



ONLINE SAFETY @ HARRIS.

“(36%) of young people reported constant contact with friends online via platforms, devices, gaming or social media”
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ARE ONLINE GAMES GOOD FOR MY CHILD?

Research shows that online gaming when used safely and in moderation can provide young people with a range of imaginative, digital skills that they can build on in later life. However, the evolution of gaming has made way for online chats open to anyone to join, access to banking via buy-in opportunities and building levels of addictive behavior patterns. Internet Matters have produced individual guides for each gaming forum for parents alongside general top tips for navigating gaming in your household:

<https://www.internetmatters.org/resources/online-gaming-advice/>



Research Says

More than 1 in 10 adolescents (11%) showed signs of problematic social media behaviour, struggling to control their use and experiencing negative consequences. Girls reported higher levels of problematic social media use than boys (13% vs 9%), however, in Gaming, boys were more likely than girls to show signs of problematic gaming (16% vs 7%).
(<https://www.who.int/europe/news/item/25-09-2024-teens--screens-and-mental-health>) Seeking validation and communicating are the main reasons girls often use social media, Research shows the links to body image issues and self worth have direct links to increased use.

IN THE MEDIA...

If books are your thing - a great buy for your teen and you is "The Gaming Overload Workbook". This talks about the benefits and pitfalls of gaming and how to manage it healthily.



For your next Netflix fix, "The Social Dilemma" explores how we communicate, use and depend on our social media platforms and where this is leading us.



Some sounds for the soul this week come via "Parenting Teenagers Untangled" a podcast designed to help navigate parents through a range of milestones, often featuring tech, gaming and social media.



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WHAT ARE GROUP CHATS & THE RISKS?

All social media chat options have a minimum age category of 13 and often have 13 -17 based features to safely support young people. However, many young people lie about their age and access profiles with less restrictions around friend requests, sharing images and sending personal information. If your child is accessing social media chat groups under 13, this is illegal. There are a range of safe chat options for younger children to access and guidance on age ratings here:

<https://www.internetmatters.org/resources/social-media-advice-hub/>

Email us OnlineSafety@harris.covmat.org



Best Overall: Qustodio

Qustodio takes the crown as the best all-rounder. It works smoothly on both iOS and Android and its easy-to-use interface and wide range of features makes it accessible. Qustodio blocks over 95% of inappropriate content, keeping your kids safe online. It lets you set time limits, track location, and even keep an eye on social media. Parents love it, with a whopping 4.7 out of 5 stars from over 10,000 UK users.

Best Value: Norton Family

If you're after good value, Norton Family is your go-to. It's packed with features but won't break the bank. For about £30 a year, you get web filtering, time limits, and location tracking. It also includes antivirus protection for the whole family. That's a saving of up to £50 compared to buying separate parental control and antivirus software.

Best for Content Filtering: Net Nanny

When it comes to blocking content online, Net Nanny is top of its game. Its clever AI can spot and block content in real-time. It doesn't just look at website addresses - it actually reads the content on the page. Net Nanny catches 99% of adult content, violence, and drug-related material. It even works inside apps and games, not just websites. That's 10% more effective than the average parental control app.

Best for Location Tracking: FamilyTime

Worried about where your kids are? FamilyTime has you covered. It's like a GPS tracker on steroids. You can set up safe zones and danger zones, and get alerts when your child enters or leaves these areas. FamilyTime's location updates are spot-on, accurate to within 5 metres. And it won't drain your child's phone battery either - it uses clever tech to keep power use low.

Best for Time Management: Screen Time

If you're battling screen addiction, Screen Time is your new best friend. It lets you set daily time limits and schedule device-free times. You can even manage each app separately. The best bit? Its reward system. Kids can earn extra screen time for good behaviour or chores. On average, families using Screen Time see a 30% drop in daily device use.



This Christmas watch out for: "Doomscrolling"...

Doom scrolling is when a person gets caught in a continuous cycle of reading negative news online. This can negatively impact both mental and physical health. Social media algorithms, negativity bias and FOMO all encourage doom scrolling.

- Doom scrolling can increase mental health issues and negatively impact sleep.
- Signs of the behaviour can include stress, anxiety and low mood.
- Setting app time limits and curating social feeds can help prevent doom scrolling.

If you would like more information please see here:

<https://www.internetmatters.org/hub/news-blogs/what-is-doomscrolling-parents-guide/>



Looking for a good programme to watch over Christmas.. Check out Channel 4 - Swiped - The School that banned smartphones.

A school in Colchester ban's smart phones for 21 days and explores its impact on school life, home life and student's mental health.



Concerned about Gaming this Christmas?

While gaming consoles remain on many children and young people's Santa list, parents may have concerns over how to keep their child safe while gaming. Video games are fun and remain popular among younger and older users alike, with research by Ofcom in 2024 showing that approximately 60% of all children aged 3-17 play video games.

With this in mind, it's important to remember that playing video games comes with risks. Some have in-game purchasing while others contain age-inappropriate content. These risks can significantly increase when a child is playing and interacting with others online.

Safety experts have compiled a list of top tips of how to stay safe over the festive period...

<https://oursaferschools.co.uk/2021/12/11/keep-children-safe-while-gaming/>

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