



**SMARTPHONE
FREE CHILDHOOD**

Smartphones: the new frontier in parenting

PARENT PRESENTATION NOVEMBER 2024

At PGPS we are strongly in favour of technology and the wonderful opportunities it brings

HOME → PARENTS → KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE ONLINE

Keeping children safe online

To help your children use the internet safely, please read the official advice from the police on online safety for children. (CEOP) - see links below.

You can also see our page containing advice and links for children, which can be found below:

Our latest e-safety and acceptable use policy can be found here:

[Policies](#)



Be smart on the internet

S SAFE Keep safe by being careful not to give out personal information - such as your full name, school address, phone number, home address, photos or school name - to people you are chatting with online.

M MEETING Meeting someone you have only been in touch with online can be dangerous. Only do so with your parents or carers' permission and only when they can be present.

A ACCEPTING Accepting or downloading files from the internet can be dangerous. Only do so with your parents or carers' permission.

R RELIABLE Information you find on the internet may not be true. An unknown source may be lying about who they are.

T TELL Tell your parent, teacher or a trusted adult if someone is bothering you. You can report online abuse to the police at www.thinkuknow.co.uk.

www.bidsmart.org.uk

KIDS MART

JONATHAN
HAIDT

The Anxious Generation



How the Great Rewiring
of Childhood Is Causing
an Epidemic of Mental Illness

allen lane



IN TWO DECADES, EVERYTHING'S CHANGED

2004



2004
Nokias ruled



2007
The first iPhone
launches



2008
Apple app
store opens



2012
4G launches in the
UK, enabling
internet
everywhere



2024
89% of 12-year-olds own a
smartphone, permanently
connected to the internet
via 4g/5g



THEY'RE NOT REALLY 'PHONES' AT ALL



MOBILE PHONE

Make calls, send texts, play Snake



POCKET SUPERCOMPUTER

24/7 access to the internet in your pocket



PARENTS WISH THINGS WERE DIFFERENT

94%

of primary school
parents think
smartphones
are harmful

Parentkind nationwide poll of 2,496
people, April 24

70%

of parents believe
smartphones
negatives impact
family life

HMD poll of 10,000 parents, June 24

33%

of parents of children
with smartphones have
cried over their child's
phone obsession

HMD poll of 10,000 parents, June 24



YOUNG PEOPLE WISH THINGS WERE DIFFERENT

67%

of 16-18 year olds
think smartphones
are harmful

Parentkind poll, 2024

1 in 5

of 16-18 year olds
have felt "life is not
worth living" due to
social media

Parentkind poll, 2024

50%

of teens say they are
"addicted" to social
media

Millennium Cohort Study, 2024

YET SMARTPHONES HAVE BECOME THE NORM



25%

of 5-7 year olds
in the UK own their
own smartphone

89%

of 12 year-olds
in the UK own their
own smartphone



SOURCE: OFCOM Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes April 24



EVERYONE'S GOT ONE BECAUSE EVERYONE'S GOT ONE



Most parents believe smartphones are harmful, yet almost all children have them by Year 7



Because resisting peer pressure becomes almost impossible when children's social lives migrate online

The powerful network effects of smartphones and social media mean parents and young people feel like they have no choice



**So what exactly
is the problem?**



When children first started getting smartphones in the early 2010s we didn't understand their impact.

Now we do, and the evidence is overwhelming.



SMARTPHONES ARE FUELLING A MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS

Rates of depression, anxiety, self-harm and even suicide among teens have all dramatically spiked globally since 2010 – when children started getting smartphones.

A 2023 global study of 27,969 young adults from Sapiens Labs showed that the younger they got their first smartphone, the worse their mental health today.



3x

Teens with problematic smartphone-use are twice as likely to have anxiety and three times as likely to have depression

King's College London, 2024

1 in 5

UK 16 to 18 years olds say that their social media has made them feel that 'life is not worth living'

Parentkind Poll, 2024

53%

The number of children referred to emergency mental healthcare in England has soared by 53% in three years

Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2024



“The mental health crisis among young people is an emergency. It is time to require a warning label on social media platforms.”



