

**BPS**

BALLIOL PRIMARY SCHOOL

# E-SAFETY NEWSLETTER

March and April 2024

For more tips and information, please visit our school page: <https://www.balliolschool.co.uk/e-safety/>  
Sign up here for a free weekly parent e-safety newsletter: <https://www.internetmatters.org/about-us/newsletters/>

## Whatsapp

You must be at least 16 years old to register for and use WhatsApp. WhatsApp is a free messaging app that allows you to send messages, voice notes, photos and videos.

What are the features of WhatsApp?

- Group chats:

One of the key features is the group chat function. Everybody in the group, even if they are not one of your child's phone contacts, will be able to see all messages within that group. If your child is added to a group with someone that they have previously blocked, that person can still see their messages and send them messages within the group chat.

In settings, you can change who can add your child to groups, for example, you can change it to 'my contacts', which means that only those in your child's contacts can add them to a group. You can leave a group chat at any point so talk to your child and encourage them to leave any chat that makes them feel uncomfortable. You can leave groups silently (only the admin will be notified).

- Location sharing:

You can share your location on WhatsApp. Talk to your child about when this would be appropriate to use but also the potential danger of sharing their location, for example with strangers.

- Blocking/Reporting:

Show your child how to block and report.

- Online Bullying:

WhatsApp has been used in instances of online bullying, e.g. to send nasty messages or share images of other children without their permission. It is important to have regular chats with your child about their online life and that they understand that they must talk to you or another trusted adult if they are being bullied. This is a helpful article from Family Lives, which talks about what to do if you are being bullied: <https://www.familylives.org.uk/advice/bullying/cyberbullying/what-to-do-if-you-re-being-bullied-on-a-social-network>

- Disappearing messages:

With disappearing messages, you can control how long a message can be seen for before it is deleted – 24 hours, 7 days or 90 days (once set, this will only work for new messages).

- View once messages:

When sending a photo or video, you can set it so it can only be viewed once by respondents. Screenshots are also blocked when using this function.

- Choose who can see your profile pic and when you're online:

In settings (privacy), you can choose who can and can't see when you're online and your profile pic. You can choose either Everyone, My Contacts, My Contacts except and nobody.

- Further information:

<https://parentzone.org.uk/article/whatsapp>

# TikTok

You must be over 13 years of age to use TikTok. Some of the videos on TikTok may not be appropriate for your child to view and there is also the risk of strangers contacting your child. If your child is using TikTok then make sure the appropriate security/privacy settings are on.

- Account set up

By default, accounts for people under 16 are set to private at the start and we would recommend keeping it as this. This means your child can approve follower requests. You can read more about the other settings available (such as switching off comments and switching on restricted mode) here:

<https://support.tiktok.com/en/account-and-privacy/account-privacy-settings>

- Inappropriate content, themes and challenges on TikTok

Whilst against TikTok's guidelines, explicit and inappropriate content can be found on this platform, for example nudity/sexual content and hate speech. We often see viral challenges on TikTok, some of which can be dangerous. If your child is using TikTok, chat to them regularly about what they are viewing and to ensure they know not to try challenges they see online.

- Family Pairing

This allows you to link your own account to your child's account. You can then set controls such as restricted mode (limit the appearance of content that may not be appropriate) and screen time management. You can find out more here: <https://www.tiktok.com/safety/en/guardians-guide/>

- Blocking and Reporting

Ensure your child knows how to use the safety features available to them. You can find out more here:

<https://support.tiktok.com/en/safety-hc/report-a-problem>

- Bullying on TikTok

This article makes suggestions on appropriate settings as well as how to deal with bullying:

<https://www.tiktok.com/safety/en-sg/bullying-prevention/>

- Tech Tips Live with Parent Zone

You can watch back this 13-minute broadcast from Parent Zone (originally broadcast Jan 2023) which discusses what you need to know if your child is using TikTok. It's an excellent overview including how algorithms work on social media. You can access it here: <https://parentzone.org.uk/tech-tips-live>

You can find out more here: <https://parentzone.org.uk/article/tiktok>

## How old is your child online?

Has your child (or you on their behalf) signed up to access social media/or a game online but have said that they are older than they are so they can have an account? For example, did your 8 year old join TikTok and put their age as 13 or did you create their account and put your own age? If so, please read some of the implications outlined below that you should think about.

If TikTok thinks your child is 13 when they join but they are in fact 8, then by the time your child reaches 13, the app will think they are 18. This puts your child at risk of viewing content that is not age appropriate and may mean your child will view adverts aimed at adults.

In addition, now the app thinks your child is an adult, they will have access to all functionalities (whereas some apps place restrictions on access to under 18s for example to direct messaging).

The following news article from Ofcom explains this in further detail as well as providing tips to help keep your child safe online:

<https://www.ofcom.org.uk/news-centre/2022/risks-of-children-using-false-ages-on-social-media>

Age ratings Parent Zone provide some advice on age ratings and why they matter in this blog:

<https://parentzone.org.uk/article/age-ratings>

# Minecraft

Check the age ratings: Minecraft is rated by PEGI as 7+ or 12+ depending on which game version you are playing. The App store rate it as 9+ and the Google Play store rate it as 10+.

