

# SAFEGUARDING



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## Welcome to our 2nd Autumn 2024 Edition

A list of local outreach support services in Reading. This can be found on the school website [here](#).

## Place2Be

Place2Be, a children's mental health charity, has created a website, Place2Be Parenting Smart. This is aimed at supporting parents on a wide variety of topics including "Helping your child prepare for secondary school", "My child is struggling with peer pressure", "Understanding sibling rivalry" and "De-escalation techniques with children" along with many more. This is a mixture of short articles and videos aiming to offer practical advice and tips to parents. This is accessible [here](#).



## Cost of living

As the darker nights draw in and the weather gets colder, we all know living costs increase. We all feel that extra pinch and find ourselves tightening our belts a little to cover all costs.

There are a number of options for help with energy costs:

1. Contact your supplier they sometimes offer an extra top up loan which you pay back.
2. Apply for Fuel vouchers on your local council website.
3. 0118 937 3797 to speak to the counsel about a Housing support fund.
4. The British gas energy trust (even if they are not your supplier)
5. Contact The Trussell trust who offer energy bill support.

Reading council offer a variety of support to families, further information [here](#). We can refer you to [Readifood](#) who can supply food parcels, [Trussell Trust](#) also provide emergency food parcels too. There is also [Olio](#) app, a marketplace for finding free and discounted fresh food, local deals and events amongst other things.

O2 offer support for families with connecting with others through the National Databank. You can access a sim card with free data, minutes and texts, for up to 12 months, by visiting an O2 shop. There is further information, including eligibility criteria, [here](#).

## Sleep

Sleep is crucial for teenagers, it has an impact on multiple areas such as physical growth and development, brain development and emotional wellbeing. It is recommended that teenagers aim for 8-10 hours sleep a night. However, many young people can struggle to achieve this for many reasons such as use of electronic devices, mental health issues, hormonal changes. Below is a useful guide to support teenagers to improve their sleep. There is further tips for young people available on [Mind](#)

**4 WAYS TO HELP A TEENAGER IMPROVE THEIR SLEEP**  
Here are 4 practical strategies to help teenagers get better sleep

- 1. ESTABLISH A CONSISTENT ROUTINE**  
Establish a consistent sleep schedule to regulate the body's internal clock. Create a bedtime routine with calming activities like listening to music or reading.
- 2. LIMIT EXPOSURE TO SCREENS**  
Consider turning off electronic devices like smartphones, tablets, and computers at least 30 minutes before bed.
- 3. CREATE A SLEEP-FRIENDLY SPACE**  
Make the bedroom a comfortable, quiet and dark space. Keep the room cool as this is more conducive to sleep.
- 4. MANAGE STRESS AND RELAX BEFORE BED**  
Encourage relaxing activities before bed like breathing or meditation practices. Journal writing can help to reduce anxiety.

The Enlightened Parent

## Sexting

Sexting is when people share a sexual message and/or a naked or semi-naked image, video or text message with another person. Children and young people may also talk about sharing 'nudes', 'pics' or 'dick pics'. This is also sometimes referred to as Youth Produced Sexual Imagery. There are many reasons why a young person may engage in sexting, this could include:

- Joining in because they think that 'everyone is doing it'
- Boosting their self-esteem
- Flirting with others and testing their sexual identity
- Exploring their sexual feelings
- To get attention and connect with new people on social media
- They may find it difficult to say no if somebody asks them for an explicit image, especially if the person asking is persistent

It is illegal to take, possess, or share "indecent images" of a child under the age of 18. However, Whilst it's illegal for anyone to exchange nude or semi-nude imagery of a child, the legislation is there to protect children from abuse. If an incident involving a young person sharing a nude is reported to the police, it is very unlikely it will result in the child being prosecuted.

What are the potential risks to young people:

- The young person may lose control of the image and where and how it is shared and who views this
- Blackmail and bullying
- Being involved in sharing nudes of others
- Experiencing online sexual harassment

Its important to have open conversations with young people about online activity. If your child has been involved in sexting it is important to discuss this with them and [Childline](#) and [NSPCC](#) offer guidance around how to do this and how to support them through this. There is also further guidance for parents on [Skips Safety Net](#)



At National Online Safety we believe in empowering parents, carers and trusted adults with the information they need to hold an informed conversation about online safety with their children, should they feel it is needed. This guide focuses on one platform of many which we believe trusted adults should be aware of. Please visit [www.nationalonlinesafety.com](http://www.nationalonlinesafety.com) for further guides, hints and tips for adults.