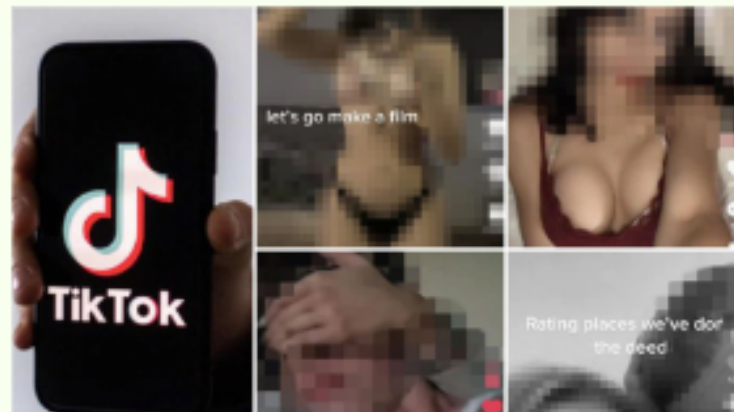
Dr Vivek Murthy
US Surgeon General, 2024



SMARTPHONES EXPOSE KIDS TO HARMFUL CONTENT

Having unrestricted access to the internet in your pocket creates a gateway to extreme content and viewpoints that we'd never dream of exposing children to in real life.

Hardcore pornography, extreme political views, sexualised and violent imagery, trolling and material promoting suicide, self-harm and eating disorders have become part of the fabric of modern childhood.



51%

of UK 11-13 year-olds
have seen hardcore
pornography online

British Board of Film Classification Report, March 2022

75%

of UK 15 year olds
questioned had been
sent beheading videos


Digital Childhoods, children's commissioner report, 2022

90%

of girls and 50% of boys
say they are sent
unwanted explicit content

Ofsted review of sexual abuse in schools, 2021

The 4Cs of online risks

	Content Child engages with or is exposed to potentially harmful content	Contact Child experiences or is targeted by potentially harmful <i>adult</i> contact	Conduct Child witnesses, participates in or is a victim of potentially harmful <i>peer</i> conduct	Contract Child is party to or exploited by potentially harmful contract
Aggressive	Violent, gory, graphic, racist, hateful or extremist information and communication	Harassment, stalking, hateful behaviour, unwanted or excessive surveillance	Bullying, hateful or hostile communication or peer activity e.g. trolling, exclusion, shaming	Identity theft, fraud, phishing, scams, hacking, blackmail, security risks
Sexual	Pornography (harmful or illegal), sexualization of culture, oppressive body image norms	Sexual harassment, sexual grooming, sextortion, the generation and sharing of child sexual abuse material	Sexual harassment, non-consensual sexual messaging, adverse sexual pressures	Trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation, streaming (paid-for) child sexual abuse
Values	Mis/disinformation, age-inappropriate marketing or user-generated content	Ideological persuasion or manipulation, radicalisation and extremist recruitment	Potentially harmful user communities e.g. self-harm, anti-vaccine, adverse peer pressures	Gambling, filter bubbles, micro-targeting, dark patterns shaping persuasion or purchase
Cross-cutting	<p>Privacy violations (interpersonal, institutional, commercial)</p> <p>Physical and mental health risks (e.g., sedentary lifestyle, excessive screen use, isolation, anxiety)</p> <p>Inequalities and discrimination (in/exclusion, exploiting vulnerability, algorithmic bias/predictive analytics)</p>			



**“We’ll look back in 20 years
and be horrified by what our
children were exposed to”**



Dame Rachel de Souza

Children’s Commissioner for England, 2022



SMARTPHONES APPS ARE ADDICTIVE BY DESIGN

Tech companies spend billions on making apps and devices as addictive as possible because 'maximising engagement' is the fundamental objective of their business model.

So it's little wonder that many children are routinely 'spending six, seven, eight hours a day on social media – often more' (Ofcom, 2024).



