Online Safety Newsletter June 2024

Kik

Kik state you must be 16 years of age to use the app.

What is Kik?
Kik is classed as a social network where users can message each other, share photos/videos as well as video chat.

What do I need to be aware of?

- Groups – once a user joins a group then your child can receive messages from other members of that group. Some of the groups are centered around topics that are inappropriate for under 18s.
- Adverts
- Location sharing
- Explicit content – including images, videos and messages.
- Live streaming/videos - risk of seeing/hearing inappropriate content.
- Talking to strangers

What parental controls does Kik offer?
Kik does have reporting and blocking tools as outlined here: https://kikhelpcenter.zendesk.com/hc/en-us/articles/4402400774043-What-can-I-do-if-my-teen-has-received-an-unwanted-or-inappropriate-message

Further information

- https://parentzone.org.uk/article/kik
- https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/social-media/chat-apps/

Check age ratings!

There is so much that we can do online nowadays including playing games, chatting with others, watching TV or sharing our videos/photographs. Being online can be great but it is important that we set boundaries for our children to keep them safe whist they explore being online, develop their digital resilience and understanding of what to do if anything negative happens when online.

So how can we help keep our children safe? We can start by checking age restrictions/ratings. **It is important that we follow these to ensure that what our children are doing or seeing online is appropriate for their age.**

Where can I find age ratings?

Films: The British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) rate films. This page includes a link to a 'Parents' Guide to Age Ratings': https://www.cbbfc.co.uk/resources/viewing-films-safely-online.

Video games: PEGI provides age classifications for video games. PEGI considers the age suitability of a game, not the level of difficulty. It is important to note that PEGI do not take into consideration user generated content within games (such as on Roblox) and chat facilities within games.

Apps: Check the individual age ratings within the relevant app store. We also recommend that you download any apps and play them yourself to check their suitability.

Social Media: All social media networks have a minimum age rating; they are all at least 13+.

What else can I do?

- Explain the importance of age ratings to your child.
- Go online together to see what your child is accessing.
- Set up parental controls on your broadband, devices and on any individual apps that your child is using. This will reduce the chances of them accessing or viewing anything unsuitable.
- Chat to your child regularly about what they are doing online and as always, remind your child that if anything is worrying them then they should talk to you or another trusted adult.

Further information

You can find out more here:
https://www.bbc.com/ownit/take-control/understanding-age-ratings

Users of this guide do so at their own discretion. No liability is entered into.
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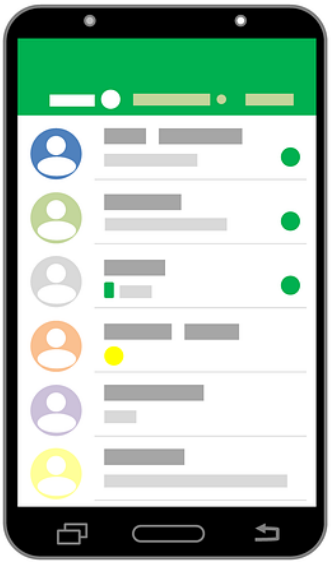
Chatting online



Following a recent report by the BBC detailing how a child was asked for inappropriate images when chatting online (source: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-gloucestershire-68616730), we thought we would discuss the dangers your child might face when communicating with strangers online.

In addition to social media apps that include a chat facility, most online games also allow communication, for example FIFA and Fortnite. Depending on the game, this may be via the in-game text chat, direct messages or talking through headphones. Some games do offer the ability to switch communication off or restrict bad language so make sure settings appropriate to your child are set up for each of the games they play. You need to be aware that there are people who may use these games to start chatting to your child and then encourage them to chat on alternative apps (which are more private, encrypted or have fewer safety options). Talk to your child about the dangers of doing this.

What risks are there with chatting online?

- Bullying
- Inappropriate chat – children may encounter explicit or inappropriate content.
- Contact from strangers – talk to your child about who is contacting them online.
- Sharing personal information – talk to your child about what information they share with others including images.
- Sextortion - this is a form of blackmail where somebody threatens to share a nude/sexual image of you.

How can I mitigate the risks?

- Ensure your child is accessing age-appropriate apps/games and that appropriate parental controls are set up.
- Chat to your child about the risks above so they are aware of what can happen online.
- Depending on the age of your child, it may be more appropriate for devices to be used in family rooms so you can monitor what they are doing and if they are chatting to others.

Reporting other users

It can be difficult to moderate online chat so ensure your child knows how to block and report others who make them feel uncomfortable and that they know to talk to you or a trusted adult if they have any concerns.

Further information

- https://www.ceopeducation.co.uk/parents/Concerned-about-your-child/Online-contact-and-staying-safe/

Tips to promote positive body image

If your child is viewing content online, particularly on social media, then the images they are seeing may be edited or even fake. A child may not yet be able to distinguish between reality and what is not real/fake, which may impact their own body image.

Internet Matters provide advice on how to empower your child to develop a positive body image and what you can do to help. Find out more here: https://www.internetmatters.org/resources/promoting-positive-body-image-with-children/

CBeebies Little Learners app

The CBeebies Little Learners app has been created with BBC Bitesize and educational experts to provide your child with a fun learning experience. It includes activities based on the UK's Early Years Foundation Stage framework, for example sounds and letters and numbers and shapes. You can learn more here: https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zndjh4j

LEGO Build and Talk

LEGO® have created Build and Talk to help you chat to your child about online safety. The activities have been created for children ages 6 to 9.

Firstly, you pick an activity to do and then you read a story, which includes questions and conversation prompts, whilst you build LEGO® together. This is a fantastic way to start talking to your child about topics such as screentime and cyberbullying. Find out more here: https://www.lego.com/en-gb/sustainability/children/buildandtalk/