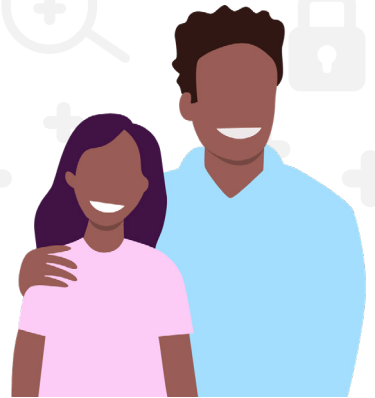


Find the Right Words



Tips for effective conversations around online safety

Conversations are a key part of keeping children safe online. Use this guide to help make conversations easy.



5 ways to find the right words for online safety chats

The right time

Successful chats about online safety come with making them feel like normal conversations. So, instead of pulling them away from their video game or something else they're doing, make time to spend together where you can have open and relaxed chats.



The right place

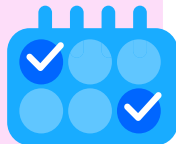
When talking to your child – especially about difficult topics – it's important to help them feel comfortable. You can do this by chatting in casual spaces, such as while driving somewhere or when taking the dog for a walk.



The right frequency

Have regular conversations for long-term safety. A one-off conversation can be helpful, but it's better to talk about it more often.

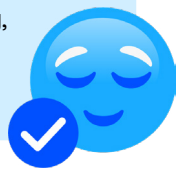
If your child has another adult in their life, make sure they talk about it with them too. Ask them about their favourite game in the way you would ask about their school day. This will help them feel comfortable talking if issues come up.



The right tone

Some topics can be scary to talk about – for both parent and child – so it's important to have calm conversations. Ask them questions about what they do online, how they feel and whether they've seen or heard anything that has worried them.

If they are a victim of an issue like cyberbullying, assure them that you're there to help and that you'll find a solution together.



The right type of conversation

Some parts of online safety are easier to talk about than others, so having the right type of conversation can help. Heavier issues like radicalisation or online hate, for instance, might be better led with stories from the news or 'what if' scenarios.

Simpler questions might work better for conversations about your child's favourite app – such as 'what do you enjoy about...?' and 'how do I...?'. These questions can help you to understand their interests.



- **Remember:** Every child is unique and will respond to online safety conversations in different ways. Keep their age, any additional needs, and personal experiences in mind when talking about online safety to help them benefit most.

- **For example:** If your child finds direct questions difficult, particularly if they are neurodivergent, you could start by telling them the things you're curious about instead of asking questions. For younger children and for some neurodivergent children, you could draw or write stories or comics to explain different scenarios.

- Neurodivergent young people might need extra help to understand that not everything they see online is true. Try giving them real-world examples of false information online. You might need to have this conversation more than once.



Starting a conversation

Use the following conversation starters to help you find the right words to talk about online safety.



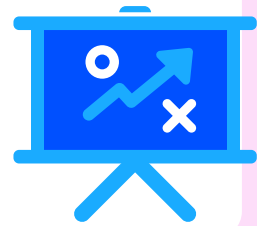
Scenario-based starters

Scenario-based questions are a great way to approach difficult conversations. It lets children think of ways to deal with a situation through a form of role-play. You can use TV shows, films, or books where the issues come up to help with this.

It's best to frame these questions as 'what could someone do' instead of 'what could you do' with scary issues.

What could someone do if they... saw cyberbullying, came across hate online, received a scary message, etc?

If someone was... being bullied, seeing hurtful messages, viewing inappropriate content, etc., what are some things you can do online (such as blocking and reporting) to stop it? If they're not sure about these tools, you can use the opportunity to research them together.



Using the news

Using news stories or information from school about apps or incidents is a great way to engage children in conversation. They will likely have basic information about it, which can help move the conversations along.

- Have you heard of...? Can you tell me what you know?
- What are other kids/adults saying about it?
- How does it make you feel? What are your thoughts?
- Is there something you think could have been done differently?



Open-ended questions

You can let children lead conversations about online safety as well. They know a lot about their digital lives, the latest apps and the games they play. Open-ended questions can help them share more easily and help you stay on top of the issues they might come across online.

- Can you tell me about... app/game/platform?
- How can users stay safe?
- What do you like about...?
- What are some online safety issues that someone might face on it?
- If that happens, what can users do to get support in the app/game/platform?



Starting a conversation

How to respond

Give your child time and space to tell you about their online experience, especially if they tell you something worrying. Try not to interrupt them and ask them to show you if they can. How you react this time could affect whether they feel they can share with you in future. Try to stay calm and be understanding, even if you don't feel that way.

Talk through solutions together. Like showing them how to block or report something, including coming to you or another trusted adult. Depending on what has happened you might need to tell the police or your child's school, especially if other children are involved. You can read the guides below for advice on specific topics.

If you're worried about something your child has told you and need to talk to someone, you can contact Action for Children's Parenting Coaches via their **Parent Talk** platform.

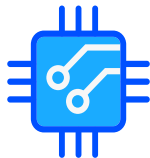


Conversation guidance by topic

For more guidance on conversations about specific topics, you can explore the following resources.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

- [What is a deepfake?](#)
- [Talking to your kids about fake news](#)



Inappropriate content

- [Age-appropriate conversations about pornography](#)



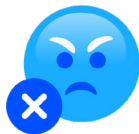
Self harm

- [Protect children from self-harm](#)



Cyberbullying

- [Cyberbullying conversation guide by age](#)



Online grooming

- [Online grooming: What parents need to know](#)



Parental controls

- [Encouraging kids to share their digital lives with you](#)



Body image

- [Help young people manage their online identity](#)
- [Promoting positive body image with children](#)



Extremism and hate

- [How to talk about harassment and abuse online](#)
- [How to counter online hate and extremism](#)



For more information and resources visit [findtherightwords.uk](https://www.findtherightwords.uk)



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