46%

of teens say they use their phones "almost constantly"

Pew Research Centre, Aug 2022

29 hours

Per week is the average British 12-year-old now spends on their smartphone

Childwise Monitor Report, 2021

2 in 3

of 11-17 year olds 'often' or 'sometimes' find it difficult to put down their phone

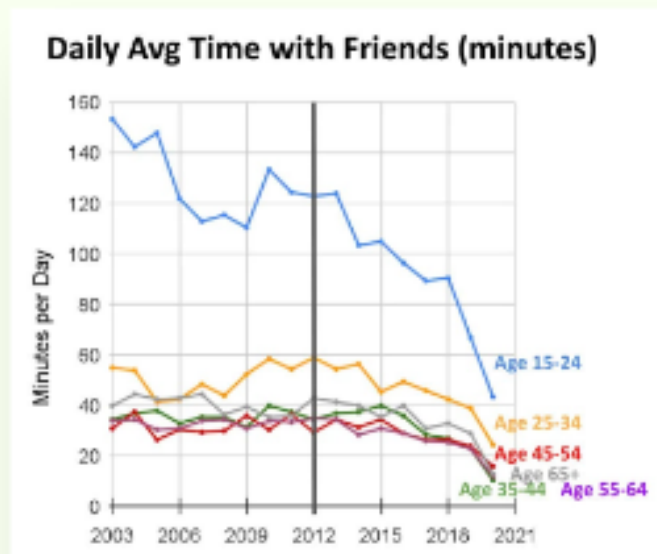
Common Sense Media, 2023



SMARTPHONES ARE FUNDAMENTALLY CHANGING CHILDHOOD

Smartphones are experience blockers, distracting children from engaging in the real world activities and connections that are crucial to healthy childhood development.

The opportunity cost to childhood is profound. The average UK 12 year-old now spends over four hours per day on their smartphone, displacing the kinds of activities that have shaped childhood for millennia.



43%

of US teenagers waking minutes are spent on screens

Gitnux Marketdata Report, Jan 2024

30%

Since 1975, the daily average time children spend playing outdoors has fallen by 30%, while screen-based activities have risen 23%

Zach Rausch - Mullan 2019

65%

The daily average time that teenagers spend with friends has plummeted by 65% since 2010

American Time Use Study



“When kids are on their phones all day, it’s not just what they’re doing on the phone that matters — it’s what they’re not doing. They’re missing out on crucial experiences that help them grow into healthy adults.”



Dr Jonathan Haidt

Professor of Social Psychology, NYU



~Susie

In the last decade there have been 70% less outdoor accidents and 93% more incidents of self harm in children... as a GP I can promise you it's much easier to mend a broken bone than a broken mind.



24

Dr Susie Davies, founder of Papaya Parents, citing NHS DATA



SADLY, WE COULD GO ON



SLEEP

Bedtime use of smartphones doubles children's risk of poor sleep



BULLYING

84% of bullying now takes place on a device



DISTRACTIONS

On average teens are bombarded by 237 smartphone notifications a day



ARGUMENTS

55% of parents say their child's smartphone use causes big family arguments



ROAD SAFETY

Mobile phone distraction is a major cause of road accidents involving children



CRIME

500 children a day were mugged in 2020 in the UK, almost all for smartphones

 **It's little wonder that many of the people who created this technology keep it away from their kids**

STEVE JOBS

“We don't allow the iPad in the home. We think it's too dangerous for them”



EVAN SPIEGEL

Grew up without a TV and credits his own success on that tech restriction. Limits his kid to 1.5 hours screen time per week



BILL GATES

Didn't allow his 4 children smartphones or their own computers until they were 14





**Parents are in an
impossible position**



BECAUSE OUR 'CHOICE' ISN'T REALLY A CHOICE AT ALL

Either we...

Give our children access to a product that we know to be harmful.

Or we...

Risk alienating them from their peers at a crucial stage of their development.

IT'S A LOSE-LOSE; FOR PARENTS, FOR CHILDREN & FOR SOCIETY

LEADERS ACROSS THE WORLD ARE THINKING ABOUT HOW TO LEGISLATE TO PROTECT CHILDHOOD

BUT PROPER REGULATION OF BIG TECH WILL TAKE YEARS, AND WE DON'T HAVE TIME TO WASTE



**The solution is to
work together**



If we all agree to delay giving our children smartphones, and instead gave them brick phones until at least the end of Year 9, the peer pressure instantly reduces.

Saying no can feel impossible when you're acting alone. Acting collectively makes it infinitely easier.



This is what Smartphone Free Childhood is all about.

It's a growing movement of 150,000 parents in the UK who are coming together to support each other in delaying access to smartphones and social media for their children.

It's coordinated via a national network of WhatsApp communities where parents can learn more about the issue, find other like-minded parents and support one another.



WE'RE NOT ANTI-TECH, WE'RE PRO-CHILDHOOD

Technology has immense benefits, and young people should be able to enjoy the opportunities it creates – when they're ready and when it's safe to do so.

