# Relationships Education and Online Safety

## A Guide for Parents and Carers to Share with Their Children

As parents and carers, we want to keep our children safe and happy. Relationships Education, as part of children's learning in Personal, Social, Health and Citizenship Education (PSHCE), includes understanding how to build and maintain positive, healthy and respectful relationships. This learning extends to relationships and behaviours they and others display online.

This guide is for you to share with your children and open up discussions about how to use the Internet safely and responsibly. By discussing these things with your child, you are showing them that you care about them, understand what it is like to use the Internet in the modern world and that they can speak to you about any concerns, without threat of judgement. If children fear that their device will be confiscated or their WiFi will be blocked when they come to you with an issue, worry or question, then they are likely to decide not to come to you for support.

# Relationships Education and Online Safety

The Internet is amazing! In fact, it is difficult to imagine life without it. We can learn new information and skills, listen to music, play games, watch videos, chat with friends, follow our favourite sports teams or celebrities and get help with our homework. It's informative and fun!

However, using the Internet comes with certain responsibilities and if we don't learn about how to be safe online, we can sometimes face risks or be exposed to online behaviours that make us uncomfortable or put us in danger.

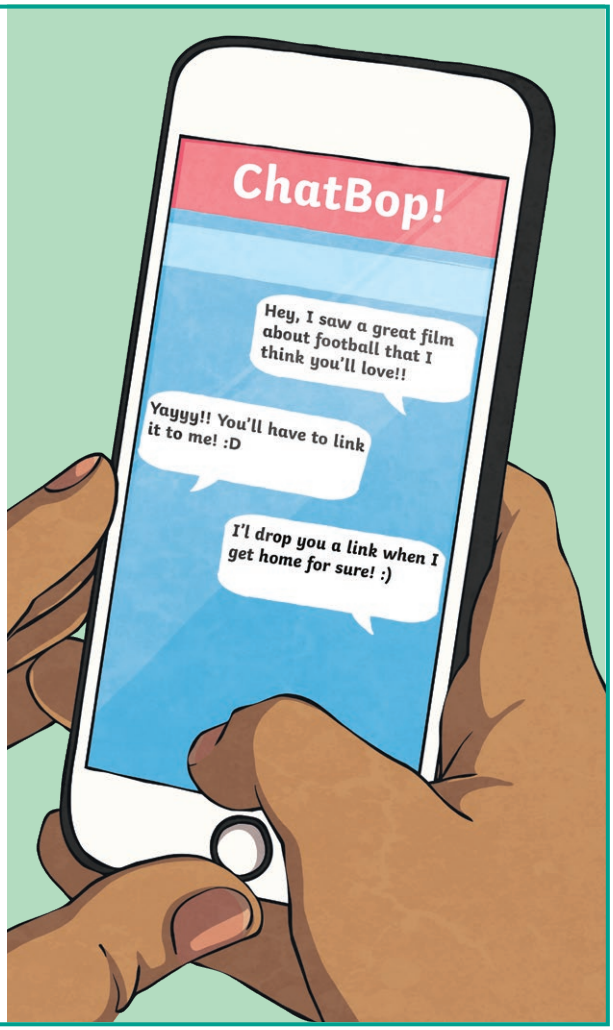
**We need to look after ourselves and others when we go online.**

## Online Relationships with Friends

We live in an age where interaction and communication with others happens as much through the digital world as it does through the real world. Many people chat with friends online – these might be friends you know in real life or people you have 'met' online and made friends with – perhaps because you like to play the same online game or you follow the same vlogger.

When we make a new friendship or 'meet' someone new online, we need to ask ourselves a few questions:

- Is this person who they say they are?
- Do they need to know any information about me and my real life?
- Are they asking me personal details, such as my address or the school I go to?
- Are they asking to meet up in real life?
- Are they sending me messages or pictures that make me feel uncomfortable?



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## Respectful Behaviour Online

It is important to remember that unacceptable behaviour in real life (offline) is also unacceptable online. Being anonymous or invisible online does not make it OK to make comments or share thoughts or opinions that you wouldn't in real life.

All forms of bullying that would not be tolerated in the real world are also unacceptable in the virtual world. Cyberbullying can include sending unkind messages, threatening others online, spreading rumours on the Internet about another person, leaving a person out of all communication or using offensive or insulting language online.

Recognising unacceptable online behaviour in others and knowing what to do about it is essential if you are using the Internet. If someone has behaved inappropriately or done something to make you feel uncomfortable, you must report it to a trusted adult. You will not get into trouble because you haven't done anything wrong.

Respectful online behaviour includes respecting the right of others to privacy. It is not OK to post a picture or video of someone else online, or to share information about them.

## Digital Footprints

Learning what to do and what not to do when using the Internet is a necessary skill for everyone these days. We need to understand the way information is stored and shared online and consider the risks or consequences attached to what we do online.

Everything we post or send online should be the result of an informed decision, having considered:

- whether the information is personal;
- who will see it;
- whether the information or image is ours to share;
- whether we might regret our actions in the future.

Remember, almost everything that is shared online is stored somewhere forever. Something you might not have wanted to be shared could be accessed by someone else who saw or recorded something you posted. There is no way of retrieving information, images or videos once they have been shared online.



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## What Is Online Fraud?

Sadly, there are some very dishonest people in the world who try to trick others – usually for money. This is called fraud and it is against the law.

### Did You Know...?

- Some people try to steal the identity of others – they learn all their personal details then pretend to be them.
- Some people will try to trick children into finding out and sharing their parents' or carers' details (such as bank details). Remember, it is important to keep others' details private, as well as our own!
- Trusted, reliable companies will never contact you and ask you to provide personal details, such as a password.

## What Is Password Phishing?

When people try to find out your password this is called password phishing. They do it so that they can get into your accounts, apps, documents, etc. and learn more about you, steal from you or even send nasty messages from your account to someone else.

This is why using strong passwords and keeping our passwords safe is vital.

## What Are Privacy Settings?

Hardware (that's the device you use, such as a laptop, tablet or phone) and software (that's the sites, games and apps you use) have privacy settings. They are not always obvious or easy to find but it is important that you are aware of how to set your privacy settings to allow only the people you know and trust to access your information (such as your posts or photos on a social media site).

### What Are Online Challenges?

Online challenges spread via the Internet very rapidly and gather huge numbers of followers. Some challenges are fun and harmless, but others encourage risky or dangerous behaviour. Occasionally, the 'challenge' is something illegal.

## Reporting Incidents and Getting Help

### For Parents and Carers

- **Internet Matters** – This is an organisation set up to empower parents and carers to keep children safe in the digital world. Their resources include a range of downloadable guides covering subjects such as, transition to secondary school, vlogging and live-streaming, online gaming and cyberbullying.
- **NSPCC** – This charity's site includes a range of resources to help you keep your children safe when they're using the Internet, social networks, apps, games and more.
- **Parent Info** – This is a free service which helps schools engage parents with expert safety advice endorsed by the National Crime Agency's CEOP command. This website provides expert information across a range of online risks.
- **Parent Zone** – Here, you'll find a range of resources for families to help you meet the challenges of the digital age, including parent guides on the latest digital trends and platforms.

### For Pupils

- **BBC Own It** – This site helps young people to take control of their online life, including help and advice, skills and inspiration on topics such as friendships and bullying, safety and self-esteem.
- **Childline** – Here you'll find information for children on gaming, bullying and relationships.

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