

Youth Voice in Online Safety  
Resources for use with 14-18s

# Want to talk about it?

Making space for conversations  
about life online



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On 7th February 2023, Safer Internet Day was celebrated across the globe. Marking the 20th year the day has been celebrated, the UK campaign put children and young people's voices at the heart of the day and encouraged them to shape the online safety support that they receive.

As part of the celebrations, young people hosted an event for representatives from government, charities and the internet industry. During the event they spoke about how every generation has a different experience of childhood, and that growing up online is a unique and, at times, challenging experience. Now, more than ever before, it is important that we take time to listen to children and young people about their online lives.

Building opportunities for youth voice into your online safety provision can be a springboard for conversations that shape how we talk about and respond to online issues, not just for one day, but throughout the whole year.

Originally created for Safer Internet Day 2023, these resources have been adapted to help you start conversations with your learners and discover:

- **What issues really matter to children and young people?**
- **What changes to they want to see?**
- **What online safety advice and support do they need?**

## Want to talk about it?

Making space for conversations about life online



# 10 things you need to know about using these resources

## 1. It's all about youth voice!

Let's all make time to hear from children and young people about the issues most affecting them online. By understanding their perspectives and experiences, we can provide the very best support and advice.

## 3. It's okay to just listen.

It's not always the right time to offer online safety advice, especially if a child/young person has just been sharing something they love about the internet. It's okay to just listen and then use what you've learnt to support them in the future.

## 5. Be ready to calmly respond to safeguarding concerns.

While discussing their online lives, it is possible that children and young people will raise concerns about things they have seen or experienced online. Make sure you are up to date with your school or setting's safeguarding procedures and for further advice on how to respond in these situations visit: [childnet.com/safeguarding](https://childnet.com/safeguarding).

## 2. Establish a safe space.

Consider how to establish a supportive environment for children and young people to open up about their experiences and learn about potentially sensitive topics. By helping them feel confident and secure, they are more likely to share and ask questions, without fear of judgment or negative feedback. For ideas visit: [childnet.com/learning-environment](https://childnet.com/learning-environment).

## 4. Use free, ready-made resources to save time.

Online safety is a huge topic, but there are lots of incredible free resources available to help. Kickstart the conversation with the activities here, then find resources on specific topics at [projectevolve.co.uk](https://projectevolve.co.uk) or [childnet.com/resources](https://childnet.com/resources).



## 6. Get everyone involved and spread the word.

We can all work together to keep children and young people safe online. Help raise the profile of online safety with other professionals, parents, and carers. Share these resources or what you have learnt about young people's online experiences. You can also spread the word on social media.

## 8. Be inspired by children and young people.

Children and young people will have their own ideas, expertise, and suggestions on how to stay safe online. Find opportunities to elevate their voices as peer leaders or even running information sessions for educators or parents and carers. You'll be inspired by what they can achieve!

## 10. Have fun!

The internet is amazing and has so much to offer children and young people, but online safety skills are an increasingly important part of all our lives. By having fun, working together, and engaging with the online issues young people care about the most, we can all create a safer internet for the future.

## 7. Know where to get more information or help.

Remember that there's plenty of help and advice available if you need more information about anything online safety related.

The UK Safer Internet Centre's 'Need Help?' page contains further information on reporting specific concerns to organisations outside of your school/setting. Visit: [saferinternet.org.uk/advice-centre/need-help](https://saferinternet.org.uk/advice-centre/need-help).

The Professionals Online Safety Helpline is a free helpline offering advice and support to all members of the children's workforce on any online safety issues. Visit: [saferinternet.org.uk/professionals-online-safety-helpline](https://saferinternet.org.uk/professionals-online-safety-helpline).

## 9. Kickstart conversations that last all year round.

By making conversations about the online world a regular part of your work with young people, you're showing you recognise its important role in their lives. Kickstart the conversation today but make it a regular habit all year round.



# Ready to get started?



Time needed: Approx. 45 mins

These three simple activities are the perfect way to kickstart conversations about life online.

They include opportunities to discuss different uses of technology and how it affects our wellbeing (positive and negative).

Activity 1:

## Online experiences

In this activity learners will reflect on their own and their peers' online experiences. Line learners up and ask them to take a step forward every time one of the following statements relates to them:

Take a step if...

**You scrolled through social media before you got out of bed this morning.**

**Your average screen time is above 5 hours per day.**

**You would choose Instagram over TikTok.**

**You listen to music online every day.**

**You've sent a message in a group chat today.**

**You have reported something online.**

**You charge your phone next to your bed at night.**

**You've shared a photo online in the last week.**

Ask learners to return to the original straight line and nominate a learner to ask their own statements to the group. You could challenge the learner to say things which they have not experienced online but which will get their peers to take a step forward.