But childhood is precious and fleeting. All children should have the opportunity to learn, develop and grow free from the addictive-by-design algorithms and age-inappropriate content of social media and smartphones.



OUR RECOMMENDED APPROACH

- Simple phone until at least the end of Year 9
- Delay social media until 16
- Internet & WhatsApp access via a shared family computer
- Track with an Airtag if you want to know where they are



SMARTPHONE



SOCIAL MEDIA



SIMPLE PHONE



FAMILY COMPUTER

[More information available here:
https://smartphonefreechildhood.co.uk/alternatives](https://smartphonefreechildhood.co.uk/alternatives)



PARENTAL CONTROLS AREN'T THE SOLUTION

- Even the most tech-savvy parents struggle to manage parental controls
- Some apps require updates to hundreds of settings to make them age appropriate
- Even if your child's phone has parental controls, their friends may not so they may be sent inappropriate content regardless

58%

of teens say they've never had controls put on their phone by parents

(Parentkind poll, May 2024)

47%

of teens with controls in place say they have bypassed them

(Parentkind poll, May 2024)

And teens find multiple ways to bypass controls:

Performing a factory reset

Using VPN software

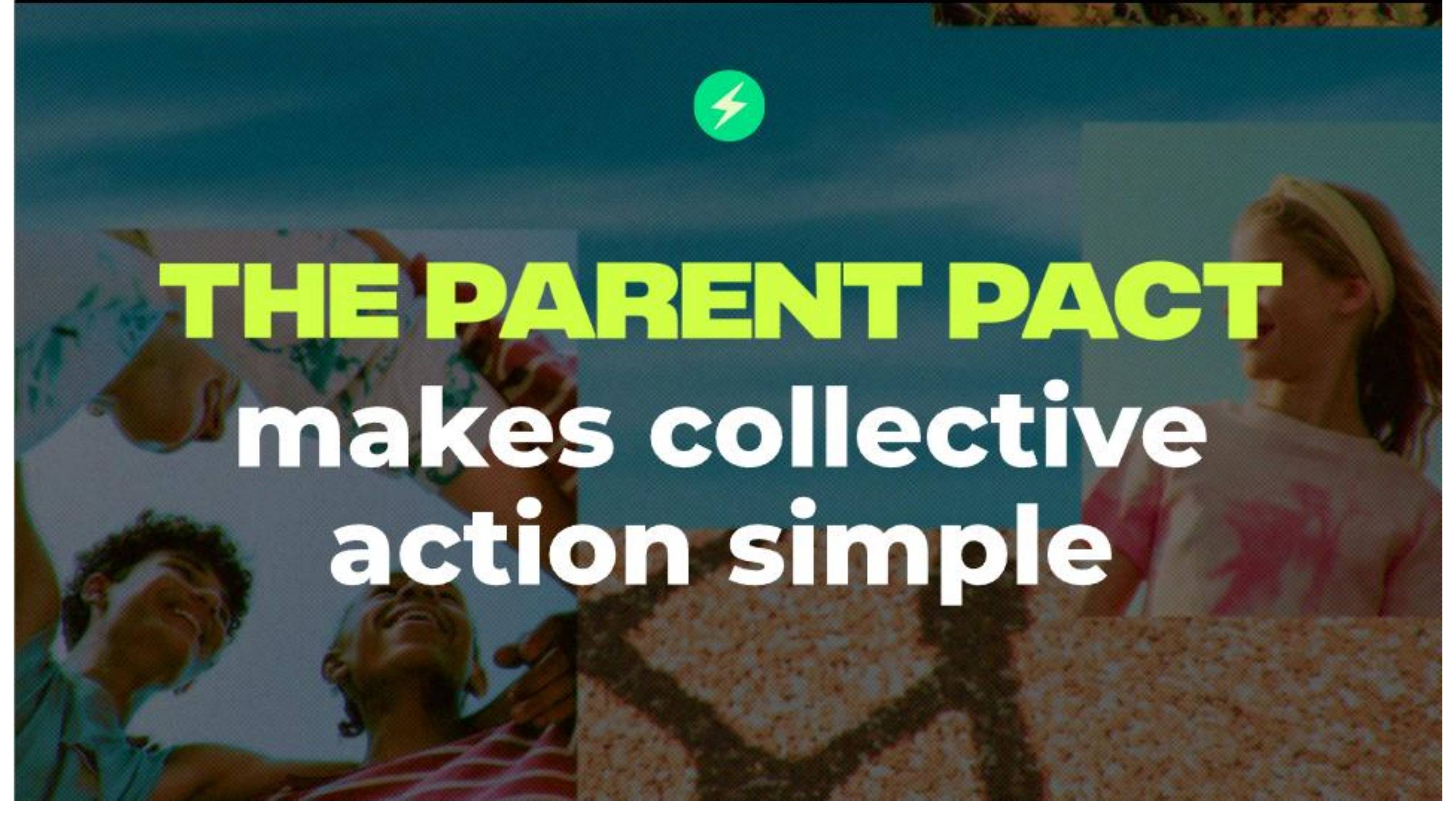
Hacking the WiFi router

Memorising your passcode



THE PARENT PACT

makes collective
action simple





The Parent Pact is an online tool that helps parents agree to delay with others in your community. The more of us who sign, the more powerful it becomes.

Step 01.

Select your region & child's school



Select your region ▾

Select school ▾

Select school year ▾

Name

Step 02.

Sign the Pact to delay until the end of Year 9



Sign the pact >

Step 03.

View results for your region, school & class



National (UK)

71,077

CHILDREN

9,453

SCHOOLS



SMARTPHONE FREE CHILDHOOD
PARENT PACT

National (UK)

76,812

CHILDREN

9,854

SCHOOLS



SMARTPHONE FREE CHILDHOOD PARENT PACT

[← Back to national](#)

Nottinghamshire


821

CHILDREN

134

SCHOOLS

[Sign the Pact](#) 

[Share the Pact](#) 

SCHOOL NAME**FACTS**

The Lanes Primary School, Beeston ↗	106
Round Hill Primary School, Beeston ↗	72
Abbey Road Primary School, West Bridgford ↗	54
Welbeck Primary School ↗	52
Fernwood Primary School ↗	28
St Edmund Champion RC Primary School, West Bridgford ↗	24
