



Advice if your child is aged 10 to 12

- Set some boundaries for your child before they get their first 'connected device' (mobile, [tablet](#), laptop or games console). Once they have it, it can be more difficult to change the way they use it or the settings.
- Tell your child that it's very important to keep phones and other devices secure and well-hidden when they're not at home, to minimise the risk of theft or loss.
- Discuss with your child what is safe and appropriate to post and share online. Written comments, photos and videos all form part of their 'digital footprint' and could be seen by anyone and available on the internet forever, even if it is subsequently deleted.
- Talk to your child about the kind of content they see online. They might be looking for information about their changing bodies and exploring relationships. They also need to understand the importance of not sending other people - whoever they are - pictures of themselves naked.
- Remember that services like Facebook and YouTube have a minimum age limit of 13 for a reason. Don't bow to pressure, talk to other parents and their school to make sure everyone is in agreement.
- Explain to your child that being online doesn't give them anonymity or protection, and that they shouldn't do anything online that they wouldn't do face-to-face.

Is Your Child Using These Apps?

Using social networking sites of one kind or another is second-nature to most children. New sites are springing up every day and there are far too many to mention on this page.

Do *you* know what sites your kids are using? Do you know how they work, what your children and the people they 'meet' on them can say or do on them?

More to the point, are you aware of the potential dangers of kids using these various sites?

Whether it's:

- Chatting with people they think are new 'friends', but who could actually intend to do them harm.

- Sharing or viewing inappropriate or adult images or other content.

- Being bullied or subject to other kinds of abuse.

- Being dared into carrying out dangerous or irresponsible acts on camera - '[neknominating](#)' being one of the most widely publicised.

- Revealing personal or private information about themselves, friends or family. Or arranging to meet in person someone they've met online, when that person isn't who they said they were.

Many of these sites use live video as a means to communicate, or involve sending photos. This leaves the way open for people to send images which may be inappropriate.

Keeping your child safe online

Many have 'rules' such as minimum membership age, or the kind of content, images or content members are allowed to share. Invariably, the sign-up process relies on trust and in reality, it is easy for kids to pretend they're older. And the rules on type of content shared can easily be abused.



Snapchat

Snapchat is a popular photo sharing app for Apple and [Android](#) mobile devices, that lets users share their photos for a few seconds before they 'disappear'. But anyone receiving a pic can keep it by taking a screen shot, or new apps have been developed which enable the picture to be retained without even doing that. The site is being heavily criticised for making it easy for children to be stalked or groomed. The age limit to join the site is 13, but many children are so much younger.



Ask.fm

On Ask.fm, anonymous users ask other users questions. This means that they can easily hide their identity and effectively, say what they like without any consequences. Bullying and abuse on the site has allegedly led to very traumatic experiences amongst youngsters, in some cases tragically taking their own lives. The site owners have said that they will include a 'report abuse' button, provide optional registration and employ more people as moderators.



Yik Yak

"No profiles, no passwords, it's all anonymous", says the app's publicity. Designed as a means of posting news and messages in local communities and on college and school campuses, the app has gained a reputation as a tool for cyberbullies and its use has been banned in many schools in the UK and US.



Habbo

Habbo (full name Habbo Hotel) - is a social networking site aimed at teenagers, although we have heard of children as young as eight years old using it. Again, it has been the subject of considerable concern because of pornographic messages.



Shots of Me (or just Shots)

An app that enables users to take and post selfies, hence using only the front-view camera of their mobile phone. Shots has been subject to widespread concern about its use to send inappropriate photos and possibly resulting cyberbullying and blackmail.