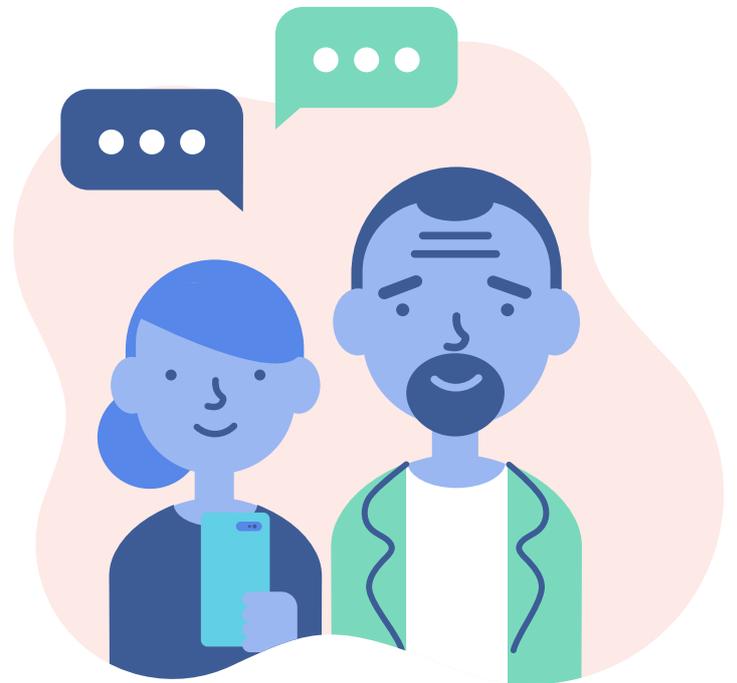


Empowering young people with additional learning needs to connect safely online

Get children set up safely – 5 things to discuss

Learn how to make use of safety settings and the tools available on your child's devices to create a safer space for them to connect with others and create learning moments



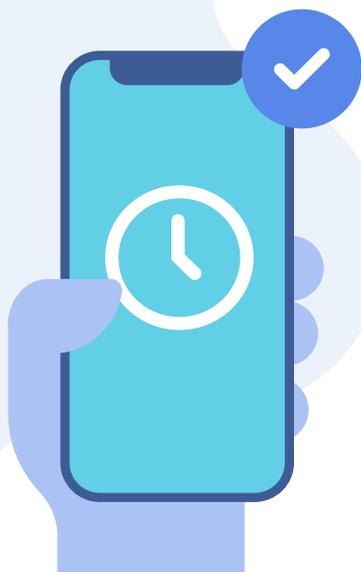
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Setting up the tech

The following are useful tools you can use for when your child goes online:

Apple devices

- [Screen Time](#) allows you to set time limits and content and privacy settings such as passcodes and filters.
- [Family Sharing](#) lets you monitor your child's screen time use, what websites they visit and apps they use. It also lets you set time limits for specific apps and has a handy 'Ask to buy' feature. It also allows you to track device locations.
- [Sharing Devices](#) have guided access which is a stand-alone way of controlling access to a single app for a set time, useful if you are sharing devices.



Android devices

- [Google Family Link](#) lets you supervise, and control access remotely and add filters and content restrictions to your child's Android device.
- [Digital Wellbeing](#) gives you access to a range of screen time data that lets you review the apps you use and the time spent on them.
- [Google Play Store](#) as well as making purchases, you can control the apps your child can download by using the settings in the actual Play Store.



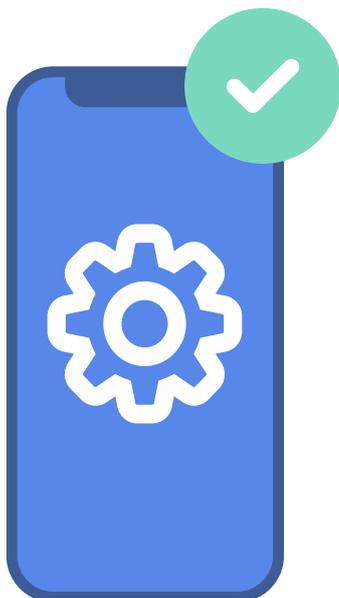
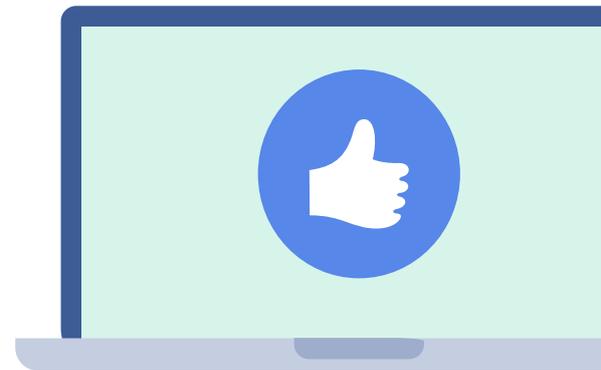
Gaming consoles

