General Counsel & Director of Corporate and External Affairs

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Six steps to a better digital-life balance

How to make sure your family home stays healthy and happy on and offline

1 | Sensible screen time

Battles over screen time can be a tricky part of family life, but they don't need to be. What children are doing on their devices is far more important than the amount of time they're spending on them. So make sure they're watching, playing and reading good-quality, educational and age-appropriate content rather than worrying about setting strict quotas. That said, if you notice your child's schoolwork, sleep, mood or health being affected, it's time to talk and revisit the rules (see p9).

2 | Bold boundaries

Whether agreeing the age they can go on social media, setting out how long they can spend gaming or having a curfew to avoid disturbing sleep, setting clear boundaries will make your child feel more secure about your expectations and confident about what's OK.

3 | Don't pull the plug

Emerging from the immersive world of video gaming is like a deep-sea diver coming back up for air – do it too quickly and it can have a negative effect. Give your child reasonable warnings about when to turn off, to help them ease out of their game, private chat or video.

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4 | Keep talking (or texting)

Around 60% of children say their parents don't discuss issues around digital life. Maintain an open and honest dialogue with your child, whether that's face-to-face or via messaging. You may not have every solution to hand, but speaking about any issues is an important first step.

5 | Engage in their world

To understand your child's online world and spot if something is going wrong, it's vital to know what they are doing. So take a healthy interest and remember to regularly ask your child about their favourite vlogger, game or activity.

75%

of children say their parents don't understand their online lives.

80%

of children aged 12-16 think their parents' rules on screen time are unfair.

6 | Bedtime bans

Making sure your family gets the right amount of sleep is crucial to healthier offline lives. Remove the temptation and improve their sleep quality (and perhaps your own) by ensuring phones and other devices are charging outside the bedroom at night.

A SAFER START TO SOCIAL MEDIA

Advice to share with your child when they first start out in the world of likes and shares

When ARE they old enough?

Social platforms like Snapchat, Twitter, Instagram and Facebook require users to be 13+ (16 for WhatsApp), but these sites and apps cannot verify age. You can manage accessibility with parental controls, but if your child is interested in social media at an earlier age, it's best to be open and discuss their motivations and whether it's really the right time for them. Remember: allowing hundreds of people to comment on their posts can affect their self-esteem, so consider whether they are ready for this.

Explore the safety features first

Most social media sites have their own safety features and reporting procedures. If your child is setting up a new social media account, help them explore these settings and tools. For example, select the right privacy and security options, and check how to block or report other users if something goes wrong online.

Be aware that others can see your location

Location services on apps can be a fun way of showing friends and family where you are. But if your child doesn't turn off settings on certain apps, others can track their whereabouts in real time. Help your child manage their location settings so they are sharing wisely. For example, Snapchat users can switch to 'Ghost Mode' to avoid being tracked.

Not all followers can be trusted

Talk to your child about only accepting friend requests from people they know and trust. Explore settings to limit who can see their posts. It's better that only people they know and get on with can view, like or comment on their posts and activity.

Think twice before clicking

Tell your child to avoid opening links that they are sent in private messages. Even if it appears to be a message from a friend, their friend's account may have been hacked. The link may be a scam or lead them to an inappropriate site.

Think about granny when sharing

Yes, seriously. Encourage your child to follow the 'Granny Rule': if you wouldn't be happy with your granny seeing it, don't post it! It'll get your child thinking before sharing something they may regret – especially as it could be online forever.

Visit vodafone.co.uk/digitalparenting for more social media safety tips and security settings.

Check the safety features! A friend might turn on location tracking as a joke – or your phone may auto-update – so regularly check your settings are as you want them.

38%

of UK children aged 12-16 believe their parents let them use social media too young.

74%

of children aged 12-15 have their own social media profile.

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Are YOU smartphone secure?

Snip and stick. Read p8 before you cut out.

Tool checklist

AUTO-LOCK

CHECK: Is your phone set to auto-lock? Protect your device with a pattern, PIN code, password or fingerprint.

