



## Teaching your child about Digital Privacy

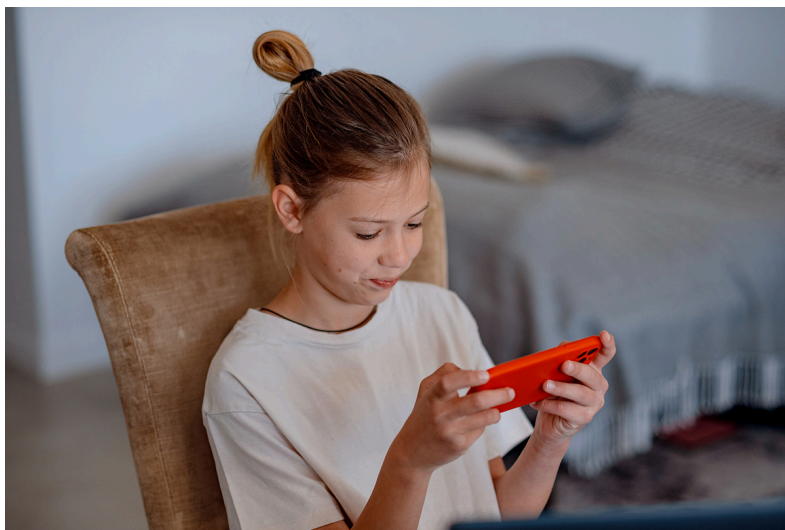
Children are growing up in a world where sharing feels normal and privacy feels optional. Many don't understand the risks because the online world feels like "just chatting," not broadcasting. These tips help start conversations that build awareness, confidence, and safety.

### 1. Explain What "Digital Privacy" Actually Means

Start with simple language:

Digital privacy means choosing what you share, who you share it with, and keeping personal information safe.

Help your child understand that once something is online, screenshotting, resharing, and saving happens instantly, even in private chats.



## 2. Talk About Nude Images (& “I didn’t mean to” situations)

Keep the tone calm, not shaming. Key points to cover:

- Sharing or asking for nudes is illegal for under-18s, even between two children.
- If someone pressures them, it’s not their fault.
- Show script examples:
- “I don’t send pics. It’s not my thing.”
- Emphasise: If something goes wrong, you can always come to me. You won’t be in trouble. Fear shuts down communication, reassurance opens it up.

## 3. Followers are not Friends

Kids often link popularity to worth. You can teach them:

- A “follower” may be someone they’ve never met.
- Only add people they know offline.
- Check regularly who’s on their followers list, do it together.
- More followers does not mean more safety, confidence, or real friendship.
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Turn it into an empowering message:

“Your online world should feel comfortable. If someone makes it feel weird or pressured, they don’t get access to you.”

#### 4. “Fake Friends” & Manipulation Online

Teach them to only speak to people they know in real life, online. A stranger could also be pretending to be someone they know.

Talk about these signs:

- Someone who asks for secrets or photos.
- Someone who gets angry if they don't reply immediately.
- Someone who love-bombs: “You're amazing. Don't tell anyone about this.”
- Someone who tries to move them to private chats.

Teach them the red flag:

If someone online asks you to hide the conversation from adults, something's wrong.

#### 5. Chatting to People Online (Games, DMs, group chats)

Kids often think gaming chats are harmless. Discuss:

- People online are not always who they say they are.
- They should never share: school name, location, passwords, full name, email, home info.
- If someone asks personal questions repeatedly, it's a warning sign.
- In group chats, one unkind comment can spread fast, encourage kindness and a pause before posting.

## 6. Giving Out Information About Yourself & Others

Teach simple rules:

- Don't share where you go to school.
- Don't post pictures with your school logo.
- Don't give out friends' names or details.
- Never send screenshots of private conversations.
- Ask before posting photos of family or friends.

This helps build empathy and respect for other people's privacy too.

## 7. Create "Family Privacy Rules" Together

Children respond better when they help create the rules.  
Ideas:

- Private account only.
- Only follow people they know offline.
- No deleting messages without discussing it.
- No sharing photos or locations without checking.
- Tell an adult immediately if something feels uncomfortable.

Make it a shared project rather than punishment.

## 8. Keep the Conversation Going

Digital privacy isn't a one-off talk, it's ongoing.

Use car journeys, TV scenes, celebrity stories, gaming moments, or your child's questions as natural conversation openers.

Finish with reassurance:

"You're never in trouble for asking for help. I'm always here to keep you safe."





## When is the best age to give your child a phone?

Most parents grew up in a world of landlines and phone boxes, this is a thing of the past and so when children first start venturing out on their own, parents want to give them a phone, this is usually an old phone that has been left in a kitchen drawer. However these phones are often the least secure and are not appropriate for a first device.

The phone was invented to communicate with people who we are not with in person and that is all a child needs, a phone that can call and text without a camera or access to the internet. These simple phones cost a little over £10. You can give this type of phone to your child as soon as they start walking to school or going to the park on their own.



