



Parenting in a Digital World

What You Need to Know

Session 1 - Early Years and Key Stage One

Preventing - Setting Safer Rules and Supporting Your Child

ACHIEVING
BELONGING
CARING



Why are we running this session?

Following feedback and questions from
our parents

Following the findings from our own Early
Years and Key Stage One student survey

To share recent research into the impact
of screen time on developing brains and
online risks young children face

We live in a rapidly changing online world

Establishing healthy habits and
boundaries at a young age will help
families as children get older

Our 3 Session Programme



Session 1 (Today) Preventing

The first session provides simple, practical steps to set up child-safe devices, and establish healthy screen rules early on.

Session 2 Supporting

The second session explores how to guide your child towards creative rather than passive screen use. This session will also focus on protection within some of the apps that they like to use.

Session 3 Responding

The third session offers gentle advice on handling accidental exposure to upsetting content, managing screen-time transitions and emotional reactions whilst reassuring young children.

Today's session will include:



The main online risks for children aged 3-7 years

How to make devices safer for young children

Simple screen rules that will work for you at home

Simple strategies to set screen time limits and protect sleep

Recognising that not all screen time is equal

Working together to teach children what to do if something online worries or upsets them

Your child's day

A child's 24-hour day can be broadly divided into three parts: school, sleep and time at home. Each part has different levels of device use, supervision and online risk.

8 hours - School

In school, we strictly limit screen time- children do not use devices outside of specific, structured learning activities. All device use in Early Years and Key Stage One is fully supervised with filtering and monitoring to ensure safe, purposeful learning.



9 - 12 hours - Sleep

Young children need 10-12 hours of sleep for healthy brain development. Screen light before bed suppresses melatonin and disrupts bedtime routines.

4 - 7 hours - Home

Home screen time can carry the highest online risk for children. Home is the main place where young children use devices like phones, tablets, and TVs. While schools keep screen use strictly for learning, parents and families play the most important role at home.

Thinking about screen time in your family

1. CONTROL



**IS SCREEN TIME IN
YOUR HOUSEHOLD
CONTROLLED?**

What are your family's technology habits like? Do they fit into the daily routine or do they drive it?

2. INTERFERENCE WITH FAMILY



**DOES SCREEN USE
INTERFERE WITH WHAT YOUR
FAMILY WANTS TO DO?**

Do screens sometimes replace time when you could be talking together?

3. INTERFERENCE WITH SLEEP



**DOES SCREEN USE
INTERFERE WITH SLEEP?**

How might screen time affect bedtime routines and quality of sleep time?

4. CONTROL OF SNACKING



**ARE YOU ABLE TO
CONTROL SNACKING
DURING SCREEN TIME?**

Does your child eat while watching a screen? Do you notice them snacking more when they are on their devices?

Starting 'Healthy Habits' early is really important

1. CONTROL



IS SCREEN TIME IN YOUR HOUSEHOLD CONTROLLED?

- Setting daily time limits
- Actively viewing content together
- Checking the quality of the content- including what the children are watching along with parental controls to restrict inappropriate content
- Modelling balanced habits

2. INTERFERENCE WITH FAMILY



DOES SCREEN USE INTERFERE WITH WHAT YOUR FAMILY WANTS TO DO?

- Think about what the screen time is replacing- face to face interaction, creative and physical play is really important at this age
- Screen-free mealtimes
- Avoid background screens- having the TV on in the background distracts young children from their active play.

3. INTERFERENCE WITH SLEEP



DOES SCREEN USE INTERFERE WITH SLEEP?

- Screen and stimulating content close to bedtime can make it harder for children to settle and sleep.
- Screen-free bedrooms overnight
- Calming routines are really important for helping young children to prepare for sleep.

4. CONTROL OF SNACKING



ARE YOU ABLE TO CONTROL SNACKING DURING SCREEN TIME?