*It is important to remember that when rating games, PEGI do not take into consideration the communication features of a game. Minecraft does include a chat facility, which adds further risks of seeing inappropriate language/content. This can be switched off.*

Minecraft remains ever popular and can be a great learning tool that is often used in schools to teach planning skills, recreate famous buildings in 3D and coding. Players use building blocks (a bit like Lego) to create their own worlds.

- Which mode?

You can choose between Creative or Survival mode - creative mode removes the survival elements of the game (no mobs appearing at night) so may be a more appropriate mode for your child to play.

- What else do I need to be aware of?

- Multiplayer – children can interact with others (including strangers), you can switch this option off within settings or choose to play offline.
- Block and report players – if your child is playing with others, make sure they know how to block and report players within the game.
- Additional purchases – be aware of in app purchases and the purchase of additional items (skin packs) to support (although not needed) game play.

In addition, protect your child's privacy by using a nickname (don't include their age/birth year) rather than their real name for their profile and chat to your child to make sure that when playing online they know not to share personal information. Also, make sure they know they can talk to you or a trusted adult if anybody or anything is making them feel uncomfortable.

Do not forget to make sure you have set up appropriate parental controls on the device your child is using to play Minecraft as well. Further information <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/online-safety-blog/is-minecraft-safe-for-children/>

## Roblox and Jump Scare Risks

- About Roblox

PEGI rate Roblox with a Parental Guidance label (icon shown right), this is because of the huge level of user generated content within Roblox. It is rated for 'Teens' on Google Play and 12+ on the App store. You can either use Roblox to create games or play games that other users have created. As a lot of the content is user generated, it may mean not all games will be suitable for your child to view/play. It is important to set up Parental controls appropriate to your child.

- What are jump scares?

Jump scares are often used in horror games on Roblox with the intention of scaring and frightening players, this could be through loud noises, frightening images or sudden movements. Some players may find jump scares frightening.

- What Parental Controls are available?

Settings include:

- restricting chat
- setting spending limits and spending notifications
- enabling age-based experiences. If you enable Allowed Experiences, your child will only be able to join experiences that match or are below the age recommendations set. Age categories available are 9+, 13+ and all ages.
- view what your child is doing on Roblox, including recently played experiences, private message history and their friends. You can find out more about the different settings available here:  
<https://en.help.roblox.com/hc/en-us/sections/4410604750996-Account-Settings>

# Instagram

You must be at least 13 years old to have an Instagram account.

Instagram have introduced several new features, including 'Quiet mode,' how to hide content as well as additional tools to help your child.

- Quiet mode

This gives users the ability to put their account in quiet mode, so you do not receive notifications and if you receive a DM, the sender receives an auto reply. This mode will help provide less distraction whilst studying and at night time.

- Recommendations

You can now hide content in Explore that you do not wish to see/are not interested in. Instagram will use this information to avoid showing you that type of content in other areas where content is recommended as well.

- Hidden words

You can already hide comments and DMs containing specific words, but this feature has now been expanded to recommended posts. If you add a word, emoji or hashtag that you want to avoid to your hidden words (in privacy settings) then Instagram will try to no longer recommend content with those words in the caption/hashtag.

- Updated Parental Supervision Tools

You can see your child's Instagram settings (if you have set up a supervised account), including their privacy and account settings and accounts your child has blocked. If your child updates a setting, then you will receive a notification to inform you.

- Find out more

You can read more about the new features here:

<https://about.fb.com/news/2023/01/instagram-quiet-mode-manage-your-time-and-focus/>

# Fortnite Battle Royale

Fortnite Battle Royale is rated PEGI 12 because it features moderate violence which means it is not suitable for persons under 12 years of age. It is important to remember that when rating games, PEGI do not take into consideration the communication features of a game. Fortnite does include a chat facility, which adds further risks.

What is Fortnite?

There are different versions of Fortnite, including Battle Royale, which is free to play (although in-app purchases are available). In Battle Royale up to one hundred players compete against each other.

What do I need to be aware of?

- Chatting to strangers and inappropriate language: Fortnite contains voice and text chat. Due to the nature of the game, your child may be chatting to strangers and may hear inappropriate language. Ensure your child knows how to report players for any inappropriate behaviour.
- In app purchases: All users can purchase V-Bucks directly through the game so make sure you don't store your card details within the game/device and restrict purchases.

Parental Controls

Fortnite includes several parental controls to help you make it a safer environment for your child including disabling voice chat, filtering language and setting privacy settings. Also, remember to set up age-appropriate parental controls on the device your child is playing on.

