

KEEPING YOUR AUTISTIC TEENAGER SAFE ONLINE



The information in this booklet was prepared by Claire Donnelly, Senior Speech and Language Therapist, Children's Disability Network Team 1, Bru Chaoimhin

UNDERSTANDING THE ONLINE WORLD FOR TEENS

The internet is an important part of social life for many teenagers, including autistic teens, who may find it easier to connect online than in person. However, the online world comes with risks such as exposure to inappropriate content, cyberbullying, and potential online predators.

Key Internet Safety Tips for Parents

- **Know Your Child's Online Activities:** Understand the platforms your child uses (e.g., Snapchat, WhatsApp, Roblox, Tiktok). Familiarise yourself with their privacy settings and how to report inappropriate content or users.
- **Set Clear Rules Together:** Discuss what is appropriate to share online and create family rules around internet use.
- **Encourage Open Communication:** Make sure your child feels comfortable talking to you about their online experiences, whether positive or negative.
- **Use Parental Controls:** Utilise parental control apps like Bark or Qustodio to monitor and limit your child's internet usage.

CYBERBULLYING AND ONLINE SAFETY

- **Recognise the Signs:** Look out for changes in your child's behaviour, such as anxiety or reluctance to use devices, which may indicate they are being cyberbullied.
- **Respond to Cyberbullying:**
 - Encourage your child to save evidence (like screenshots).
 - Help them block the person and report them to the platform such as Instagram, Snapchat, online games like Fifa or Roblox.
 - Consider reporting to guardai if the behaviour escalates and is unsafe.



GROUP CHAT SAFETY

- **Teach Group Chat Etiquette:** Help your child understand what is appropriate to share and the difference between friendly teasing and bullying.
- **Monitor Group Chats:** If possible, keep an eye on the group chats your child is involved in, especially those with peers from school.
- **Discuss “Hidden Social Rules”:** Discuss subtle social nuances, sarcasm etc that can be used in these group chats.



SPECIFIC SAFETY TIPS FOR POPULAR PLATFORMS



This guide provides essential information and tips to help you support your teenager in staying safe online across various platforms. It includes specific safety advice for popular online games and social media apps that teenagers frequently use.

1. Instagram

Privacy Settings:

- **Account Privacy:** Encourage your teen to set their Instagram account to "Private" so only approved followers can see their posts.
- **Tagging:** Advise them to be cautious when tagging their location or people. They should get permission before tagging others.
- **Comments:** Teach them to manage who can comment on their posts by restricting comments to "People you follow" to reduce unwanted interactions.

Safety Tips:

- **Report and Block:** Remind your teen to use Instagram's tools to report and block anyone who is inappropriate or harassing them.
- **Content Awareness:** Ensure they understand the risks of sharing personal photos or sensitive information publicly.



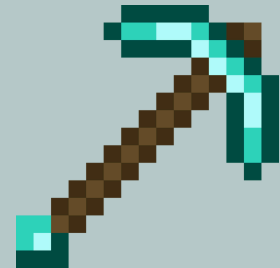
2. TikTok

Privacy Settings:

- **Account Privacy:** Suggest setting their account to "Private" to control who can view their videos and interact with them.
- **Video Settings:** Instruct them to use privacy settings for each video, controlling who can see, comment on, or share their content.

Safety Tips:

- **Content Awareness:** Stress the importance of avoiding personal or sensitive information in videos. They should be aware of their potential audience.
- **Interactions:** Encourage them to be cautious about interacting with unknown users and avoid engaging with inappropriate content.



3. Minecraft

Privacy Settings:

- **Server Privacy:** Advise your teen to join only trusted servers or create a private server with known friends.
- **Chat Settings:** Guide them to use in-game settings to control who can message them and manage their interactions.

Safety Tips:

- **Report Abuse:** Make sure they know how to report abusive behaviour to server moderators.
- **Personal Information:** Remind them never to share personal information with other players.

4. FIFA

Privacy Settings:

- **In-Game Chat:** Ensure they know how to use FIFA's settings to control who can message them or see their personal information.
- **Play with Friends:** Recommend playing with friends they know.

Safety Tips:

- **Manage Frustration:** Teach them to manage frustration constructively and avoid sending aggressive messages to other players.
- **Report Misconduct:** Encourage them to report any inappropriate behaviour they encounter.



5. Snapchat

Privacy Settings:

- **My Friends:** Advise your teen to use the "My Friends" setting to limit who can contact them and to only accept friend requests from people they know.
- **Stories:** Recommend adjusting settings so that only "Friends Only" or a custom list can view their Stories.

Safety Tips:

- **Temporary Content:** Remind them that Snapchat messages and photos disappear, but can still be saved or screenshotted. They should be cautious about sharing private images.
- **Report Inappropriate Content:** Encourage them to report any harassment or inappropriate content they encounter.



