

e-Safety Newsletter

Helping to keep your children safe online

PARENTS' EDITION NO. 10

MAY 2015

**What is appropriate
for our children?**

**Questions
and answers**

**What is
the internet?**





Alan is a consultant who has worked in the education sector for many years, specifically within ICT and internet safety (commonly known as e-safety).

He is passionate about the positive use of technology; that the internet and all it brings can be used as a force of good,

But as in all walks of life there are risks. Alans' main drive is to ensure that our children are protected as much as possible, not by wrapping in cotton wool, but good education so that children can enjoy technology and the internet - safely.

Foreword by Alan Mackenzie

We should never forget that technology and the internet have opened up a fascinating world of exploration for all of us.

As children's access to technology increases with age it stands to reason that their exploration and curiosity will increase too. That's a natural part of growing up and no different to real life, but with that exploration comes an increase in risk; again no different to real life, and it isn't necessarily a problem either.

A big factor when it comes to risk is 'coping strategies'. What I mean by this is that things will happen; no matter how large or how small the risk, children have to know how to cope with particular situations, and if they don't know how to cope they have to be able to turn to somebody for help. That may be a friend, a telephone or online helpline, but most important of all, it's us, the parents or carers.



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What is appropriate for our children?

The positives of the digital world overwhelmingly outweigh the negatives, but as parents we need to keep that watchful eye on our children regardless of their age.

That watchful eye is very much dependent on your parenting style; some parents will be more strict than others, some will allow their children to explore freely as they have a very open and trusting relationship, and again this comes down to many factors, with the age of the child usually being the most significant.

For example with very young children we have to keep very close tabs on them, much as we do in the real world, but as they get older we have to slowly allow them to start exploring for themselves.

But that slow release from our parental vice-like grip is very much based on trust and understanding; a break in that trust should bring consequences, particularly for older children..

There's no such thing as a single piece of advice that fits all parents, because the factors involved are numerous, but there is general advice that individual families can adapt to their own circumstances.



You may be aware that online risk is very generally categorised into 3 distinct areas, namely content, contact and conduct.

As parents our greatest concerns normally tend to centralise around the contact category, for example exploitation by another person, but children and young people normally state that content is more of a concern. In other words they know about the contact risks because they learn about it in school, but quite often state that some content on the internet is what troubles them the most; in other words it is the things they are seeing that can upset them such as adult-type images, violent videos, use of inappropriate language by others for example YouTube comments, online games etc.

More and more we are hearing about the emotional and potentially traumatic risk to children due to the exposure of things that they are seeing online, from beheading videos to self-harm to pornography and others. So that begs the question; what is appropriate and inappropriate?

That's an interesting question as there are so many variables; what is appropriate to one person may not be appropriate to somebody else, it's subjective, in other words we will all have our own individual opinions. Again, we come back to the big factors such as age, resilience, content that we parents are comfortable with our children seeing.

1. Don't be worried, be curious. As a parent you have that instinct to know if something is wrong, or if something has changed in the behaviour of your child. If there is a change in behaviour what has sparked this change?
2. This change in behaviour could be a range of things, for example are they spending too much time on a particular game? Good research is starting to show that in some cases, over-use of devices can have an impact on the behaviour of children (grumpy, unable to concentrate due to lack of good quality sleep etc). Another example may be that they are getting nasty or unwanted contacts from others and may not want to tell you for a number of reasons, principally that you may take away their access or that they are embarrassed or scared.
3. Are your children using social media? If so what are they using, who are they talking to, who are their 'friends', is it age-appropriate, what type of information are they sharing, do they (and you) know how to use the security and privacy settings, and do they (and you) know how to block and report someone? If you ever need to know the content of a game, how to block and report on a social network, or pretty much anything else, do a search on YouTube.
4. What do your children learn in school in regards to internet safety? That will give you a good understanding of what they know so that you can build on yours and their knowledge.
5. Back to point 1 - be curious. But also understand that as children get older they will want some privacy and we need to respect that, however that respect comes with boundaries whether they are 5 or 15.



What is the Internet?