Radcliffe-on-Trent Infant School, Radcliffe-on-Trent ↗	23
West Bridgford Junior School, West Bridgford ↗	21
Jesse Gray Primary School, West Bridgford ↗	21
East Bridgford St Peters CE Academy, East Bridgford ↗	17
Lady Bay Primary School, West Bridgford ↗	16
Seely Primary School ↗	14
Eskdale Junior School, Chilwell ↗	13
Archbishop Cranmer CE Primary Academy, Aslockton ↗	12
Pierrepoint Gamston Primary School, West Bridgford ↗	12



**We're all trying
to do the best
for our kids**



If your child has (or will have) a smartphone

What steps can you take to avoid the risks and pitfalls we have discussed?

The website internetmatters.org is full of useful information and advice.

Social media is for ages 13 and over

Most social media and entertainment platforms require users to be 13 or older. This includes platforms like Instagram, Snapchat and TikTok. Pretending to be older will leave children open to risk.

Many platforms have family or parent modes

TikTok has Family Pairing, Snapchat and Instagram have their own Family Centres and Roblox has Allowed Experiences controlled via a Parental PIN. All of these features are safety tools that you can set up to keep your child safe on their smartphone.

Playing games is a part of socialising

Online games apps like Roblox, Fortnite and Minecraft are often about community and socialisation, not just playing games. The ability to chat and communicate with others means it's important to review in-game safety before they play.

Smartphones have in-built safety settings

Android devices come with Digital Wellbeing while Apple devices come with Screen Time. Individual companies will have additional safety settings -- like Samsung Kids or Google Family Link. Set these features up to improve your child's smartphone safety.

Social media platforms have in-built safety settings for teens

If your teen is honest about their age, they will benefit from additional safety on platforms like TikTok and Instagram. Pretending to be an adult means they miss out on these features.

There are a range of messaging apps to follow

WhatsApp is a popular messaging app that children use. However, users must be 13 or older to use it. Additional messaging apps like Telegram might have different age requirements to safety considerations that you should look into.

Setting up filtering can help reduce inappropriate content.

