

Supporting your child with SEND to thrive online

Online Pornography



Things to know

What is online pornography?

Online pornography can be images or videos online of naked adults, or adults having sex or showing sexual behaviour. Some people enjoy looking at or watching these for sexual pleasure.

Online pornography has an age rating of 18+ due to the sexually explicit and potentially harmful nature of its content to children. It is against the law to show pornography to someone under the age of 18 or help them access it.

Despite this, young people may end up seeing or watching online pornography for a number of different reasons, and it can be quite easy for them to find it online. In fact, research tells us that, for most young people, their first exposure to online pornography online is by accident.

Young people may watch or see online pornography:

- out of curiosity,
- by accident – for example, someone sends them a link, or an advert appears,
- for their own pleasure,
- because they think it's a good way of learning about sex, or
- because they have been pressured to by one of their peers.

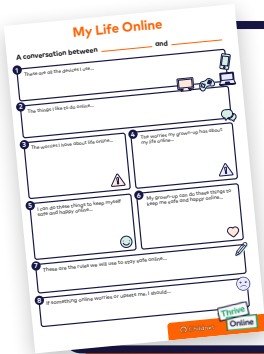


Online pornography – the potential risks

- If young people watch online pornography before they are old enough to fully understand it, it may shape their understanding of healthy sex and relationships, what sexual behaviour is considered 'normal', and how to treat others when sexually active.
- Some online pornography may confuse young people's understanding of consent in sexual relationships, as pornography often contains violence towards women.
- They might become quite upset, distressed, or confused by the content.
- They might compare their own bodies to the actors in the images and videos and become self-conscious about how they look.
- Some young people may feel unable to stop looking at it and this may affect their overall mental health and wellbeing.



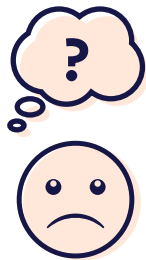
Things to do



Establish boundaries. Although it is important to respect young people's right to privacy when they are online, it is also a good idea to establish some boundaries around their technology use. Childnet's **My Life Online** resource could help you with this. For example, you could ask that no devices are left in their bedroom overnight, as this may allow them to access content like online pornography more easily.



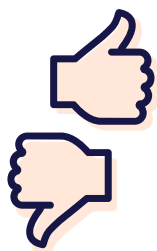
Set parental controls. This will help filter out potentially harmful content like online pornography. They can be put in place across all the devices, services, and networks that your children are using. Guides on how to set these up can be found on [Internet Matters](#).



Explore strategies for if they see something online that makes them feel uncomfortable. Unfortunately, even if you have parental controls in place, your child may still end up seeing something that makes them feel uncomfortable. Pornography may appear on websites, pop-ups, social media, or in other video content. Strategies could include turning off or putting down the device, walking away, and telling a trusted adult. You could use picture cards to help them remember these strategies.



Talk to your child about sex in an appropriate way. Use correct language for private body parts, and you could use pictures to help explain and visualise. Take the conversation slowly and at a pace that is suitable for them. For further advice about exploring this topic with your child, ask your child's school for suggestions of resources and approaches, or do further reading on the [Family Lives website](#).



Talk to your child about the importance of consent in healthy relationships. Begin by asking your child if they know what 'consent' means – you could use the word 'permission' first. Then ask them to discuss or list times when asking someone for consent or permission is important, e.g. asking someone if you can hug or kiss them. Family Lives have further advice on talking to your child about [consent](#) and [healthy relationships](#).



Inform yourself. If you do not feel confident in your understanding of online pornography and talking to your children about it, read more on the [Family Lives](#) and [Childnet](#) websites.



Things to say

“Have you heard of pornography (or 'porn') before? Do you think that you understand what pornography (or 'porn') is?”

If they are unsure at all, use the definition at the beginning of this document to help you explain what it is and what the law says.

“Pornography is for people aged 18 and over.”

It is important that your child understands why pornography has this age rating – because some of what you see in 'porn' can be dangerous, and might confuse, worry, or upset someone younger than 18.

18+

“You do not have to look at or watch pornography if you don't want to.”

It may be tempting, but young people under the age of 18 may not be ready to see pornography, and it might make them feel very uncomfortable.

“No one should ever force you to watch pornography – it is okay to say 'no'.”

Encourage your child to walk away from a situation where someone is trying to make them watch pornography, and tell a trusted adult.



Thrive

Online

“

If you see something online that upsets you or makes you feel uncomfortable, tell a trusted adult. ”

Make sure that your child knows all of the different trusted adults in their life that they can speak to.

“

If you have questions about sex or people's bodies, you can come and speak to me. ”

Reassure your child that you are there for them and can help them or answer any questions that they may have, even if it seems embarrassing at first.