Activity 2:

## What online issues matter to you?

In this activity, learners will get the opportunity to discuss which online issues matter to them the most.

**Make a copy of the graph using the mini example provided.**

Next, ask learners to choose where to place each of the online issues. For example, how harmful is online bullying to children/young people? How frequently are young people experiencing it? Use the following list of issues or provide your own examples. Give learners the opportunity to come up with their own or adapt those provided.

**Catfishing**

**Data sharing with tech companies**

**Edited or filtered online lives**

**Fake news and misinformation**

**Online bullying**

**Online hate targeting particular groups**

**Online sexual harassment (e.g. unwanted sexual approaches/conduct online)**

**Peer to peer nudes**

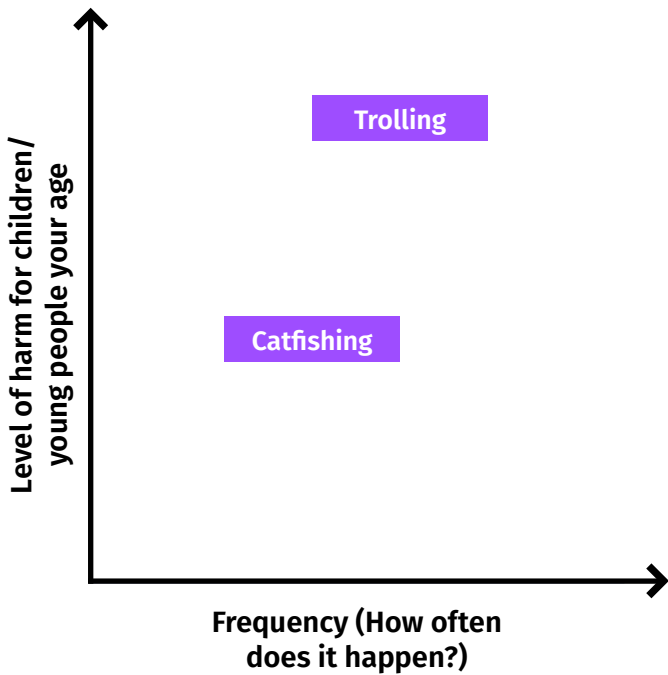
**Phishing and scams**

**Pornography**

**Trolling**

**Upsetting news stories**

## Activity 2:



Young people under 18 who are worried that a sexual image or video of them may have been shared online can use Childline and IWF's Report Remove tool to see if it can be taken down. Visit: [childline.org.uk/Remove](https://childline.org.uk/Remove).

## Activity 3:

## Digging deeper

Based on how they have plotted their graphs in Activity 2, learners should agree on their top three online issues that they'd like to focus on in more detail.

Split the learners into three groups, each taking one of the issues, and give them time to discuss them further. They should think about:

- Why does this issue exist?
- What impact can it have?
- Whose responsibility is it to resolve this issue?
- What could the internet industry and the government do to tackle it?

After their discussion ask each group to present their thoughts back to the whole group. Invite learners to ask questions.



# Starting conversations

These activities are designed to get learners talking about their experiences of using the internet and the issues that matter online to them the most. They include opportunities to reflect on how their tech use has changed over time, explore the influence of tech on their relationships and interests, and discuss the scope of internet use worldwide and the impacts of this.

## Tech on display

Most of the time learners are told not to use their personal tech in educational settings but this activity encourages the opposite. Invite learners to get out their devices and explain that you will be reading out things for them to find on their phone or online. You may choose to make this into a race.

### First person to....

- Find their screen time settings.
- Find a reporting page on social media.
- Find a positive news story.
- Find #AD on an influencer's post.
- Find a viral video.
- Find the song at number one in the charts this week.
- Find someone online who is campaigning for change.

## Would you rather?

Read out the following choices, asking learners to pick one of the two options. Get them to vote and ask for their reasons.

**Work for Apple** or **Work for Google.**

**Teach an older member of the family a dance from TikTok** or **Stream on Twitch**

**Get hate online for being yourself** or **Praise when you aren't yourself**

**Netflix** or **Amazon Prime**

**Create a successful social media app** or **Create a successful game**

**Lifelong free subscription to Spotify** or **Apple Music**

**Buy something online** or **Go out shopping for it**

**Your phone battery is always full** or **You always have signal**





## Tech timeline

This activity creates discussion around learners' online experiences and at what age different tech milestones start to happen. For educators, it is a great way to see what is happening online and to help you decide on any support your learners might need in the future.