## PARENTING GAMERS



Moving from policing to parenting your gaming kids: how to engage and guide

With concerns about escalating screen-time, the impact of violence, unexpected costs and interloping strangers it can be tempting to lock down video games to limit their negative impact. While some sensible boundaries are helpful, they are only a short term solution for how we guide children towards gaming health. Like other areas of childhood, parents and carers can have a powerful steering presence by engaging and participating in the video games their children play. This not only reduces risks because they are aware of the kinds of activities, interactions and costs involved but makes video games a part of family life. Along with building dens, climbing trees, cooking and family walks, playing games with children enables parents to guide the quality of content being played. This may start with sharing the games children are currently playing, understanding why they love it and celebrating successes. But with a little research, this can grow into suggesting other games to play and higher ambitions for what kids get out of playing long-standing favourites.



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### A New Media For Everyone

Video games are a new kind of media. Because they are new we don't entirely understand their potential yet. They've become hugely popular and commercially successful as blockbuster entertainment for children and teenagers. However, like books, films and music, the real range of video games on offer is much broader than this.

There are games about every topic you could imagine, and aimed at a wide range of ages and perspectives. Whether it's sharing a families heartbreaking story in *That Dragon, Cancer*, stepping into the shoes of a Syrian migrant in *Bury Me, My Love*, or taking the hand of your child and soaring over the clouds in *Sky: Children of Light*, games take us places in unique ways. It's no surprise, then, that Newzoo figures show that in 2018 40% of men and 32% of women play games. And Entertainment Software Association (ESA) data showed that the average age for US gamers is 34 for women and 32 for men.

If you want to turbocharge your care of a child who loves playing video games, the best thing to do is to find games you want to play yourself. This can sound like strange advice until we consider how hard it would be caring for a child who loves books without reading ourselves or guiding a child who loves music without sharing our favourite songs.

### Video Game Diet

Gaining an understanding of what video games are, what they are like to play and the different experiences on offer, enables you to encourage a varied gaming diet. Similar to how we don't worry about plate-time but what's on the plate, we can differentiate between different types of screen experience.

Playing *Fortnite* offers exuberant excitement and connection to friends. Playing *Mario Kart* connects us to the players sitting next to us. *Roblox* can be a place for children to play at having a job or surviving a storm. *Minecraft* can be a tranquil escape from a busy day at school. *Alto's Adventure* can be a way to calm anxiety or jangling nerves.

Parents and carers can expand these experiences. *Kingdoms Two Crowns*, *Reigns* and *Life is Strange* teach players to trust their instincts in game-worlds built to encourage risk and hunch taking. *Florence*, *Abzu*, *Journey* and *Brothers Tale of Two Sons* are a gentle way for children to learn about their own emotional responses to challenging situations as well as appreciating how people experiencing the altruism of building something that other players benefit from.

### Creators Not Consumers

Ambition for their future means parents and carers support activities where children are excelling. While this is familiar territory when a child is brilliant at an instrument or learning a foreign language. It's easy to miss the need for our enthusiasm when it comes to video games. Along with the general connection and good feelings that come from a parent or carer celebrating success in an activity that a child enjoys comes the imperative that they could go further than they realise themselves. The rise in competitive video games can sound peculiar but requires great skill, draws large audiences and comes with high prize money for professional players. Beyond this, parents can guide children towards other careers in video games which need diverse creative, technical and social skills. A simple and effective way to do this is to encourage children to create as well as consume games. This can start as simple customisation of the games that allow you to design maps and characters. Then there are games like *Mario Maker* on Wii U, 3DS and Switch where you can design and share levels for other players. *Dreams* on the PlayStation 4 takes this further with an accessible game creator that's also really powerful.

### Finding Games You Want Children To Play

Parenting rather than policing video games equips children to build good habits and a healthy relationship with digital media for when they leave home and parents aren't around to enforce the rules. One challenge can be finding the kinds of games you want your children to play. There are good resources to help you with this. Many of the examples here come from my upcoming *Taming Gaming* book: <https://unbound.com/books/taming-gaming/> There are also websites that provide video game suggestions like *AskAboutGames* <https://www.askaboutgames.com>. Also, there are good Twitter accounts that help, like *Wholesome Games* (@\_wholesomegames) and *Non-Violent Game Of The Day* (@NVGOTD).