- As children grow older, gameplay whether it is on mobile or console increasingly involves communicating with others, so it's important that you make sure you also set up [gaming consoles](#) with this in mind.



Laptops & PC's

- Laptops and PC's are much like smartphones and tend to fall into two camps: Apple [and Windows](#). The Apple macOS (Operating System) offers very similar features to Family Sharing on smartphone iOS.



Home broadband

- The most common home broadband networks all offer [parental controls](#) and filtering free of charge. This allows you to control the sites your child can access.
- [Sky Broadband Buddy](#) at an extra cost, allows you to set up a profile for your child and control access and time spent on both individual apps and types of website.

Mobile networks

- The big [mobile networks](#) all offer protection for accidentally stumbling across inappropriate content. But like the broadband networks, they operate on a website level (not on apps) and so for social media they cannot block app access.

Safe Search

- [Google Safe Search and YouTube Restricted Mode](#). Safe Search on Google's search engine stops anything that is considered 18+ appearing in the search results. YouTube Restricted Mode filters out inappropriate adult style content from being played on YouTube such as adult themes and bad language.

Setting up social media

For children that have learning difficulties, it's important to recognise that their chronological age may not be aligned with their emotional understanding and cognitive ability. However, with the right setup, there is no reason why children with vulnerabilities cannot enjoy the many benefits connecting online has to offer.

On many platforms your child's profile can be viewed by anyone around the world, so think carefully about the information you choose to include.

- **The profile picture**

Does their profile picture need to be of them? Particularly if your child is young – this could be a cartoon, an image, or a graphic instead, so it is not immediately obvious that the profile is for a child.

- **The personal information**

Think about sharing information that makes it easy for someone to contact or track and find your child. Your child may have a tendency to be more open and trusting so help them think about why sharing personal information can be risky behaviour.

- **Privacy settings**

For children with learning difficulties, these settings are important as they offer a practical level of protection from some of the risks that they are more likely to experience. Typically privacy settings allow you to manage the following:

- Who can see your child's profile and what information they see
- Who can see what your child posts and shares
- Manage who can comment and react to your child's posts
- How and when your child can be tagged or tag others
- Sharing your child's physical location



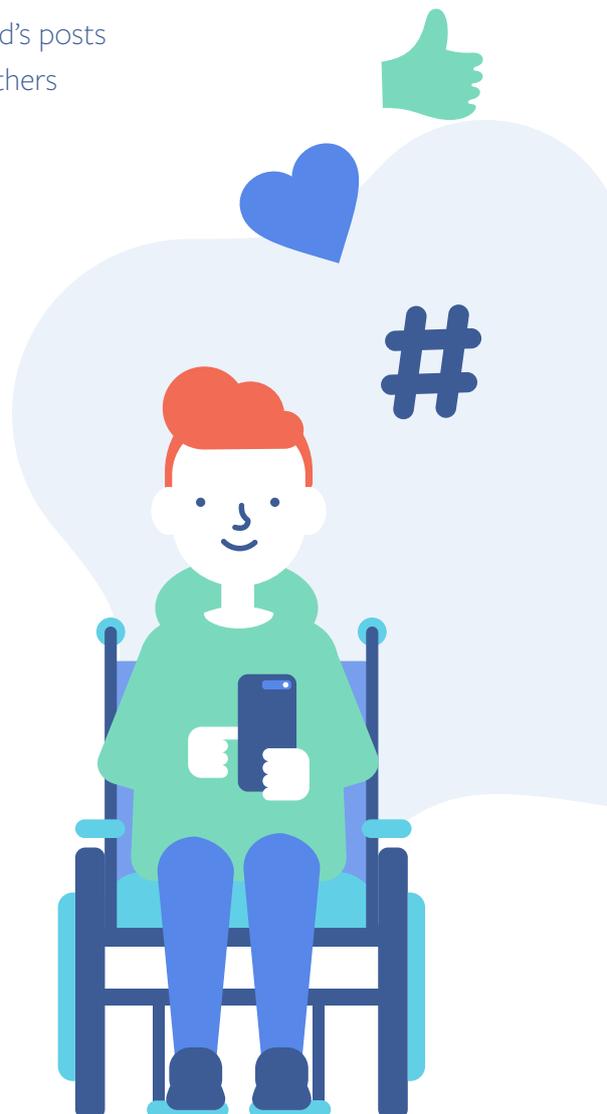
Work through the privacy settings together with your child so that you can explain why you want them to be set that way. You may also want to regularly review the settings and amend them as your child gains more confidence and demonstrates they are able to think critically about what they see online.