Further information Virgin Media outline how to set up the different parental controls available:

<https://www.virginmedia.com/blog/parental-controls/gaming-fortnite>

# Does your child need a mobile phone?

If you are thinking about giving your child their own phone, then you might find this article from Family Lives useful as it discusses things you need to consider:

<https://www.familylives.org.uk/advice/primary/health-and-development/does-your-child-need-a-mobile-phone>

## Setting up parental controls on your child's mobile

If you do not have the same mobile phone as your child, and therefore are unable to use Google Family link or Apple Family Sharing, then you can set restrictions on your child's device instead.

Apple devices:

To set up restrictions on your child's device directly (rather than using an app) then follow the instructions on the link below: <https://support.apple.com/en-us/HT201304> The instructions will show you how to get to the settings on your child's phone and then how to set restrictions such as restrict content, schedule downtime, set time limits for apps. You will need to set a passcode 'use a screentime passcode' to ensure changes cannot be made after you have set them.

Android devices:

As with the above link, this link shows you how to set up parental controls on the device itself by creating a PIN: <https://support.google.com/googleplay/answer/1075738?hl=en-GB&zippy=%2Cfor-family-members-who-manage-their-own-accounts>

## Parental controls and managing your child's device

Do you need help managing your child's device? You can use Google Family Link or Apple Family Sharing to help you depending on your child's device.

Google Family Link

This is a parental control app from Google that lets you:

- See activity reports showing how long they spend on each app.
- Approve or block new app downloads.
- Set screen time limits.
- Find their location (using their device).

You will need to download an app and then decide appropriate settings.

<https://families.google.com/familylink>

Apple Family Sharing

You can set up Family Sharing in the settings of your device. Family Sharing allows you to:

- Share Apple subscriptions.
- Share purchases from the App Store.
- Approve what children purchase/download.
- Limit screen time.
- Share locations and find devices.

<https://www.apple.com/uk/family-sharing/>

Monitoring Apps (paid for)

In addition, there are apps that you can pay for that you may find provides a better solution for you. Whilst we cannot recommend a specific product, these are some examples that you could review and test using a free trial:

- Norton Family: <https://uk.norton.com/products/norton-family>
- Qustodio: <https://www.qustodio.com/en/>
- Family Time: <https://familytime.io/>

# Are AI-generated things a reliable source of information?

The short answer is no. A recent investigation from the BBC revealed AI-generated videos containing false scientific information and conspiracy theories, posted to YouTube channels, are being recommended in children's YouTube feeds, labelled 'educational content'. Unfortunately, misinformation circulates online alongside genuine news. Often, **fake news** and misinformed content are presented in a way that is persuasive, eye-catching, and alluring, to trick people into believing.

The BBC defines fake news as:

*'completely made up stories disguised as news and made to go viral for political or commercial gain.'*

For this reason, it's important that as educators and parents we take action, to protect children from growing up absorbing misinformation.

## Why educate children about reliable news sources?

False news and misinformation play on children's natural state of curiosity as they learn about and encounter the world around them, which can ultimately influence their opinions and worldview.

As well as having a natural tendency to be inquisitive, children are often very literal. Therefore, they may accept information at face value, without interrogating things like news articles' legitimacy, or the reputability of the person sharing the news. The sensationalised subjects which often dominate misinformation, framed as a conspiracy 'secret' or something to be fascinated by, can hook children in and pique their natural curiosity and intrigue.

## What can you do?

It can be difficult to control exactly what children see online, despite our best efforts of setting child restrictions and limiting screen time. Given that misinformation often disguises itself as legitimate, we've devised some pointers you can explore with children, and implement at school or home.

## Things to think about before believing or sharing stories online:

- **Has the claim been reported elsewhere by well-known media companies?** If a news story is legitimate, often it will be repeated by various sources across different mediums, such as television, online, and radio.
- **Is the person explaining the news story an expert?** Follows and likes on a post or article do not always equate to reliability. Fake news is intended to go viral.
- **Does the news report sound like a real person talking, or robotic, like an AI-generated voice?** Sometimes posts deliberately sharing misinformation are AI-generated, to churn out content quickly.
- **Is the content believable and does it align with your existing knowledge on the subject?** Questioning the believability of a story, to determine if it could actually occur, is important.
- **Is the source repeatedly accurate?** Is the source or content creator consistently correct and proven with the stories they share? Mistakes can happen, even with skilled and experienced journalists. Legitimate news sources will always admit when they have reported something incorrectly, and then share the correct content.
- **Has the news story been discussed with a trusted adult?** It's good to discuss news stories that seem questionable or overly sensationalised with a responsible adult, to hear their opinion and help determine if the story is reliable or not.

Use these points as a checklist for exploring news stories, and remember to consider them before sharing stories on social media, or with peers at school.

## Our main message

It's important to preserve children's education and provide them with legitimate news stories. Learning about current affairs can be incredibly beneficial for children's development. However, as educators and parents, we must ensure we expose children to trustworthy news that is appropriate, but most importantly, real.

For more information, please visit:

<https://www.picture-news.co.uk/blog/teaching-children-about-reliable-news-sources/>