PASSWORDS

CHECK: Are your passwords tough enough? Use upper- and lower-case letters, numerals and special characters (!*%). Keep them different for each site.

CAMERA

CHECK: Do you think about what you snap? Images accidentally shared can can give away private information, such as location (e.g. school uniforms, street signs and door numbers).

PRIVACY

CHECK: Are you keeping things private? Social media privacy policies and settings change regularly, so check them every term!

LOCATION

CHECK: Have you turned off location-sharing functions? Only leave location-related services on when you need them, and only for those who need them. Otherwise, turn off!

BLOCKING

CHECK: Do you know how to spot trolls and effectively block them? People won't be told you've blocked them, so don't worry about making someone feel bad or angry.

REPORTING

CHECK: Do you know how to take appropriate action? Tell the platform you're using or an adult you trust if something is upsetting you online.

What digital boundaries are right for your child?

How to set the right rules at the right age

'It's important to be reasonable'

"You can feel good about setting boundaries if you remember to ask yourself, 'Am I being reasonable?' Are the important safety boundaries flexible and age-appropriate? Are they vastly different to their friends'? Are they important for your child's wellbeing?"

Vicki Shotbolt
CEO and founder of Parent Zone

Visit vodafone.co.uk/digitalparenting for more.

4-7 years

Curious explorers

Children at this age are starting to become curious about the world around them. It's important to allow them some freedom to explore the online world but also to do it more safely. Apps like YouTube Kids may give filtered access to social media – but some inappropriate content can occasionally slip through the net, so keep an eye on what your child is viewing. Games for older children might be starting to appeal (e.g. those rated PEGI 12) but be aware that some contain violent content and in-game chat functions.

Sleep: NHS recommends 10½-11½ hours a night | **Content:** PEGI 7; BBFC U, PG, 12A | **Screen time:** Maximum 1hr a day

8-12 years

Becoming independent

Children are likely to have a growing interest in social media, through friends and role models. Many social media platforms, like Facebook and Instagram, have age 13+ restrictions, but this will not stop your child from being attracted to them. Show an active interest in the platforms they are talking about, whether that's discussing how sharing selfies makes them feel or the realism of images they see online. Children's moods can be affected by social media, so it is better to be involved and help them explore in a safer way.

Sleep: NHS recommends 9¼-10¼ hours a night | **Content:** PEGI 12, BBFC 12A, 12 | **Screen time:** From 1hr, progressing to 1.5hrs a day, as they get older

13-15 years

Taking risks

Teens become self-conscious about their use of the internet and social media to express and explore their interests. It's likely your child will be curious and search for sites and topics you may not think they are ready for. Help them be aware of, and critical about, what they may come across online. Being able to understand potential risks – such as extremist, violent or pornographic content – can help them to assess the dangers and make better decisions about what is suitable for them.

Sleep: NHS recommends 9-9¼ hours a night | **Gaming:** PEGI 16; BBFC 12, 15 | **Screen time:** 1.5hrs per day weekdays, 2hrs weekends can be beneficial for this age range

Top tips

- Find out what rules their friends' parents are setting and discuss with them.
- As the rulemaker, be clear, firm and consistent.
- Set the rules with your child to help them understand why they're needed.
- Help younger children understand why certain rules do not apply to older ones.
- You set the example, so think about your own screen time and what you're sharing on social media too.

A 2017 report into the effects of screen time for 15-year-olds by the Oxford Internet Institute at the University of Oxford found that a 'moderate' amount of screen time (1.5 hours gaming, up to 2 hours on mobile devices, on weekdays) can have a more positive than negative effect. Anything above this can have an increasingly negative effect.