Guides for the most popular privacy settings can be found [here](#).

Some apps allow you to choose which pieces of information in your profile you share and with whom. This can be particularly helpful, not least to trigger a conversation with your child to help them understand which pieces of information it is appropriate to share with strangers and which bits with friends and family.

You can find a helpful guide to setting up safe social media profiles [here](#).

Although the minimum age requirement for many social media apps is 13, there are some parents and children that knowingly set up accounts for their children even though they are yet to be 13 years old. Think very carefully if you do this, and if you choose to lie about your child's age make sure it is as close as possible to their true age.



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Setting up for wellbeing

Configure devices for better accessibility and ease of use.

Both Android and iOS offer a range of accessibility features allowing you to customise the way your child's device works.

These can be particularly useful if your child is visually or hearing impaired or has communication difficulties, making it easier for them to interact with their device.

- For Android, you can find details of available features [here](#).
- For iOS you can find details of available features [here](#).

There are also a number of third party accessibility apps available in both the Google Playstore and the Apple store.

How to use review the time your child spends online

For children with additional needs technology can become something that underpins their entire lives so finding ways to ensure they have a healthy relationship with technology can be helpful.

The 'Your Time on Facebook' feature allows you to manage notifications and to set limits for time spent on the app.

- On Instagram, '[Your activity](#)' feature on Instagram allows you to pause notifications, set time limits and see how much time you've spent on the app.
- [iOS screen time for Apple devices](#) lets you know how much time you are spending online and what apps you are using, as does Family Link from Google on Android devices.



Some suggestions for setting up family and friendship groups

For children with additional needs, it can be helpful to set up their account(s) together. Help them find their friends and family to ensure they are adding and following the correct people.

You might also want to set up your own account on each of the platforms they are using and connect with them, or ask a sibling or family member or friend to connect with them if they are uncomfortable about you as a parent being part of their online experience. There are some things to consider if you choose to do this.

- Don't play an active role. It is important that you recognise this is your child's own experience, so we would suggest you watch and listen rather and never engage on the actual platform itself.
- Be upfront. Tell your child if you are going to connect with them and your reasons why.
- Consider how long to connect for. As your child matures and develops it may be appropriate for you to stop following them and allow them to have their privacy.



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Setting up for success

Family Agreement

Setting up a family agreement can be a great way of thinking through how your child will connect with people online and is a great document to refer to in order to reinforce the behaviour you are trying to encourage. Things you will want to consider are:

- **Devices.** Which devices are they allowed to use and how long for? Are there any apps and services they are not allowed to use? When is it OK to download files, games or apps?
- **Sharing.** What information is it OK to share online? Who can I post images and videos of online? Will my account be set up to be private? How will I respond to requests?
- **Working together.** When I will ask for help? Who can I ask for help?

You can find a suggested family agreement [here](#).

Reviewing time online

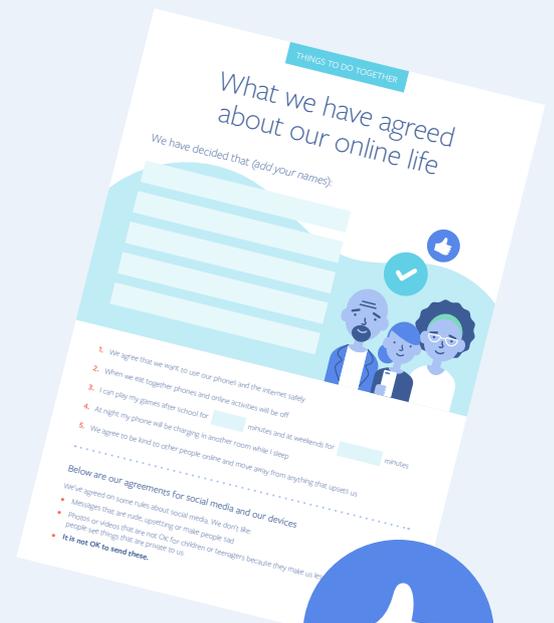
Given the additional risks children with vulnerabilities face online, it can be a leap of faith to allow your child access to the digital world, however, there is also an increasing number of apps and software solutions that can both help your child to look after themselves, but also provide you with a sense of control.

