

Setting Online Boundaries

Parent Guide — Exploring online boundaries and how they can have a positive effect on your child's life

Why do online boundaries work?

Setting online boundaries can make your child **feel safer online** and help them to **avoid inappropriate apps, games and content**. Without clear and consistent guidelines, a child can misuse tech, or find themselves in a risky situation.

They can also help your child understand when, where and how they use screens – which will encourage them to recognise how much is good for them.

What should I consider?

Firstly, think about your child's **age and personality** – and what might be best for them. For example, if they are **easily affected** by unrealistic images or personal comments made by others, some social media platforms **may not be right for them**.

Understanding what your child does online can help you **make the right decisions**. For instance, if they love gaming, you need to know what **games might be appropriate** – and **how much game time is enough**.

Consistency and negotiation

Be careful **not to let boundaries slip**. This doesn't mean you cannot have different rules for

weekends and school nights – but if **boundaries regularly shift**, they **become less effective**.

It is also **ok to negotiate**. Children will **naturally push their boundaries** as they grow, and you should **always listen to their opinion**. The **more you involve your child in the process**, the more they will **believe in their own boundaries and intuition**.

Lead by example

Think about the **example you set**. Your child will be **quick to pick up on your own behaviour**, so if you **impose strict time limits for them**, but then spend **all evening on social media**, they may start to **question the fairness** of your expectations.

What about online tools?

You can use **tools to support you and your child** in enforcing boundaries – such as time limits and filters. But it is better if these **tools support you, rather than dictate your decision**.

Our research shows that the more **children are shielded online**, the less likely they are to **know how to respond when things go wrong**. **Discuss the tools you have put in place together**, and explain they are there to **enhance their online experience**.