There are three levels to doing this



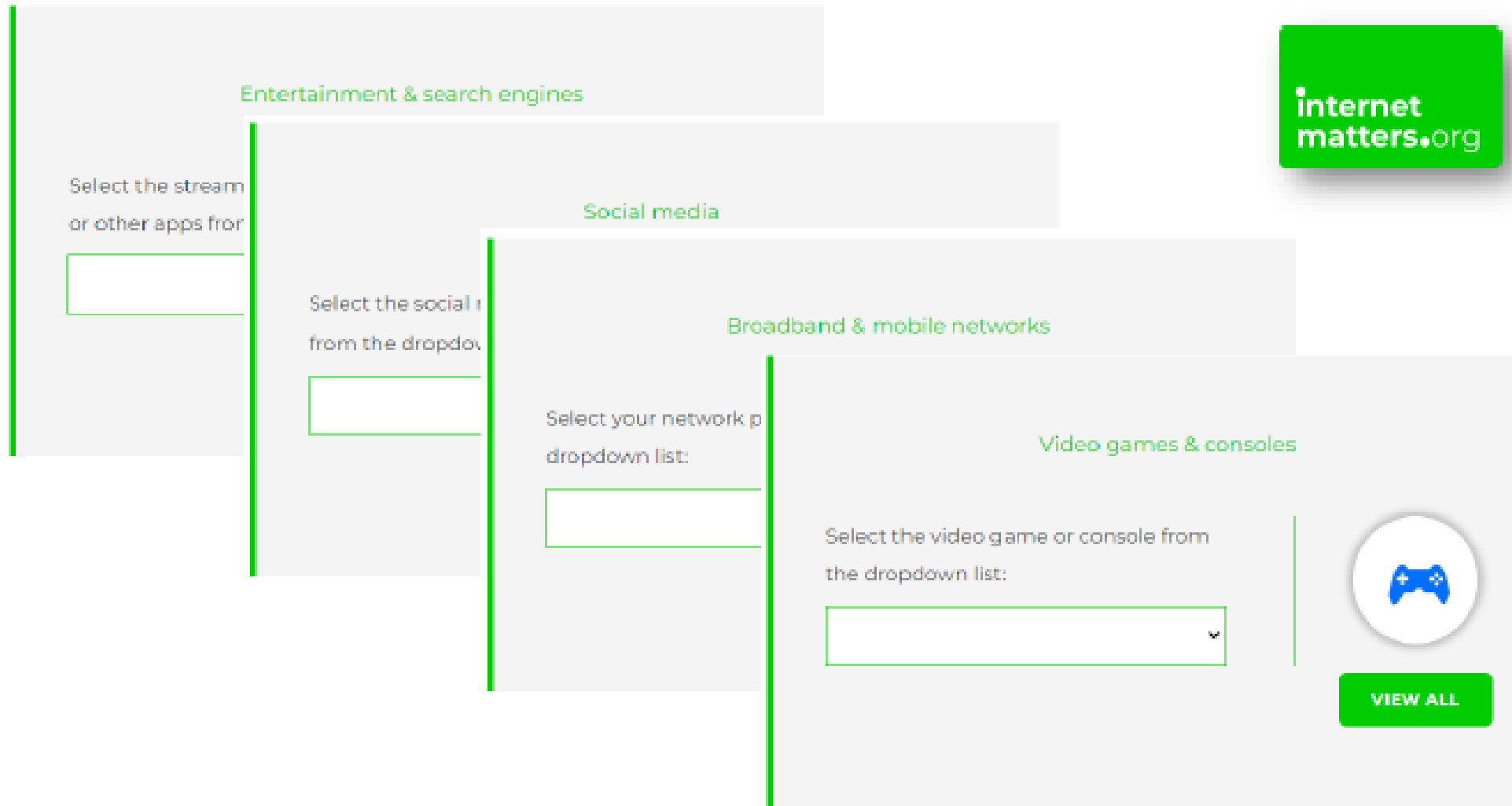
Your internet/wifi provider (only works in your home)



On the device itself



Within the settings of specific apps



Internet matters have sections that guide you through how to setup parental controls for every type of phone or device imaginable. Each section has a drop down menu where you can find the device or provider you need.