- Eating while distracted by a screen can make it harder for children to notice when they are full.
- Avoiding the high-fat or sugar convenience foods that quickly become an unhealthy habit

Let's talk screen time: how much is too much?

EARLY YEARS (EYFS)



DAILY LIMIT: < 1 HOUR



The World Health Organisation (WHO) state screen time for children aged 2 to 5 should be strictly limited to no more than 1 hour daily to prioritise talking, real-world play and to support early brain development.

KEY STAGE 1 (KS1)



DAILY LIMIT: < 2 HOURS



Health experts recommend less than 2 hours of fun screen time a day for Primary aged children. Too much screen time can cause health problems, poor sleep, and less time playing with family and friends.

Top Tips for making Screen Time limits work

Use visual tools and automated limits

- Configure Apple Screen Time or Google Family Link to set daily app limits, schedule downtime, and automatically lock devices when time expires.
- Set a physical or visual timer (such as a Sand Timer) near young children so they can see their remaining time elapsed without needing to read a clock.
- Give a 10-minute and 2-minute heads-up before time is up to help children shift their focus towards the next activity smoothly.

Establish clear rules and routines

- Define specific screen free window- for example during meal times or an hour before bed.
- Build screen time into a predictable daily routine.
- End on natural stopping points- stop screen time at the end of a video, show episode, or game level rather than cutting off media mid-scene or mid-game, which triggers resistance.

Create alternatives and model behaviour

- Build a screen free activity bank- make this readily available for quick reference when screen time ends.
- Create a family agreement- involve the children in agreeing upon the screen rules.
- Model healthy device habits- for example adult phones away during family conversations and mealtimes.

What did children tell us about their online lives?

Last year, we carried out a survey with students to better understand their online lives. This is what our children told us.

Activity Type	Reception	Year 1	Year 2
Watching Videos	83%	75%	85%
Playing Games	83%	75%	95%
Socialising	6%	25%	38%
Learning	50%	45%	66%

ABCIS EY & KS1 My Online Life Survey, 2025/26

For most of the children, online life is still mainly about entertainment and gaming. Socialising online grows considerably between Reception and Year 2 although this was predominantly with family members rather than friends.



Some of the apps that they have told us they are using.



- Continuous autoplay and personalised recommendations make it easy for young children to get stuck in addictive viewing loops.
- Even on youtube kids fast-paced or potentially upsetting content can get through the filters.



- No 3rd party adverts or user comments so it is more controlled.
- It is very easy for children to switch profiles to an adult or older sibling profile.
- Within kids ratings they can still contain dark themes, scary villains or loud actions with may upset young children.



- Inappropriate age rating (13+)
- Short form content is designed to encourage continued viewing and can be difficult for young children to stop watching.
- Risks of unfiltered content including inappropriate language, sexualised content, viral trends and disturbing videos.

Not all screen time is equal

Imagine putting a four-year-old child on a fast roller coaster for one hour. Immediately after, you ask them to sit quietly and colour a picture. That is almost impossible for them. Their heart is beating fast, their body is full of energy, and their brain is working too hard.

Fast-paced TV shows and videos do the exact same thing.

Shows with fast action, flashing lights, loud sound effects, and quick scene changes overload a young child's growing brain.

What are the impacts of fast-paced screen time?

It is harder for them to pay attention

- Fast shows teach a child's brain to expect exciting pictures every two seconds. Real life moves much slower.
- When the screen turns off, normal activities—like reading a book, playing with blocks, or listening to an adult—feel boring to them.

It is harder for them to control their actions

- Studies show that watching just 9 minutes of a fast cartoon makes it hard for a child to control themselves.
- It becomes difficult for them to remember simple directions, follow rules, or wait patiently for their turn.

Strong emotional reactions when screen time ends.

- Does your child get very angry or cry loudly as soon as you turn off a tablet or TV?
- Some children find the transition away from highly stimulating screen content difficult. They may be tired, confused, and overwhelmed.