Firstly, the internet isn't the world wide web (or the web), it's an entirely different thing altogether. The history of the Internet is quite fascinating and I'm not doing it justice here, but bear in mind we're just touching on the basics.

The very foundations of the internet started way back in the late 60's when groups such as scientists and academics needed a way of sharing information rapidly between multiple computers. This was developed by the US Defence Department and became known as ARPAnet (Advanced Research Projects Agency Network) in the United States (ARPA was the name of the department).

But that doesn't really explain what the internet is. It's really difficult to define in a simple way, so think of it this way: the internet is basically a worldwide network of roads (motorways). On

those roads there is data (cars) travelling to different destinations. Data can be a variety of things, for example an email, a voice call, a photograph or video, a social media post. So basically the internet is about connecting 'things' to other 'things' so that data can travel. So that begs the question, what is the world wide web?

Well, that will be explained in the next newsletter.

One of the most common issues I hear is that children know more than adults in regards to the internet and technology. In order to keep up with what our children are doing, some level of knowledge is really important. So with that in mind, each newsletter from now on will go into some basics to start building your knowledge. This month we're starting right at the very beginning:



Is there anything I can do to stop my child seeing inappropriate content?

Yes, there are a few ways, but remember that no technical solution is ever 100% effective.

1. In schools, particularly for the younger children, you will normally find that teachers will use pre-checked sites that are appropriate to the age of the child. These will have been determined according to the curriculum and what the children are learning in that particular lesson. This would be a good idea if you strictly want to keep the children on sites that you have checked out for yourself, and would normally be limited to games or educational sites. Of course remember that you will need to keep a watchful eye over your child whilst they're on the internet, but that is always advisable for younger children.
2. The other way is to set a filter either on your broadband internet connection, or on the individual device itself. Nearly all internet service providers give you the option of switching your internet filter on or off. If it is switched on, you can then determine what categories of web sites and services you will allow into the home. But do keep in mind this is a one-size-fits-all solution. In other words everyone in the house using whatever device will come under the same restrictions. At the very least I would recommend you have a look at the filter that is available to you so that you can determine if it fits your needs; they're all user-friendly and require no technical knowledge.
3. Given that your children may have mobile/tablet devices, you may like to think of putting some software on your child's device, not so that you can spy on them, but simply for assurance purposes. My favourite by far is Mobile Guardian - see the next page.



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Many children will have their own smartphone or tablet but in the past it hasn't always been easy for parents to ensure the device is being used appropriately and that children aren't opening themselves up to risk.

Mobile Guardian can be a big help, protecting your children from content, contact and conduct risks. Take a look for yourself:

www.mobileguardian.com

HELPING PARENTS

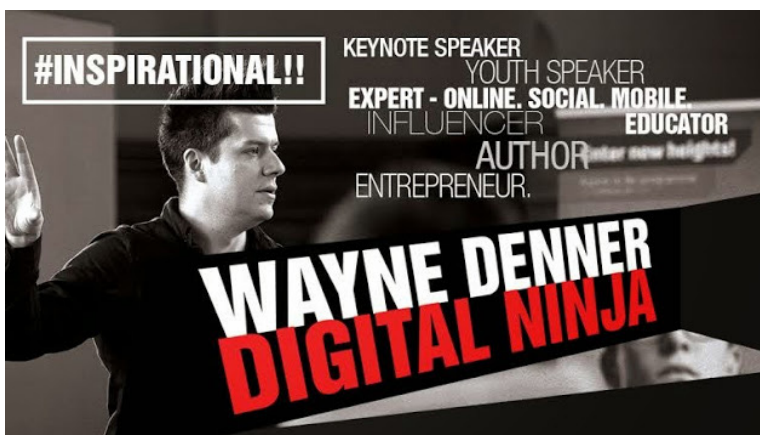
Reduce the risk of cyberbullying

Filter web content safely

Be aware where the device is

Manage device within set timeframes

Teach and install good digital practices



Wayne Denner is an inspirational, bubbly, fun character, but most of all he knows his apps.

He's got a new YouTube channel specifically for parents to learn about what some of these new apps are and what you as parents need to know:

<https://www.youtube.com/user/waynedenner>



Contact Alan Mackenzie

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