Look through the milestones ahead of delivering this activity and choose those most appropriate for the age range you are working with.

Create a timeline in your setting from birth to the current age of your learners (a large floor or wall space would work best). Include markers to show different ages and include some space afterwards for milestones in the future.



Provide learners the milestones provided and ask them to position them on the line based on the average age children/young people might experience them. Once they are finished you can start a discussion about the different milestones and where they are.

Pick out some key ones to discuss. Does everyone agree? Do any happen later or a bit earlier? Are there any milestones we should add? What are the biggest ones or most exciting ones? Which ones might be a bit of a worry?

Take a photo.	Have a video chat with family.	Allowed to use a tablet with an adult.
Allowed to use a tablet on your own.	Watch funny videos on a tablet.	Learn a dance from a video.
Use emojis.	Play a game where you can spend real money.	Have a favourite YouTuber.
Get a phone.	Get a laptop.	Play a fighting or shooting game.
Use a filter.	Receive inappropriate comments from people online.	Start using social media.
Reported something/someone.	Exposed to (or witnessed) online hate.	Livestream.
Chat to new people.	Exposed to online pornography.	Encounter online bullying.
Judged by the way you look.	Part of a group chat.	Excluded from something online.
Allowed to have a device that stays in your bedroom (e.g. tablet, laptop, games console).		

## Higher or lower

Every minute of the day people across the world are using the internet in their daily lives. Play this game by asking learners to guess whether each category is a higher or lower figure than the previous one. Each figure is based on total user activity on popular apps every minute of the day.

1

“Do you think that every minute of the day the number of snaps sent on Snapchat is higher or lower than 1 million?”

*Answer: 2 million (higher)*

2

“Do you think that every minute of the day the number of messages sent on Discord is higher or lower than 2 million?”

*Answer: 668 thousand messages (lower)*

3

“Do you think that every minute of the day the total hours streamed on Netflix is higher or lower than 668 thousand?”

*Answer: 452 thousand (lower)*

4

“Do you think that every minute of the day the number of people shopping online is higher or lower than 452 thousand?”

*Answer: 6 million (higher)*

5

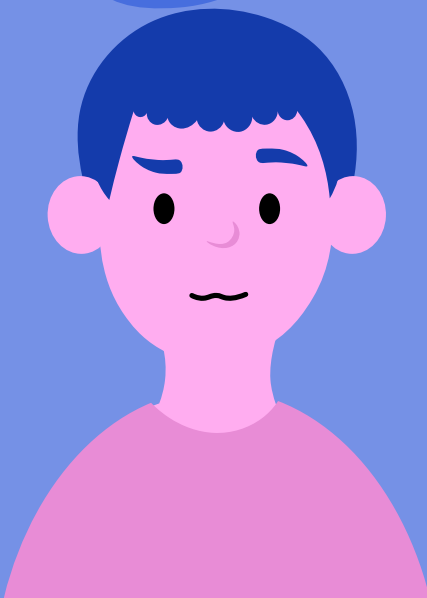
“Do you think that every minute of the day the number of searches Google conducts is higher or lower than 6 million?”

*Answer: 5.7million (lower)*

6

“Do you think that every minute of the day the number of videos watched by TikTok users is higher or lower than 5.7 million?”

*Answer: 167 million (much higher)*



Note to educators: To explore and discuss the figures given here in more detail visit:  
[domo.com/learn/infographic/data-never-sleeps-9](https://domo.com/learn/infographic/data-never-sleeps-9)

## Quote to Quote

The quotes shown on this page have come from children and young people across the country working with the UK Safer Internet Centre. Use these quotes and the supporting questions to prompt discussions with your own learners.

Why not ask your learners to come up with their own quotes and share these around your school/setting?

“The best thing about being online is connecting with people with similar interests and talking to your friends as well as being in supportive communities that help you feel more comfortable and develop your interests.” (15, she/her)

Do you agree or disagree with this? Why?

Do you think it is easier to connect with people on or offline?

Why do you think the internet has become a place where communities can flourish?

“Something all adults should know about how young people use the internet is we don’t actively try to look for danger, most of the time we are being very safe.” (17, she/her)

Do you think young people generally use the internet responsibly?

Can you think of any issues that adults are concerned about online, but that young people are not?

What would you want adults to know about how young people use the internet?