One thing that can help

Switching to Slower, Calmer Shows can really help

Change fast, exciting cartoons to quiet, gentle shows.

Look for shows that have:

- Real-life speed: The show moves at a normal speed, just like everyday life.
- Fewer picture changes: The camera stays on one person or object for a longer time, instead of jumping quickly between scenes.
- Normal talking: Characters speak calmly and naturally, without screaming or loud, surprising noises.



Whilst this can help, the quality, age appropriateness and watching things together also matter.

Understanding Short Videos and Your Child's Learning

How easy is it to get your child to turn off a 90-minute movie when it finishes versus stopping them after 15 minutes of YouTube or TikTok short clips?

Children stop using their memory

- In a full TV show or movie, children have to remember the story from the beginning to understand the end.
- Short videos change every 15 seconds, so children do not need to practice using their memory.

Children lose patience easily

- Short videos skip all the slow parts and show only the most exciting moments.
- This makes real life feel too slow. Children then find it hard to listen to teachers, complete activities, or wait for their turn.

Children watch without really understanding

- Swiping quickly makes the brain look for the next fast reward instead of actually paying attention.
- A child can swipe for 40 minutes and still not be able to explain what they just watched.

Other apps that they have told us they are using.



- Minecraft can support creativity and problem-solving, particularly in offline or single-player play.



Roblox

- Roblox contains millions of different games. Many are innocent but others contain dark themes or violence.
- Roblox kids is aimed at 5-8 year olds- this version locks content to 'minimal' or 'mild' maturity rating and does not allow messaging.

What safety tools are already available?

Most devices and platforms have built-in tools that can help parents manage their child's online experience.

- [Apple](#) – Screen Time & Family Sharing
- [Google](#) – Family Link
- [Microsoft](#) – Family Safety
- Games consoles – Parental controls
- Apps and platforms – Supervised or family settings



Which of these are you already using at home?

We cannot remove all online risk, but we can reduce it.

Explore the Internet Together!

Using the internet **with** your child is the best way to keep them safe online.

- **Let them show you:** Ask your child to share their favourite games, apps, and videos.
- **Talk about safety:** Teach them not to click on pop-up ads. Explain that ads try to sell things, ask for money, or show unsafe pictures.
- **Be active together:** Ask your child questions while they play or watch. This helps to turn passive screen time into interactive time with you.

Talk About Unsafe Online Content

Parental filters cannot block everything. Children can still see unsafe or upsetting things online.

- **Name what to avoid:** Tell your child to look out for scary pictures, rude images, or bad words.
- **Encourage them to talk:** Tell your child, *"If you see anything online that scares or upsets you, tell me right away."*
- **Be a safe person:** Remind your child that they will not get in trouble for coming to you for help.

Recognising how young children go online

Using Pictures Instead of Words

Young children choose what to watch or play by looking at pictures, colourful buttons, and video images, even if they cannot read.

Using Voice Search

Children often use voice search before they can spell. They speak into smart speakers or tap the microphone icon on YouTube (for example, saying "Play videos").

Shared devices

Young children often borrow tablets or game consoles from older brothers and sisters. This can expose them to games, videos, or chat features designed for older children.

When children play on a parent's unlocked phone, safety controls may not work. This can let them access internet browsers or download apps without permission.

Share-space rule: Keep young children's device use in family areas where an adult can see and support them.

Privacy Settings and Location Services

Only give an app permission to use a feature if it **really needs it** to work. If a simple game asks to use your camera, turn it off.

Four Things to Check in Settings

- **Camera:** Turn ON only if the app needs to take photos or videos.
- **Microphone:** Turn ON only if the app needs to record your voice.
- **Contacts:** Keep OFF so the app cannot see your list of friends and family.
- **Location:** Choose "Only While Using the App" or "Never". This stops the app from tracking where your child goes.

