**CHILDREN’S DIGITAL WELLBEING - PARENTS ROLE**

Our overall wellbeing is determined by the physical and emotional experiences we have on a daily basis. As technology continues to be such a huge part of our lives, from the way we represent who we are to the interactions we have with others, it too has an impact on our wellbeing. This is often referred to as your 'digital wellbeing' or 'online wellness.'

It is essentially about having an awareness of how being online can make us feel and looking after ourselves and others when online. This can include recognising the impact being online can have on our emotions, mental wellbeing and even on our physical health and knowing what to do if something goes wrong.

Our digital wellbeing can be influenced by the choices we make online, the content we see, the interactions we have with others and even how long we spend engaging with technology and the internet. Reports have found that those who spend extended amounts of time online are more likely to see upsetting content, receive abusive comments or send abuse to others.

Technology and the internet should be there to enhance and simplify our lives rather than be a cause of distraction, worry or upset. However, not all online experiences are positive for young people and this can have a negative impact on how they feel about themselves, their friendships and relationships and even how they see the wider world.

Children have become increasingly independent users of technology and the internet with many of them owning their own devices. Their online use will consist of many of the same activities as younger children (gaming, watching video content) but they may be independently accessing content which is intended for an older audience and beginning to explore the use of social media through services like Tik Tok, Snapchat and Instagram. This access to online content which is intended for older users and desire for independence when going online could mean they are at an increased risk of seeing inappropriate, worrying or upsetting content which could impact on their digital wellbeing.

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### **5 Top tips for supporting children online**

1. **Discuss how using technology makes us feel** - As a family discuss how using technology and going online can make you feel. Discuss how you know you have been online for too long, considering physical, emotional and device-level factors, e.g. headaches, feeling grumpy, device battery is now low.
2. **Give technology a purpose** - It is important that we use technology for a purpose rather than unconsciously engaging with it which may lead to extended use. A good example of this would be using a tablet to find a recipe online and then putting it down to cook instead of looking for a recipe and ending up scrolling through endless pages online.
3. **Establish boundaries** - Create a set of rules or boundaries to help keep your whole family safe online. At this age, children can contribute their own ideas for safe use of technology and may respond more positively to rules which have been created in partnership with them.
4. **Use parental controls** - Make use of the controls available to ensure that the internet is a safer space for your child to explore. You can set up parental controls on devices, on your home internet connection and even on a mobile phone network. Visit [Internet Matters](https://www.internetmatters.org/parental-controls/) for more detailed information per service, app and device. Remember that parental controls should form part of a wider approach to keep children safe online and not be a used as a replacement for discussion and involvement.
5. **Be supportive** - It's important that children know who they can turn to for support and that they feel listened to and supported if anything ever does worry or upset them online. Make sure children know who all the trusted adults are that they can ask for help, whether it's at home or at school.
6. **Stay informed** - It's important that you know what to do or where to go to find out if ever your child does need help with something that is worrying or upsetting them online.

### **Conversation starter ideas**

A simple and effective way to get involved in your child's online life is through discussion and an open dialogue is the best way to help your child access the amazing resources the internet has to offer whilst keeping them safe online.

1. What do you like to use technology for?
2. What things make you happy when you use technology?
3. What things make you unhappy/angry/sad when you use technology?
4. How long do you think you spend using technology each day/ week? How long do you think you should spend using technology each day/ week?
5. What happens when you’ve been using technology for too long? to your body? to your mood? to your device?

Source: <https://www.childnet.com/parents-and-carers/hot-topics/digital-wellbeing/7-11-year-olds->