My Child's First Device

5 Steps to Make Phones, Tablets, and Laptops Safer this Christmas

This Christmas might be the time you're deciding to give your child their first phone, tablet, or laptop (or third, fourth, fifth – even a new update). This is a big decision! The responsibility and freedom that comes with owning a device is a big step for children – and you! It might even be their first "grown up" responsibility.

As a parent or carer, it's important to remember that even if a child is tech-savvy, they need to be taught how to be tech-safe. We know this can be daunting with various device brands, apps, and settings to choose from. Our online safety experts have created 5 steps to help you make that first device (or brand-new model!) safer for the child or young person in your care.

Remember!

This is an exciting time in your child's life! You want to be a part of that in a positive way that encourages them to share with you and trust you. If you take the time to teach them, they will be empowered in their online actions and behaviours for the better.

1 Do your homework

Make sure your home environment is secure and ready for your child to be online. Many major broadband providers offer age restriction settings so check with your provider to ensure these restrictions are put in place.

Many retailers offer free Parental Controls to their customers. You can find Parental Control walkthroughs on most popular provider websites.

Check the device's brand website for simple walkthroughs of where to find privacy settings on your child's specific device.

2 Set up the device with your child

Taking the time to sit down with your child and set up the device together will help you both get to know how the device works, allow you to implement SafeSearch filters on search engines, and set up in-app purchase restrictions. You can use the device settings to set up agreed upon restrictions, like Screen Time and App Limits.

Explain why these settings are important to protect children and young people from online risks and that these restrictions will be lifted when they are old enough. Ensure your personal account is set as the Parent account and make sure your parental control PIN number is secure and random.

3 Discuss and agree on healthy phone and device habits

Once the device has been set up, take the time to agree on some healthy rules and boundaries for how they will use the device. This can include rules like when and where they can use their decide, screen time allowance and which apps are allowed to be used.

Be realistic on what will work in your household. If your child has friends with different rules, remind them that what works for one family might not work for another! As the parent or carer, you are responsible for the way your child uses their device and they will need guidance, especially if this is your child's first independent responsibility.

4 Check-in with your child

Check-in with your child about their device use. It doesn't have to be a big sit-down conversation! Informal chats over the dinner table, in the car or while watching television as a family can have the biggest impact. Ask questions like, "Tell me about your favourite app! Why do you like to use it?" or, "How has your device helped you today?".

Online safety is never a one-off conversation – it's a continuing dialogue. Show your child that you're interested in their responses and thoughts to foster an environment of openness and trust between you and the child in your care.

5 Keep Yourself Informed

We live in a digital world that changes daily. The most responsible thing you can do in keeping your child's device safe is to keep yourself informed.

Stay alert to trends and threats that they may be exposed to. With many companies beginning to offer "kid" versions of their platforms, knowing what is safe and what is suspect will help you make the best decision for your child. Luckily, we have some excellent resources to assist you that are reliable and relevant. Visit our website and social media pages.

SAFER SCHOOLS oursaferschools.co.uk

Online Safety Centre

oursafetycentre.co.uk

How to stay safer on popular platforms

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