How can you set up a smartphone safely?

In short it is very difficult to make a smartphone complete safe, which is why we recommend delaying it for as long as possible. If your child already has a smartphone or you've decided to give them one, the most important thing you can do is set it up safely before they start using it.

A properly set-up phone creates boundaries, reduces risk, and gives your child the best chance of having a healthy digital relationship.

Here's a simple step-by-step guide.

## 1. Start With a Family Conversation

Before touching any settings, sit down together and explain why safety matters.

You might say:

"A phone is a powerful tool. My job is to keep you safe, not to spy on you. These settings protect your wellbeing, not punish you."

Children respond well when they feel included, not controlled.

## 2. Create a Child or Teen Account

Always set the phone up using a child account, not an adult one.

This gives you built-in control over:

- App downloads
- Screen time
- Content restrictions
- Purchases
- Privacy settings

Use:

- Apple Family Sharing (iPhone)
- Google Family Link (Android)

## 3. Install a Trusted Digital Safety App (like Qustodio)

Tools like Qustodio add an extra layer of protection and give parents clarity without invading privacy.

Qustodio features include:

- Daily screen-time limits
- Safe browsing and filtering
- Location check-ins
- Alerts for risky activity
- Ability to block harmful websites
- Simple dashboards for parents



## 4. Set Age-Appropriate Content Filters

Turn on:

- App age limits
- Web filters
- Explicit content restrictions in music, videos, apps
- YouTube Restricted Mode
- SafeSearch on Google

This helps prevent exposure to adult content, violence, self-harm, pornography, and gambling.

## 5. Turn Off All Notifications (Except From Real Humans)

Notifications are designed to hook children with dopamine.

Turn off:

- Social media alerts
- Gaming notifications
- YouTube/short-form video alerts
- App “badges”

Keep only:

- Calls
- Texts
- School apps
- Family apps
- Qustodio notifications.

This massively reduces compulsive checking.

## 6. Disable Private Messaging Where Possible

Many harms start in private messaging spaces, especially:

- Roblox chat
- Snapchat
- Instagram DMs
- TikTok messaging

Either turn chat off or keep messaging limited to real-life friends.

## 7. Set Downtime / Bedtime Mode

Use built-in tools or Qustodio to set:

- A bedtime (no apps after a certain hour)
- A homework focus mode
- Screen-free family times

Consistency matters more than being strict.

## 8. Turn On Location Sharing (If Appropriate)

For younger teens, location sharing provides safety without making them feel watched.

Use:

- Find My (Apple)
- Google Maps location sharing
- Qustodio location alerts

Explain it as safety, not surveillance.

## 9. Review the App Store Together

Decide together:

- What apps are allowed
- Which are not
- What age they can download certain platforms

Parents should approve all downloads.

## 10. Keep Phones Out of Bedrooms

This single rule reduces:

- Anxiety
- Sleep disruption
- Risky messaging
- Exposure to harmful content
- Night-time scrolling



# What About Other People's Houses or Other Children?

Many parents worry about what happens when their child is playing at a friend's house, visiting family, or spending time in places where they are not there to set boundaries.

## 1. Focus on Conversations, Not Control

You can't control what happens in every home, but you can give your child the confidence and skills to keep themselves safe.

Teach them simple rules that apply everywhere:

- "No phones in bedrooms."
- "No shared passwords."
- "No games or apps I haven't approved."
- "If something feels weird or wrong, come and tell me."
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These become part of their internal compass, not dependent on which house they're in.



## 2. Agree “Family Digital Boundaries” That Travel With Your Child

Children understand rules better when they’re framed as family values, not restrictions.

For example:

- “In our family, we don’t watch YouTube without an adult.”
- “In our family, we don’t play 18+ games.”
- “In our family, we keep phones downstairs.”

This makes it easier for them to speak up politely at someone else’s house.

## 3. Teach Your Child Polite Scripts They Can Actually Use

Children often know something doesn’t feel right, they just don’t know what to say.

Give them ready-made lines such as:

- “I’m not allowed that game, but I can play something else.”
- “Can we do something offline instead?”
- “My mum asks me not to use phones upstairs.”
- “I’d rather not watch that, can we watch something different?”

Scripts reduce pressure and give kids a way out.

#### 4. Talk to Other Parents, Without Blame or Awkwardness

Most parents want the same thing: children who are safe and not overwhelmed online.

You can say something simple like:

“We’re trying to limit phone use, do you mind keeping screens downstairs?”

or

“My child is a bit anxious with YouTube/TikTok, would you mind avoiding those while they’re there?”

Most parents are relieved, not offended.

#### 5. Build a Supportive Network of Like-Minded Families

You don’t need every parent to agree, you only need a few.

When even two or three families share similar boundaries, your child feels supported rather than “different”.

This is how community change starts, parent to parent, one simple conversation at a time.