HOW TO SPEAK DIGITAL

The essential dos and don'ts of family communication

DO - Be a team

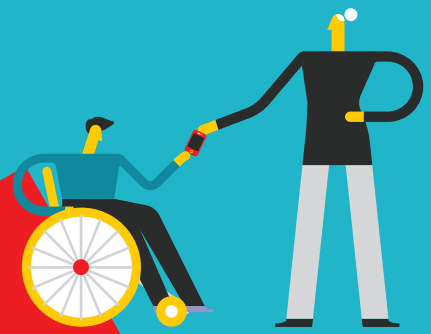
Everyone prefers a democracy to a dictatorship. Discussing and agreeing your family's rules around digital with your child will help them remember, enforce and respect what you agree on.

DON'T - Use their device against them

If they do break the rules, punishment by confiscating or banning devices can do more harm than good. Try old fashioned time-outs or getting them to do chores instead.

DO - Be consistent

If you've decided not to allow phones at the table or in bedrooms, stick with it or make a point of changing the rule or making an exception.



DO - Notice the positives

Telling them when they do something good (like turning off their device without being asked) is just as important as telling them when they've done something wrong.

DO - Enjoy their knowledge

Ask your child to show you how to do something online. Working through problems together will foster a great relationship.

DO - Stay calm

When something goes wrong it's tempting to go into overdrive, especially if they've broken one of your rules. If you do overreact, they are less likely to come to you next time.

DON'T - Forget the rest of the family

If you are enforcing screen time boundaries, try to make sure everyone in the family supports you. Just like bedtimes, each person may have a different one, but everyone needs to join in.

DON'T - Forget their right to privacy

Remember you don't have an automatic right to see every text message or to be that parent who posts every picture of them on their own social feeds (i.e. an 'oversharent'!).

DON'T - Assume they know everything

People often think children are digital experts just because they have ninja swiping skills. They still need your help to check safety settings on the devices and platforms.

90%

of **12- to 16-year-olds** in the UK don't believe their parents **follow their own rules** on screen time.

10 Tech tips to bring you together

Apps, games and online platforms can get your family busy, connected and active together in new and creative ways. Tech expert Kieran Alger picks 10 of the best.

Kieran Alger
Tech expert

Kieran Alger has been writing about technology for more than 10 years for national magazines, newspapers and the UK's leading tech websites.

GET CREATIVE

Get sketching

Help your child unleash their artistic flare with paint and draw apps like **Kids Doodle**. Get them experimenting in animation with **Sock Puppets** (iOS only) or using their creative forces in **Star Wars Creativity Studio** (iOS iPad only).

Start up a blog

Use sites like **Wix**, **WordPress** or **Squarespace** to start a blog and let your child explore a favourite hobby in more depth and learn some simple coding in the process.

Snap a family photo album

Create a scrapbook that comes to life with **Lifeprint** – an app that works with your smartphone to turn photos and prints into videos. Or create a themed photo book for printing with online album makers **Snapfish** or **Apple Photobook.**

GET ACTIVE

Do the housework

Apps like **ChoreMonster** provide fun incentives for younger children to tidy rooms, while planners like **Mothershp** help set schedules for older ones.

Explore augmented reality

Get outdoors and see the world a different way with augmented reality apps. Whether on a prehistoric hunt (**Dinosaurs Everywhere,** iOS only) or catching outlandish creatures (**Pokémon Go!**), these apps make moving and exploring more fun.

Go on a nature hunt

Explore your inner David Attenborough with UK conservation apps like **Wildlife Trust**: **Nature Finder**, **Great British Bee Count** and **BirdTrack**.

Visit vodafone.co.uk/digitalparenting for more.

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GET CONNECTED

Play games together

There are loads of games you can try together, from modern twists on family classics like post-it note identity-guessing game **Heads Up** (iOS £0.99, Android free), to Connect4 rework **Four in a Row** or the brain-training **Lumosity**.

Explore your history

How much does your child know about their family tree? Use an ancestry site (**MyHeritage.com** and **Ancestry.co.uk**) together to turn family detective, trace your roots and discover where you came from.