For children, consider installing the [BBC Own It app](#). This app is personal to children and young people. It prompts the child when they type in something inappropriate and offers up some resources that might help. It also has a mood tracker and provides helpful suggestions, and is packed with helpful articles and resources to stay safe online.

And there is an increasing number of wellbeing apps for young people. You can find some examples [here](#).

For parents, there is a range of apps and software packages that allow you to monitor your child's use and time spent online. A number of apps allow you to install a keyboard that can monitor what your child types, highlighting anything of risk based on keywords. MM Guardian, PocketGuardian and SafetoNet all offer capabilities of this kind. You can also find out more about monitoring apps [here](#).

If you choose to use one of these apps, make sure your child knows you are doing it and why. It's important that you give them the right to discuss this with you and that as they demonstrate they are making good choices you can and will reduce the level of engagement you have.



Conversations to have

1. Staying safe and avoiding risky situations

The way adults and children understand risks can be very different, and it is important to think about the right way to talk to a child with vulnerabilities about harm. Talk to them about **what they may see, who they talk to** and **what they share** as children with vulnerabilities are more like to overshare and experience coercion, abuse and bullying

Reassure them that with the right setup and the right behaviours together you can work together to ensure any risk they face does not turn into a harmful situation.

2. How you will be involved

Children with additional needs often need an increased level of parental engagement and supervision as their child may struggle with being able to assess and make good judgments about both what they see online and also what they share online. However, your child is still an individual and depending on their age and ability has a right to some privacy, and as they mature into adulthood, it's important to encourage independence. It is really important you tell your child how you plan to stay involved and support them in their digital life. Whatever you choose to do, make sure your child knows you are doing it and why.

3. Online reputation and being a good digital citizen

Your child's online activity creates a 'digital footprint' that potentially lasts forever. Encourage them to think about how the online world can be used positively as well as for simple fun, connectivity, and enjoyment. Remind them to be a good digital citizen and treat others as they would like to be treated.

Where children have communication difficulties, talking about how words can be interpreted online, for example, capital letters often implies you are 'shouting' and that many people use emojis to convey a range of emotions. A list of emoji meanings can be found [here](#).



4. Critical thinking about what they see online

Critical thinking is something that all children find challenging, and for children with additional needs, this can often be even more challenging. Nonetheless, it is important to try and get your child to simply ask some basic questions about what they see online. Helpful questions might include:

- When I read something online, what proof do I have that it is true?
- How do I know if it's a fact or just someone's opinion?
- Am I reading something the way it was intended or am I misinterpreting it?
- Is what I am sharing sending out the correct message? How will it make people think about me?
- Have I accurately expressed what I meant to say? Could my words be read differently?
- Is this person someone I know and trust? What proof do I have that they are who they say they are?

Encourage your child to come and ask you if they are finding a situation difficult or need any help in expressing themselves in the right way.



5. Resolving online issues that might come up

All children respond to having a set of rules that they have helped to develop, so make sure that you agree strategies for any situations that might come up. Here are some examples:

- **Friend requests** - you may feel the need to approve all their friend requests or agree that you will look through their friends list together every now and again.
- **Responding to unsolicited messages** - If they receive an unsolicited message you might ask them to simply block that user or come and share them with you to agree on how to respond if at all.
- **People being mean** - if they feel anything is upsetting as well as using tools like filtering comments, mute, block and report make sure they come to talk to you or a trusted adult in their education setting.
- **Requests for images** - ensure they know to say 'no' to any request for an image and then tell you about the request so you can establish if it is something to worry about.
- **Request to meet** - ensure they know never to meet up with anyone they have only met online, and again come to you or another trusted adult to tell them about it.

Make sure that you are familiar with when, where and how to report issues your child faces online. You can find help [here](#).