#### 6. And Most Important: Keep the Door Open

Make sure your child knows:

“You can always tell me anything, you won’t be in trouble.”

When kids feel safe talking to you, they are more likely to come to you if something upsetting, confusing, or inappropriate happens outside your home.



How to disconnect as a family and reconnect together

## 1. Start With Small, Consistent Rituals

Reconnection doesn't require huge lifestyle changes.

Start with one daily ritual that everyone can count on.

Ideas that work:

- A phone-free breakfast or dinner
- A 10-minute "family check-in" each evening
- A short walk after school
- Reading together before bed

Consistency builds closeness.

## 2. Create Phone-Free Zones in the Home

This isn't about punishment, it's about protecting sacred spaces.

The most effective phone-free zones are:

- Bedrooms
- Meal tables
- Car journeys (great for talking!)
- Family nights / movie nights

Explain it as:

"This is our space for peace, not pressure."

### 3. Introduce a Weekly Family “Switch-Off Hour”

One hour a week, everyone turns off all screens - adults included.

What to do instead:

- Board games
- Cooking together
- Art/crafts
- Walks
- Lego
- Playing cards
- Listening to music
- Planning a future trip or treat

Children engage far more when they see parents modelling the behaviour too.

### 4. Ask Open Questions That Spark Real Conversation

Instead of “How was school?” try:

- “What made you laugh today?”
- “Did anything feel tricky?”
- “Who was kind to you?”
- “What’s something you’re proud of this week?”
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These open the door to emotional connection.

## 5. Replace “Scroll Time” With “Shared Time”

If screens are currently the default, gently swap them with something shared.

Examples:

- Swap 20 minutes of scrolling for a walk or game
- Cook a meal together once a week
- Listen to a podcast or audiobook as a family

Tiny swaps add up.

## 6. Help Kids Transition Out of Online Time

A lot of conflict comes from abrupt stopping.

Try:

- A 5-minute warning
- A slow “wind down”
- Something fun or calming to transition into

This reduces arguments and makes family time enjoyable.



## 7. Model the Behaviour You Want to See

As parents the behaviour we model is so important for our children. So much of our life is now conducted on our phones, but for children reaching out to connect, they are dismissed by us without us even realising.

- When your child talks to you when you are on your phone, make eye contact with them, if possible put the phone down and engage so they feel validated or explain that you will be with them as soon as you can.
- Respond to texts and calls in another room when possible.
- Keep your phone out of the bedroom.
- Keep phones off the dinner table.
- Don't use your phone when you are watching TV with them.
- Leave phones behind on family outings whenever possible.

This is the most powerful tool we have.

## 8. Celebrate Offline Moments

Make your child feel good about offline play.

Say things like:

- "I loved seeing you so creative."
- "You look really calm when you're off your phone."
- "I'm proud of how you played with your sister today."

Positive reinforcement changes behaviour faster than any rule.

## 9. Keep Devices Out of Emotional Moments

If a child is upset, confused, or overwhelmed, avoid giving them a screen to distract them.

Help them regulate with:

- Deep breaths
- A hug
- Talking it through
- A calming activity

This teaches real coping skills.

## 10. Make Reconnection Fun, Not a Fight

The goal isn't perfection.  
It's presence.

Keep changes simple, flexible, and joyful.

When children feel included, not restricted, they are far more open to offline time.





## How to talk to your child about sextortion

Sextortion is the fastest growing cybercrime against children. It typically occurs like this: a child is added by an attractive teenager of the opposite sex (teenage boys are the most common victims) a flirtatious conversation begins and the “girl” sends the boy a nude image and asks for one in return. Once the boy complies the extortion starts. Money or Amazon vouchers are demanded or the image is threatened to be shared to all their followers and friends.

Sadly countless teenagers have ended their lives over this scam, often within hours of the first contact from the scammer. The internet is full of teaching materials on how to extort money from children using this method.

Explain to your child how these criminal organisations operate to scam money from children. Explain that under no circumstance should they ever share nude images of themselves or others. If anyone sends them to your child, they should come and tell you right away and they will never be in trouble.

And if something goes wrong, they won't be in trouble, they just need to come and tell you.





## How to talk to child about porn

Aim for 10, before 10.

10 solid conversations about porn before your child reaches the age of 10. The majority of children are first exposed to pornography in Primary school unintentionally, they aren't going looking for it. We want to have conversations with them before their first exposure.

The first conversation can go something like this: "You know what your private parts are right? Well if you ever see anything weird on the ipad or any screen, you know you can tell me? If you ever see anyone without clothes on, showing their private parts, I want you tell me right away, okay? You will never be in trouble for telling me or for seeing anything. So if you ever see anything like that, stop and tell me or Dad, okay?"

We want a version of that conversation over and over again. Reiterate:

- They won't ever be in trouble for what they have seen
- Never panic or act shocked if they tell you, stay calm
- As they get older we can add in that this is called pornography
- Let your inner circle of trusted adults know where you stand on this too