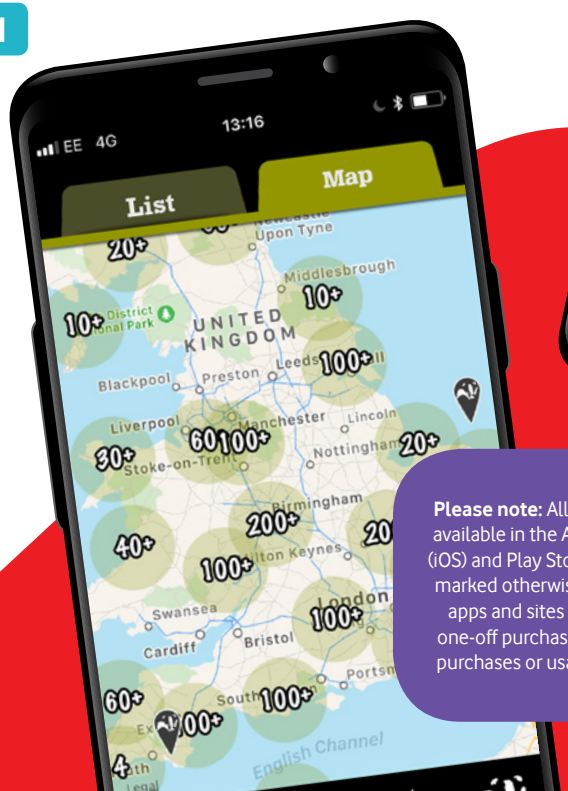
Never miss story time

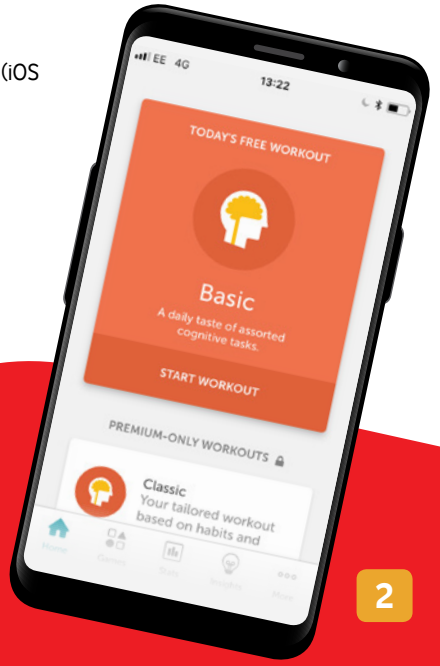
For those times when you can't be home for bedtime, fire up video messaging (**WhatsApp**, **Skype**) or a voice app (**Voice Record Pro**) to record a personalised video reading or audiobook of your child's favourite night-time adventure.

Make a playlist

Use a music streaming service like **Spotify** or **Apple Music** (iOS only) and make a playlist of your family's favourite songs to soundtrack that long car journey or housework session.

1





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Please note: All apps are available in the App Store (iOS) and Play Store unless marked otherwise. Some apps and sites require one-off purchase, in-app purchases or usage fees.

1) Search the UK's wildlife with Wildlife Trust: Nature Finder.

2) Test your memory and problem-solving with Lumosity.

SLEEPING VS SCROLLING

A recent Ofcom study found 70% of young people miss sleep because of online habits. Dr Richard Graham and Dr Elly Hanson explain how to help your children have a healthier night-time routine as they grow older.

5 to 10 years

What are the health benefits of sleep?

Every one of us as a child hated bedtime, when we had to leave our parents or some exciting event to get the sleep we needed. And we now know, we really do need sleep. Sleep is important for learning and behaviour, growth, and staying happy. A lack of sleep can affect growth, and when a sleep problem is resolved, a growth spurt can occur.

What can you do?

- ✗ Avoid high stimulation activities such as TV, video games or social media for at least an hour before bedtime.
- ✓ Establish a regular evening routine, reading to younger children or encouraging them to read.
- ✗ No caffeine or fizzy drinks during the evening.
- ✓ Listen to relaxing music, and have them take a bath or shower before bed.

