



Online Safety Newsletter

March 2024

Managing Screen time from Internet Matters

Are you worried your child has too much screentime or would like more advice on how to support your child in managing their screen time? Internet Matters have a wealth of information on their website to help support you.

This first link discusses how to get the most out of screen time and how to talk to your child about screen time based on their age:

- <https://www.internetmatters.org/issues/screen-time/protect-your-child>

This second link provides advice on how to tackle too much screen time and what the signs of too much screen time might be:

- <https://www.internetmatters.org/issues/screen-time/deal-with-it/>

This final link provides a guide on how to balance screen time:

- <https://www.internetmatters.org/resources/creating-a-balanced-digital-diet-with-screen-time-tips/>



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:

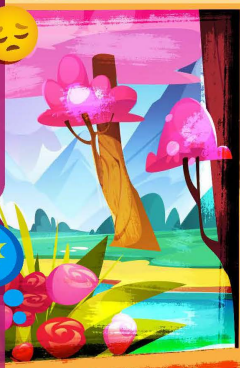
<https://www.familylives.org.uk/advice/primary/health-and-development/does-your-child-need-a-mobile-phone>

Top Tips for Supporting Children Who Are EXPERIENCING BULLYING

In a DfE survey, 36% of parents said that their child had been bullied in the past year, while 29% of secondary school headteachers reported bullying among students. Public Health England states that young people who maintain positive communication with their family were less likely to experience bullying – so it's important that parents, carers and educators know how to talk to children about bullying.

1. WATCH FOR BEHAVIOURAL CHANGES

Children who are experiencing bullying may become quiet, withdrawn, or anxious; however, they may also act on the pain and anger that they're feeling. A shift in attitude towards their existing friends (or not mentioning them any more at all) or alluding to new friendships which seem notably different could also be warning signs. It's important to be alert to such changes and talk to your child about them if they occur.



2. THINK THINGS THROUGH

Before acting, ask yourself if this is the right time and place to address concerns about bullying. Might your worries trigger strong feelings – perhaps from your own experiences – that could discourage your child from opening up to you? You could try discussing what you've noticed with another trusted adult who knows your child well.



3. BE OPEN AND UNDERSTANDING

Try to outline to your child the changes that you've noticed in their body language, appearance, behaviour, or tone of voice – and do so without sounding judgemental. Help them to describe what they're feeling – be it anger, sadness, fear or something else – as accurately as possible. If they say they're "angry", do they mean "enraged" or "frustrated"? This will help them to understand how they're feeling and why.



4. LET THEM SPEAK FREELY

Use open questions and a welcoming tone to encourage your child to talk. Listen closely and summarise what they've said at appropriate points (ideally without interrupting) to demonstrate that you're understanding clearly. Bullying may have undermined your child's sense of control, and they may fear that you'll judge them, overreact or impose consequences – so this conversation can reassure them being honest with you was the right decision.



5. CALL A TIME OUT

A conversation about bullying could leave both you and your child feeling distressed. It's important to recognise this and pause at suitable moments to calm down. Take deep breaths, enjoy a hot drink or even have a cathartic cry. This can reinforce trust, while also helping you both feel that you have control over the situation and the emotions that you're feeling.



6. STAY INFORMED

Make sure you know your child's school's definition of, response to and relevant contacts for bullying. This information should be in their anti-bullying policy, which ought to be available on the school's website. Class teachers or form tutors are usually the first point of contact, though there may be dedicated support teams or key workers to help your child, depending on the specific situation.



7. PREP YOUR CHILD FOR THE RESPONSE

Schools' responses to bullying vary depending on whether they're resolving disagreements and arguments, or addressing unintended verbal or physical harm and so on. It's important to work out with your child whether any harm was intentional, how much control they had over the situation and how often such incidents have occurred. Reporting concerns accurately will get the best outcome for your child more quickly.



8. SUMMARISE YOUR CHILD'S EXPERIENCE

When you contact the school, make sure you've precisely described what your child experienced: what happened; when; where; and who was involved. This will help the school to investigate further, identifying any witnesses, as well as those who were directly involved. It can also help the school to know how your child is feeling and how they'd like the matter to be resolved.



9. LIAISE WITH THE SCHOOL

Any school has a duty to ensure that the members of its community feel safe and included. It's important for children to learn their role in this. The school must determine how best to restore these feelings of safety and respect. It's often best for schools to keep parents and carers informed of any action taken – and for families to avoid taking matters into their own hands.



10. CHECK IN FREQUENTLY

Once the issue has been resolved and the bullying behaviour has stopped, your child may still feel anxious and might find it difficult to rebuild relationships or develop new ones. Parents, carers and the school should all keep an eye on how the child is feeling and acting over the following months. Any relevant information should be shared, so that further support can be planned if necessary.



Meet Our Expert

Bob Basley is the Director of Anti-Bullying Quality Mark-UK, which challenges and supports schools to develop sustainable whole-school approaches to prevent bullying, including working with parents and carers. More than 80 schools in England and Wales currently hold the quality mark.



The National College

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