Quick Tip: If an app asks for permission, ask yourself: *"Does this app need this to work?"* If the answer is no, tap **"Don't Allow."**

Safety settings are only part of the solution

Children also need adults to stay involved in their online lives.

Watch - Talk - Practise

- **Watch together:** Spend time alongside your child while they play, watch or explore online. Take an interest in what they enjoy and who they interact with.
- **Talk:** Talk regularly about their online life, not only when something goes wrong. Make it easy for them to tell you if they see or experience something that worries or upsets them.
- **Practise:** Talk through situations they might encounter online and practise what they should do. Children are more likely to respond safely if they have thought about it before.

The goal is for children to come to you when something goes wrong, not to hide it because they are worried about your reaction.

Practise: What should your child do?

Simple examples to talk through at home can help children know what to do when something unexpected happens online.

A scary or strange picture or video pops up when you are watching your favourite show.

A message pops up saying “You won a free toy!” and asks you to click a button.

Someone in a game says mean words and makes you feel sad.

Someone you do not know sends a friend request or a message.

You accidentally click the wrong thing and buy something.

Someone online says “Keep this a secret from your parents.”

Stop - Put the Screen Down - Tell a Grown Up

Suggestion: Agree on Clear Family Rules

A simple family digital agreement can help everyone understand what is expected at home.

Keep screens near grown-ups: We play on tablets and computers in rooms where a grown-up can see and help us.

Always ask first: We ask a grown-up before clicking, downloading a game, buying anything, or posting pictures.

Only Always ask a grown-up before talking to someone online: We never chat online with people we don't know in real life.

Keep our details secret: We never share our full name, photo, home address, or school online.

Keep phones and tablets out of bedrooms overnight: All tablets and phones are left in their charging spot overnight—never in bedrooms.

Tell a grown-up if something feels wrong: If we see anything scary, sad, or strange, we tell an adult right away. We will never be in trouble for asking for help.

That last rule is very important. Children are more likely to hide a problem if they think telling an adult means losing their device.

Which rules could work for your family?

Three Ways to Support Your Child Online

PROTECT - Use appropriate safety settings, parental controls and clear family rules to reduce risk.

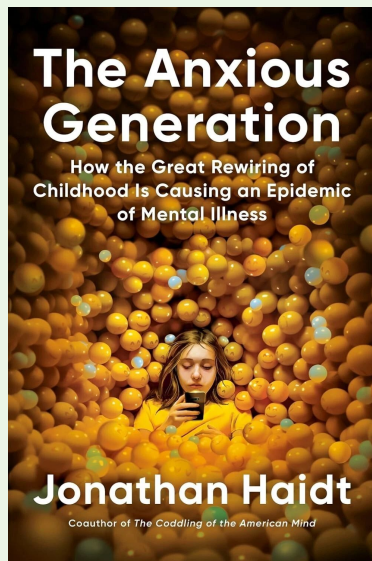
PARTICIPATE - Stay involved in your child's online life. Know what they are doing, who they are communicating with and talk regularly about their experiences.

PREPARE - Help your child recognise when something is not right, practise what to do and make sure they know they can always come to you for help.



We cannot remove all online risk, but together we can help children become safer and more confident online.

Further Reading



The Anxious Generation – Jonathan Haidt

This book explores the impact that smartphones, social media and changes in childhood may be having on children and young people's wellbeing. It has contributed to wider discussion and debate about children's use of technology. He is also good to follow on instagram.

We asked for some of your ideas that you use at home

Here are the ideas you shared

I let my child set a timer for about 20 minutes, use the computer, and tidy everything up afterwards. This helps my child learn to manage technology independently.

I only allow access to YouTube kids channel. If they need any information I support at home and just search by Google (AI).

We use a portable timer to set a specific amount of time for our child to use electronic devices.

I try to spend time and stay with my children when they play on the iPad.

Any Questions?

*Achieving
Belonging
Caring*