Dr Richard Graham is a Consultant Psychiatrist with an expertise in technology addiction.

11 to 16 years

Why is sleep affected?

Adolescents have a different sleep/wake cycle to younger children and adults, preferring later bedtimes and wake times. However, if scrolling through phones or watching videos at night, the light from these devices can disrupt the body's natural wind-down to sleep, creating bodily confusion about whether it is night or day.

What can you do?

- ✗ Let teens lie in as much as possible – but avoid a huge difference between weekdays and weekends.
- ✓ Later evenings should be spent in lower light, avoiding devices as much as possible closer to bedtimes.
- ✗ Devices should be kept out of bedrooms at night.
- ✓ Speak to like-minded parents in your child's social circles to agree a rough consensus around bedtime rules – to avoid frustration and arguments.

Dr Elly Hanson is a Clinical Psychologist with expertise in children, young people and digital technology.

Do something amazing with your phone while it charges overnight – power up The Vodafone Foundation's DreamLab app and help fight cancer. **Download it today!** (UK charity 1089625)

Visit vodafone.co.uk/digitalparenting for more.

Ask the experts...

The answers to your digital dilemmas

"How do I know if my child is spending too much time gaming?"

Dr Mark Griffiths says: "I devised the following checklist to help you to check if your child's video game playing is getting out of hand. Does your child...

- Play video games every day – and for long periods (three to six hours)?
- Play as a way of forgetting about other things in their life?
- Get restless, irritable, and moody if they can't play – or you make them stop?
- Sacrifice social and sporting activities to play?
- Play instead of doing their homework?
- Struggle to cut down their amount of video game playing?

If the answer is 'yes' to more than four of these questions, your child may be playing too much. If their schoolwork, physical education, peer development and interaction are not affected, there is little to worry about. Excessive gaming doesn't always have negative consequences, the content and context of the game are more important than the amount of time spent gaming."

Our experts:

Dr Mark Griffiths
is a Chartered Psychologist, Distinguished Professor of Behaviour Addiction and Director of the International Gaming Research Unit.

Dr Victoria Baines
is an author on cybersecurity and child online protection.

Dr Asha Patel
is CEO of Innovating Minds, a social enterprise fostering emotional and mental health in young people.

IF YOU ARE WORRIED ABOUT GAMING...

- Give your child a specified time for play.
- Give them reasonable countdowns for turning off.
- Remove devices from their bedrooms overnight.

"I heard that one in five 14-year-old girls has self-harmed in the past year. Is this linked to peer pressure on social media?"

Dr Asha Patel says: "Self-harm is generally in response to feeling emotionally distressed. Social media can be a go-to, to seek content that is often distorted or far away from reality. As a result, children compare themselves to filtered images and seemingly perfect lives – contributing to children spiraling further.

The internet has a long memory and once you click on an advert or a website, it will identify sister sites, reinforcing and increasing vulnerability to accessing unhelpful content. To prevent this, you can try deleting their browsing history.

Also, beware online communities that are very seductive for those who self-harm. Those they meet in chat rooms can understand and share their feelings and consequently they may feel that they belong. In fact, their negative thoughts are being reinforced."

"My kids want to get a virtual reality headset. Are there any risks?"

Dr Victoria Baines says: "Until recently, VR was largely a solo activity, but all this changed with the advent of Social VR – combining the immersive world of VR with the functions we're used to on social media.

In Social VR, you feel like you have a body in your virtual environment. If someone walks up to you and touches you, it feels – to some extent – like you're actually being touched. With the kinds of unwanted experiences children can have online – bullying, approaches from strangers, inappropriate chat – we need to prepare ourselves for the possibility these experiences in VR could have a physical aspect."

Visit vodafone.co.uk/digitalparenting for more.

IF YOU ARE WORRIED ABOUT SELF-HARM...

- Ask if any sites or apps are upsetting and worrying your child.
- Discuss and support them in how to best address this.
- Don't pressurise your child and give them an outlet to talk.