You can also use the VSC Rating Board (<https://videostandards.org.uk/RatingBoard/>) website and PEGI app to search for games of different ratings.



### Meet our expert

Andy Robertson is a parent of three children and journalist who writes for national newspapers and broadcast television. His *Taming Gaming* book helps parents guide children to healthy play.



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#WakeUpWednesday



# 12 Social Media

# Online Safety Tips

## FOR CHILDREN WITH NEW DEVICES

With Christmas only a few weeks away, many of you will be using social media to share your excitement with friends and family. Being active on social media is a great way to show others how much fun you're having, but it's important that you know how to use these apps safely and securely so that bad things don't happen. By following our safety tips below, you can make sure that your personal information stays private, your postings are positive and that your social media use overall is responsible, healthy and most of all enjoyable.

### 1 DON'T ACCEPT FRIEND REQUESTS FROM STRANGERS

Make sure that you set your profile to private so that people you don't know can't find you online. Always tell a trusted adult if a stranger or somebody you don't know sends you a message or a friend request.



### 7 BLOCK ONLINE BULLIES

Sometimes people might say nasty things to you online or post offensive comments on your pictures or videos. If this happens, always tell a trusted adult who will help you block them from your profile and support you in taking further action.



### 2 NEVER SHARE YOUR PERSONAL INFORMATION WITH PEOPLE YOU DON'T KNOW

Keep your personal information personal. Sometime people online aren't always who they say they are and might ask you to share things that you don't feel comfortable sharing.

### 8 REPORT INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

If you see something on social media that you don't like, offends you or upsets you, you should always report it to a trusted adult. You should also report it to the social media app who will be able to remove the content if it is against their user policy and can block the person who posted it.



### 3 DON'T SHARE EMBARRASSING PHOTOS OR VIDEOS OF OTHERS ONLINE

This could really upset them and could get you into a lot of trouble. Always think twice before posting anything on social media and treat people online as you would in real-life.



### 9 ONLY USE APPS WHICH YOU ARE OLD ENOUGH TO USE

Before downloading any new social media app, always check the age-rating. If you need help, ask your parent or carer to make sure that the app is safe for you to use and never download anything which you are too young for as it may contain content that isn't safe for you to see.



### 4 NEVER SEND NAKED PICTURES OF YOURSELF TO OTHERS

This is illegal if you are under 18 and you could get into trouble with the Police. If you are being pressured by someone, always say no and tell a trusted adult. Even if you think it is innocent fun, the photo could be shared with other people and you won't be able to control who else sees it.



### 10 ALWAYS SECURE ALL YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA PROFILES WITH A PASSWORD

This will help to keep your private information safe and won't allow others to access your profiles without your permission. Make sure your passwords are memorable and personal to you but something which other people can't guess, and always share them with your parents just in case you forget them.



### 5 CREATE A POSITIVE ONLINE REPUTATION

Always be kind and polite when posting comments on social media and only upload pictures and videos of things you are proud of. This forms part of your digital footprint. Everything you do online can be tracked and monitored and could affect what people think of you in real-life if it is negative.



### 11 ASK PARENTS TO SET-UP 'PARENTAL CONTROLS' FOR SOCIAL MEDIA

When you download a social media app, you should always ask a trusted adult to help you set it up for the first time. This will help you control who sees what you post, who can contact you and make sure you are able to enjoy using the app safely and securely.



### 6 LIMIT YOUR SCREEN TIME

Social media can be addictive, and it is easy to keep checking newsfeeds or your notifications every 5 minutes which can affect your behaviour and stop you from doing other things. Remember to only use your phone at certain times of the day, turn notifications off at bedtime and go out and have as fun as possible. This will keep you fit and healthy and make you appreciate there's more to life than just what's on social media.



### 12 ALWAYS TALK TO YOUR TRUSTED ADULT IF SOCIAL MEDIA IS MAKING YOU UNHAPPY

Sometimes, social media can make us feel bad about ourselves or sad that we aren't the same as someone else or doing the same things as someone else. Remember, if you ever feel this way, it's really important to talk to your trusted adult(s) like your parents, carers, other adult family members or a teacher, all of whom will be able to support you and discuss your feelings with you to help make you feel better.