“The best thing about learning online safety in school is you are with your friends in a class and able to talk to each other about experiences.” (15, she/her)

“The worst thing about learning online safety in school is it can also be extremely negative whereas being online is something to celebrate, albeit with caution.” (15, they/them)

What have been your experiences of learning about online safety?

What do you think makes a good online safety lesson?

Why do you think adults might sometimes sound negative when they’re talking about the internet?

“The worst thing about being online is negative posts as well as content glamourising harmful behaviour, especially for people who are vulnerable and/or impressionable.” (15, she/her)

“If I could change one thing about the internet, it would be harder to access age restricted content.” (15, he/him)

What do you think is meant here by ‘content glamourising harmful behaviour’? Do you think this is common online?

Young people and children are often considered more vulnerable to online harms. Age restricted content is one method used to protect them. Do you think this is effective? Why? Why not?

What other things would you like to see done to support/protect children and young people online?

# Engaging parents, carers, and families at home

These activities can be sent home or provide other opportunities to start conversations with parents and carers about staying safe online. They include opportunities to:

- discuss media reporting on technology and the internet,
- prompt parents and carers to check-in with their child's technology use.

## Trading thoughts

The online world is such a big part of all our lives now, and news stories and opinion articles are being posted about this topic every single day.

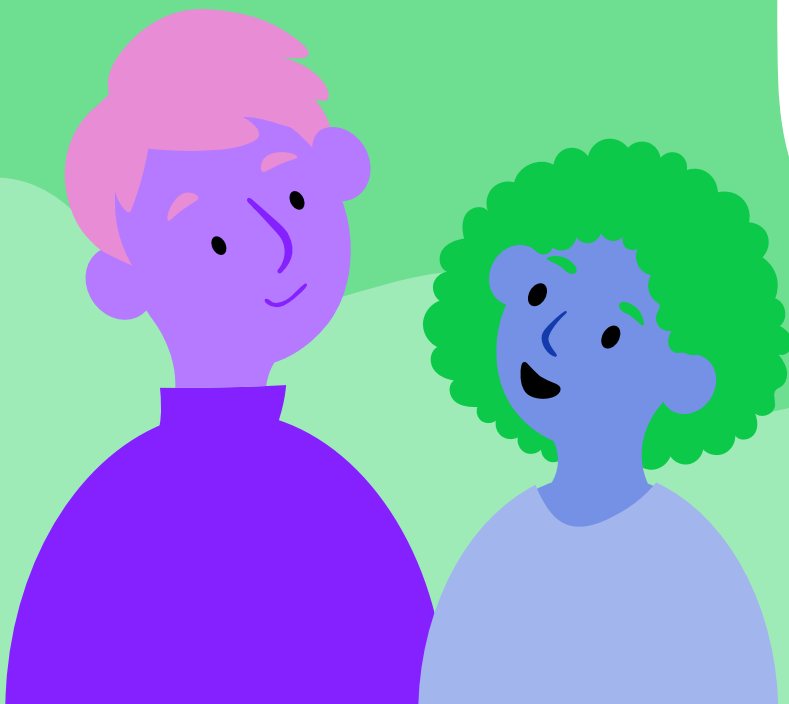
Ask learners to look for a news story or opinion article about the internet, technology, etc. Alternatively, provide learners with a few different examples for them to choose from.

Learners should read the story/article and decide what they think about it. Learners should then have a discussion with a trusted adult of their choice about the article and get at least two different perspectives on it.

## Talking tech – tech through the ages Q&A

Young people today have grown up with the internet but that wasn't always the case. Their online experiences and 'life online' are very different to that of other generations. Encourage learners to talk tech with their family members, both older and younger, to hear about the impact technology and the internet has had on them.

- When did you first use the internet? What did you use it for?
- What do you think is the biggest difference between the internet now and when you started using it?
- How old were you when you got your first mobile phone?
- What is the device you wish you had when you were younger?
- What is the best and worst piece of technology you have ever had?
- Do you have any concerns about how much the internet has become part of people's lives?



# Getting children and young people to take the lead

These activities are designed to empower learners to take the lead and have their say. This could be peer-to-peer or with adults. They include opportunities for learners to:

- Reflect on their experiences of getting their first device,
- Have a say on your school/setting's social media channels,
- Develop creative skills and share a short drama piece with peers.

## School/setting campaign

Get your whole school/setting involved in raising awareness of an online issue which matters to them!

Find out from learners which issues they might be experiencing or think are important. Support learners in creating a school/setting wide campaign. They could:

- Write an article for the school newsletter.
- Run an assembly.
- Create a form time activity to be used across the school/setting.
- Write a letter to school/setting leadership.
- Create a display.