If your child doesn't want to talk to you or wants any additional support, they can contact The Mix www.themix.org.uk | 0808 808 4994

IF YOU ARE WORRIED ABOUT VIRTUAL REALITY...

- Discuss the risks of shared virtual experiences with your child.
- Remind them there is a 'realness' to VR when involving other people.
- Encourage them to tell you if something doesn't feel right.

Things will go wrong online. How you respond when they do will make all the difference in the long term.

... Your child has been sexting

KNOW: Sending or receiving sexual images to or from a child is illegal – but context and common sense are important. Schools and police forces have guidance that allows them to consider your child's best interests when dealing with these incidents.

REACT: Stay calm. Your child will be feeling embarrassed and worried, so however tempting it is to get cross, it's important to remain composed and provide reassurance.

RECOVER: Decide who else should be informed and then deal with the practical things that can be done to limit any negative impact. *You can find all the info you need at www.thinkuknow.co.uk*

... Your child has seen inappropriate or upsetting content

KNOW: Children of any age can find things online that upset, confuse or worry them. This can lead to a whole barrage of questions about anything from violent YouTube videos to world news, sex or extremism.

REACT: Take your lead from them: ask them to explain what they've seen. They will have questions, so offer straightforward, honest answers (while being careful not to overwhelm them) to help them deal with whatever has upset them.

RECOVER: Leave the conversation open and reassure your child that they can come back to you if they have further questions or concerns. *See the Digital Parenting online hub for more advice.*

Visit vodafone.co.uk/digitalparenting for more.

STOP SPEAK SUPPORT

Cyberbulling affects one in three children. If your child is affected, or if you need support, visit **www.stopspeaksupport.com.**

... Your child has been trolling or bullying someone

KNOW: The truth is, most children slip into some bad behaviour at some stage in their growing up. It doesn't mean you've done anything wrong or that they are getting into bad habits. It does mean you need to deal with it firmly and quickly.

REACT: Don't be tempted to step in until you have heard every side of the story. Give your child the chance to explain exactly what has been going on and be ready to listen to how they feel.

RECOVER: Make sure they understand what is and isn't acceptable on and offline, and agree together how they are going to put things right. *For more on bullying, visit the Digital Parenting online hub.*

Parental Controls & Filtering

Understanding parental controls and privacy settings on mobile networks, devices, apps and websites can help you manage what your child sees and does online.

Mobile phones and tablets

The UK's main mobile providers (Vodafone, EE, 02 and Three) automatically block 18+ rated content. But remember, these filters only work when a device is connected via the mobile network, not Wi-Fi. To set up extra controls, go to settings on the device or the App Store and Google Play.

Broadband and Wi-Fi

Broadband providers offer parental controls that allow you to monitor your child's device and set rules about what they do online when they're at home. You can restrict things like inappropriate content, social networking, screen time and location services. Some are automatically applied and some need to be manually set up, so check with your provider.

Search engines

Your web browser lets you control content and search options, including blocking or tracking history, preventing apps being downloaded, and blocking sites containing nudity, violence and inappropriate content. Don't forget to apply suitable settings to all the browsers used on every family computer and device.

Social media

Privacy settings on social networking sites like Snapchat, Twitter and Instagram help you manage what your child sees, who contacts them and how they interact with others. They can also be used to report inappropriate content.

Gaming

You can use parental controls to manage your child's online gaming, as well as who they play and communicate with. Options include time and spending limits, and managing access to content, sites and purchases.

#Goldilocks

is a timely tale about the dangers of oversharing on social media and ruining your online reputation. It's been co-produced by Vodafone and Andersen Press. For more information, **visit www.vodafone.co.uk/digitalparenting**

For further help and support

Digital Parenting hub
www.vodafone.co.uk/digital parenting

Internet Matters
www.internetmatters.org

The Mix
www.themix.org.uk

Parent Zone
www.parentzone.org.uk

The Vodafone Foundation
www.vodafonefoundation.org

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