6. WhatsApp

Privacy Settings:

- **Group Chats:** Make sure they know how to manage group chats, including exiting groups and reporting inappropriate content.
- **Reporting:** Familiarise them with the process to report and block users causing trouble.

Safety Tips:

- **Group Etiquette:** Teach them to only share messages and content in group chats that they are comfortable with everyone seeing.
- **Privacy:** Advise them to avoid sharing personal details or sensitive information in their messages.



7. Roblox

Privacy Settings:

- **Account Settings:** Help them set their Roblox account to "Friends" mode to limit who can send messages or join their games.
- **Chat Features:** Show them how to disable chat features or use filtering options to control in-game communication.

Safety Tips:

- **Avoid Sharing:** Stress the importance of not sharing personal information or login details with other players.
- **Report Issues:** Ensure they know how to use Roblox's reporting system to address inappropriate behavior or content.

TOOLS AND APPS TO HELP YOU KEEP YOUR CHILD SAFE

- **Bark:** Monitors texts, emails, YouTube, and 24 different social media platforms for signs of cyberbullying, adult content, online predators, etc.
- **Qustodio:** Offers web filtering, screen time limits, and location tracking.
- **Tozi App:** Helps children navigate online safety, providing resources to understand bullying and positive online interactions.



PARENTAL MONITORING APPS AND SOFTWARE

- **Net Nanny:** Allows parents to block websites, monitor online activity, set time limits, and get alerts for inappropriate content. It offers real-time web filtering and monitoring.
- **Circle Home Plus:** Provides internet filtering, time management, and usage monitoring across all devices connected to your home network. It allows you to set up profiles for each family member with customized internet rules.
- **Kaspersky Safe Kids:** Offers web filtering, app management and location tracking. You can block harmful content, manage app usage, and monitor social network interactions.



PARENTAL MONITORING APPS AND SOFTWARE

- **Family Link by Google:** Helps manage app permissions, set screen time limits, and monitor app usage. It's particularly useful for managing Android devices and Google accounts.
- **Norton Family:** Provides web filtering, time supervision, and location tracking. It also allows you to monitor and block access to inappropriate content and manage screen time.
- **Qustodio:** Includes web filtering, time management, and monitoring of social media activity. It can block websites, track usage, and set time limits on devices.
- **Bark:** Monitors text messages, social media activity, and emails for signs of harmful behavior. It provides alerts for potential issues such as cyberbullying and inappropriate content.
- **CyberPatrol:** Allows for content filtering, time management, and detailed reporting on online activity. It offers extensive web filtering options and the ability to block specific websites.
- **SafeSurf:** Provides web filtering and blocking of inappropriate websites. It also includes time management tools to help regulate screen time.

TIPS FOR USING PARENTAL MONITORING TOOLS



- **Choose the Right Tool:** Select a tool that matches your family's needs, such as specific website blocking, screen time management, or comprehensive monitoring.
- **Set Up Profiles:** Many tools allow you to create individual profiles for each child, so you can customize settings based on their age and needs.
- **Regular Communication:** Use monitoring tools as part of a broader conversation about online safety. Regularly discuss internet use and online behavior with your child.
- **Review and Adjust:** Periodically review the settings and reports from these tools to ensure they are working effectively and adjust them as needed based on your child's evolving needs.
- By leveraging these tools, you can better manage and monitor your child's online activities, ensuring a safer and more controlled digital environment.

LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

Understand the Law: Coco's Law (Ireland) criminalises the sharing of intimate images without consent. Discuss with your child why it is important never to share or forward such images.



ENCOURAGE HEALTHY ONLINE HABITS

- **Promote Balance:** Encourage offline activities and hobbies.
- **Teach Self-Monitoring:** Help your child track their online time and understand the importance of taking breaks.



WEBSITES AND RESOURCES FOR FURTHER SUPPORT

- **National Online Safety (UK):** nationalonlinesafety.com
– Guides and resources about online safety for parents.
- **NSPCC (UK):** nspcc.org.uk – Offers advice on internet safety and dealing with online bullying.
- **Common Sense Media:** commonsensemedia.org – Reviews of apps, games, and websites, plus advice on internet safety.
- **Tackle Bullying (Ireland):** tacklebullying.ie – Information and support on dealing with cyberbullying.
- **Childline (Ireland):** childline.ie – Support service for children and young people.
- **Vodafone Digital Parenting:** vodafone.co.uk – Guides and articles on internet safety.
- **Planet Puberty (Australia):** planetpuberty.org.au – Offers content on safety during puberty, including online safety tips.
- **Internet Matters (UK):** internetmatters.org – Resources for parents to help keep children safe online.