Smartphones & other devices

Select the smartphone, other device or OS from the dropdown list:

- Amazon Echo configuration for kids
- Amazon Fire HD guide
- Android Smartphone guide
- Android Tablet guide
- Apple HomePod Family Sharing guide
- Apple iPhone and iPad parental control guide
- Apple's Family Sharing
- ChromeOS safety guide
- Fitbit fitness tracker
- Google Family Link guide
- Google Nest guide
- Kids Safe Mode on Sky Q
- macOS Ventura 13
- OS X Mavericks guide
- OS X Yosemite



[VIEW ALL](#)

BEST FREE PARENTAL CONTROL APP OVERALL



(Image credit: Future)

1. Qustodio ★★★★★

A full suite of parental control tools to keep your kids safe online

For those looking for a more hands-on approach, sites such as Techradar have reviewed the best apps that you can install on your child's device that will allow you to set certain controls around screen time and filtering. There are multiple free and paid options available.

Setting up filtering is an important step, but online resources such as Internet Matters also focus on the importance of opening up dialogue with your child.

Talk about it: Tips for a meaningful conversation

- Start conversations when your children won't be embarrassed, for example in the car going home from school. **Try to de-personalise it by asking their opinion on a current news story** that relates to an online issue.
- **Be proactive - don't wait until something has already gone wrong** - discuss issues ahead of time - knowing what children of a similar age are doing will help you know more about the environment that your child is living in.
- **Ask them for advice on how to do something online** and use this as a conversation starter.
- Make sure they know they can come to you if they're upset by something they've seen online - **listen to them when they do and try not to overreact** - the important thing is that they have come and told you!
- **Be sensitive and praise them** when they share their online experiences with you.
- If your child comes to you with an issue, **stay calm and listen without judging them.**
- **Talk about online grooming as you would stranger danger** and explain that people they meet online might not be who they say they are.
- Ask them about things online which **might make them (or others) uncomfortable.**

Dealing with inappropriate CONTENT

What to talk about

- They can come to you if they see anything that upsets them
- If they have seen pornography... that it presents an unrealistic image of sex and relationships
- The importance of respect for each other and the meaning of consent

Top tips / tools to use

- Parental controls on home broadband
- Content lock on mobile networks
- Safe search on Google (& other browsers) & YouTube; child-friendly search engines



internet
matters.org

As well as considering harmful content, perhaps consider encouraging your child to be a mindful consumer of content – not just doomscrolling or falling into the endless blackhole of YouTube or TikTok. We want our children to use their device intentionally.

One of the best ways to approach this it to explain that we want them to use it to **make plans with friends IN REAL LIFE** – not just a device to sit and stare at.

Dealing with inappropriate CONTACT

What to talk about

- Sometimes people hide behind fake profiles for dishonest reasons
- Agree how they will respond to requests from people they don't know in real life
- Never ever to meet up with anyone they don't know in real life

Top tips / tools to use

- Set up safe social media profiles that don't share personal information
- Turn off geolocation settings on devices
- Use the strongest privacy settings on social media
- Learn how to report/block/mute

Dealing with inappropriate CONDUCT

What to talk about

- Talk to a trusted adult if they experience anything upsetting online
- Think carefully about sharing images of others
- Be responsible online, remembering they are creating their own digital footprint

Top tips / tools to use

- Report inappropriate posts/content to the social media providers
- Think carefully about using monitoring apps that identify inappropriate behaviour

Controlling tech time

And there are tactics you can put in place **to help manage** their screen time...

- 1 Set a good example
- 2 Talk together about the time spent online
- 3 Agree on appropriate length of time they can use their device
- 4 Get the whole family to unplug & create screen-free zones
- 5 Use technology/apps to help manage screen time e.g. Forest App



Controlling tech time

Your children will be watching the way you use technology and they will copy; make sure there is some consistency in how you **role model** good behaviour:

1

Turn off notifications on apps to avoid that constant 'ping'

2

Buy an alarm clock so you don't have devices in the bedrooms

3

Keep phone on silent in your pocket or bag when you pick the kids from school

4

'No phones at the table' rule or 'no phones between 6 and 7' rule

5

Family tech-free days!



internet
matters.org



WE'RE IN THIS TOGETHER

Navigating the fast changing world of smartphones and social media is complex.

This stuff's tricky, the evidence is evolving fast, and every family is different.

Wherever you sit on the spectrum, or whatever decisions you've made for your children, we respect your position.

Every family will come to their own conclusions; we just want to open up a conversation about these issues.

It's a new frontier of parenting, and we're all in it together.



**Let's keep
talking**

