

Internet Safety – Parents’ Questions Answered by Paul Hay

The questions put mainly fell into two camps. How to stop access to content or to monitor what children are doing, plus controlling time spent online.

Questions concerning the monitoring and controlling of what children do.

Q. Advice about getting the balance for children’s privacy - parents viewing/monitoring what children are looking at on electronics/phones. Should children have the right to this sort of privacy?

Q. Advice on children viewing older recommended age material – dealing with expectations when their friends view even older material from very younger ages.

Q. What is the best way to monitor your child’s activity on social media?

Q. How to monitor SnapChat and Instagram?

Answer: As parents we feel we should be checking on everything our children are doing. In practice this is quite difficult as there are a lot of areas to cover. There is the social media interaction, online chats, message boards and forums as well as talking to other online players in games. There are software packages which allow the saving of activity but they will not capture everything. We would also have to consider the different devices. There is not one solution that would cover every computer, tablet, phone or games console. If a child is determined to talk without being heard they will find a way through a different app or web service. In the offline world we don’t hear their conversations when they are out of earshot.

If a child is signed up for an app or online service, we do not have the right to view their content. They are a user in their own right. The only way of stopping them is if they are under 13, and have therefore broken the terms and conditions of the app. You can report them to the likes of Instagram and Snapchat so they can stop their account. What I would say is this may cause you different problems.

One could continually ask to see their device and go through everything, but again you will need to be prepared for very strong push back. They will see it as a lack of trust and that we are prying. However, we are quite in our rights to continually remind them of the right behaviour on line and that if they are too secretive and will not talk to us about what they are doing, then maybe they are up to something and can’t be trusted and that warrants extra scrutiny.

Q. Are all social media apps unsafe or do some, more than others, provide an easier platform for cyberbullying?

Answer: All apps and websites that allow people to communicate can be referred to as Social Media and because it enables them to communicate, unfortunately, they can be used to be unkind to others.

Communication is either posts on peoples' profiles, designed for others to see, such as Facebook, Instagram etc, but a lot of communication is one to one. These methods may be text messages or message apps such as WhatsApp, OoVoo, etc, but also through games online. Such communication can be private and only seen by the recipient.

Educating people about their behaviour may stop problems happening, but it will not stop the original messages being sent and the child being upset. If it is in a public area, there is more likely that the messages will be spotted by other people and be reported, but one to one messages will not be tracked. If a child receives messages, they should always save the messages, refrain from replying and speak to an adult so we can help them.

Children can particularly become vulnerable when using apps or games that are for older age groups. They may not be ready or prepared for the type of chat and 'banter' that may happen.

Q. Raising the dangers of Sarahah

Answer: Sarahah was created by a developer from Saudi Arabia as a way for people to share honest thoughts anonymously with their friends and contacts. Ideally, people will post nice things about their friends, but like any app it can be used to be unkind. Unlike other familiar apps, you cannot reply or interact directly. This app became very popular last summer, but has started to wane. This often happens, they are used by lots of young people but they quickly get bored and move on.

Here is a useful link

<https://www.common sense media.org/blog/parents-ultimate-guide-to-sarahah>

Q. Can I automatically switch my child's access off to the web but leave the rest of the house live?

Q. How to cut off access (securely)?

Answer: Not easily. You could turn off the wireless function on their device, but they are probably capable of turning it back on. iPads do have a capability called "Guided Access" which enables you to limit the device to one app that is running. Therefore, you could turn off Wi-Fi on the iPad, open a single app and then put it into Guided Access and they will not be able to do anything else including turning on Wi-Fi.

Here's a link to show you how.

<https://support.apple.com/en-gb/HT202612>

Of course the other option is no devices upstairs or outside the room where you are. Again, it comes down to behaviour and our own expectations.

Q. How are the authorities protecting minors from the data feed captures that are streaming at all times from multiple sources

Example: I attended an event with son and people that were also at the event appeared in our data feed as suggested contacts in Facebook, LinkedIn and other network/apps. This happens in reverse and is very concerning to parents.

Answer: Social media apps (and online businesses) want to keep you using their apps or websites. Therefore, they will try as best they can to make you want to stay connected for longer. A good way is to make it more relevant to you and your interests. They will try to target you directly by showing things that mean something to you. It will pick up on data that you have supplied yourself or have allowed them to collect. When you sign up to a website or app there will be terms and conditions which may have wording that allows them to collect information. There may be tick boxes where you have actually ticked that they may use this information. This is particularly relevant when your smart device has location services. If the app is allowed to make use of your location, you are more likely to see recommendations that have been selected because you have attended an event or been to a certain location. One can be paranoid about these things. In most cases it is not being used for bad reasons, but if you are wary, then read the Ts&Cs and only use the app if you are happy with what they collect and turn off any location services when they are not needed.

We tend to be cautious when it is the internet but forget that your Tesco Clubcard probably knows more about you than any app!

Questions concerning the amount of time spent online.

Q. What would you recommend as a maximum screen time per day (term/holiday) for a 15 year old?

Q. What is the recommended reasonable max screen time?

Q. How many daily weekly hours is OK for gaming or should there be gaming free days?

Q. How do you get your child to turn off gadgets in their room at a reasonable time of night particularly when others seem to be allowed to have theirs on much later.

Answer: This is almost impossible to answer with anything specific. I think it comes down to what problems are being caused by their continued use. You may find that they are very tired in the morning because they are not sleeping, they are not getting their homework finished, or are rushing it so they can play. Are they getting enough fresh air? Are they becoming aggressive when they cannot play? That could be a sign of addiction.

Certainly, allowing the devices upstairs before bedtime will mean they will not get off to sleep. I would say stopping looking at screens at least an hour before they are meant to sleep is a good idea as it gives their minds a chance to calm down so they are not still 'buzzing'.

There are also various studies about the effect the blue light can have on their brains.

Just remember, they are NOT the only child who isn't allowed to play all the time! Other parents are just as 'horrible' and 'unfair' as we are!

There is a good article about this subject on Page 26 of the Digital Parenting magazine. The online copy can be found [here](#)

www.pclstraining.com/app/download/18417932/Digital+Parenting+Issue+6.pdf

One final thought. Are you a good role model? are you also constantly on the iPad? Our children will follow our lead.

Useful links can be found on this page of my website:

<http://www.pclstraining.com/links/>

and if there are other questions parents have, they are welcome to send me an email paul.hay@pclstraining.com