

Online safety tips for parents & carers to KEEP CHILDREN SAFE ONLINE OVER SUMMER

School's out ... for summer! Yes, it's that time of the year again: around six weeks at home for ecstatic youngsters. For many young people, a bumper stint off school means a welcome chance to spend even more time with their games console, phone, tablet or smart TV. So whether your children are likely to be scrolling on Snapchat, nestling in front of Netflix or frying foes on Fortnite, we've put together some top tips to help you keep them safe online this holiday.

THERE'S NO NETWORK LIKE HOME

Teenagers, especially, tend to be delighted to find that a coffee shop, restaurant or shopping centre offers free WiFi. These public networks are much less secure than home WiFi, though, so discourage your child from making online purchases or entering personal details when out and about.



LIGHTS OUT, SCREENS OFF

This is a golden rule: try to limit how much screen time your child has towards end of the day. Staring at the screen of a phone or tablet for too long before bed severely impacts a child's quality of sleep – which can play havoc with their concentration, mood and energy levels the next day.



FOCUS ON FACTS

The internet is phenomenal at spreading gossip. When children of certain ages aren't in daily contact at school, the digital rumour mill can go into overdrive. Remind your child not to believe everything they're told online – especially if the person involved isn't around to provide their side of the story.



KEEP TALKING

It sounds blindingly obvious, but having regular chats with your child about who they're talking to online, what games and apps they're using and what shows they're streaming is a huge benefit. It doesn't have to be every day or even every week, but it can signal potential issues well in advance.



PRIVATE INFO STAYS PRIVATE

It's worth checking your child's social media or gaming profiles occasionally to make sure they aren't inadvertently giving away too much information. Details such as their full name, address or where they go to school could all be used to track them down by individuals with sinister intentions.



LIMIT SOCIAL AUDIENCES

When they're old enough, young people love to broadcast their summer holiday highlights all over social media. The unfortunate truth, however, is that we don't always know who might be viewing this content. Check the settings to ensure that only friends and family can see your child's posts.



DEMONSTRATE GOOD HABITS

Children often learn their digital behaviour from watching the grown-ups around them. So make sure your child observes you being positive and supportive on social media, for example – and, especially, sees that you know when it's time to switch the screen off, even though you're having fun.



WATCH FOR EXCESSIVE GAMING

With no school, children often take every opportunity to fit in 'just one more go' on their favourite game – sometimes at the cost of their daily routine, or having family time. A little extra gaming is to be expected in the holidays, but it could become problematic if it evolves into a recurring habit.



IT'S 'THE GREAT OUTDOORS' FOR A REASON

For most northern hemisphere-dwellers, this time of year is a rare opportunity to enjoy the outside world in pleasant weather. Remind your child how amazing it is to feel the sun on their back and fresh air in their lungs. Disney+ and Minecraft will still be there on drizzly Sundays in October.



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