## Help forum

Encourage peer learning and support by creating opportunities for younger learners to ask questions and get advice from older learners. You might choose to focus on a particular area of online safety, e.g. advice around screen time, doing homework online, social media etc. You could:

- Provide boxes for learners to post their online safety concerns or questions. Submissions can then be answered by older learners in a newsletter or on a display board.
- Get older learners to visit younger learners to answer questions.
- Facilitate a drop-in for younger learners to meet with older learners.

## School/setting tech takeover

Why not support learners to take over the school/setting's social media feeds for the day? They could suggest online safety tips to share, create their own hashtag, talk about online issues which are important to them or share photos of activities taking place.

Learners do not need direct access to the account and could create content or compose text separately for a member of staff to post.



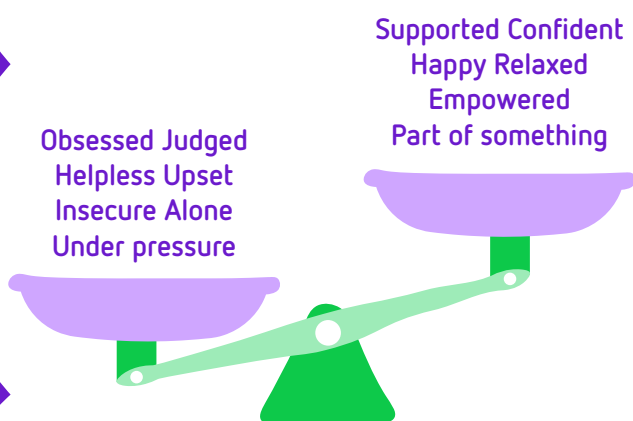
# Encouraging young people to tell someone about online concerns

Use the activities in this section to start conversations with learners about when and where they can access support.

## Balancing act

Some learners might have online concerns that they are not ready to talk about or may never want to talk about. It's important they have other strategies to look after their wellbeing.

Display the image of the scales.



Explain to learners that being online might sometimes feel like a balancing act. Whilst it has many positives, it also presents pressures which can cause the scales to tip.

Discuss with learners what self-care strategies they already do to look after themselves.

Ask learners to submit a top tip which can then be shared with other learners. These might be related to tech or general wellbeing. They could include:

- Listen to your favourite song.
- Go for a walk.
- Do some exercise.
- Mute notifications on a device.
- Meet with a friend.

## Take a seat

Read one of the following statements and ask a learner to play the role of a person with this opinion. Ask the nominated learner to take a seat at the front. Invite other learners to ask questions and give them advice, challenging their opinion and persuading them of the opposite. Repeat the activity with a different statement and a new learner in character.

“There is no point telling someone as they won't be able to help. This is something which I need to deal with on my own.”

“I don't believe in reporting things that happen online as everyone should be able to do and say what they want. If you don't like it, then ignore it.”

“I would never tell someone in school, like a teacher about what's happening online because everyone knows teachers gossip so before long everyone in the staff room would be talking.”

“I know my mate is struggling and things online aren't helping but they asked me not to tell anyone and if I do then I'd be a bad friend.”

“People have it much harder than me and are actually going through bad stuff in their lives so there isn't any point talking about how I feel about something small.”

## Navigating support

This activity is designed to support learners in recognising the different places they can go to for support, and when they may need to access these.

Place labels around the room for each of the following:

- Police/other authorities
- Adults you know and trust (e.g. parents, carers, teachers, youth workers, etc.)
- Peers (e.g. friends, siblings)
- Helplines (e.g. Childline, The Mix, etc.)
- Deal with it myself
- Other

Read out the following statements and ask learners to stand next to the place they would advise someone to look for support in that scenario. Encourage learners to share why they have chosen this type of support. Someone is worried about a friend who says they are meeting up at the weekend with a person they have been chatting to online.

- Someone has shared a nude image with someone they trusted but now it's been sent around and loads of people are looking at it.
- Someone is feeling really down and seeing things online, like everyone's perfect lives, really isn't helping.
- There has been a big argument in a group chat. People are now threatening each other.
- Someone posted a photo online. There are lots of comments but some of them are sexual and make the poster feel uncomfortable.

More suited for 17-18 years

- Someone was drawn into a gambling site and lost quite a bit of money. They're struggling to stop.
- Someone sees a pornographic video online that has made them feel really uncomfortable.
- Someone is worried about a friend who is accessing a lot of self-harm content online.
- Someone has a younger sibling who wants to get into cryptocurrency and has spent a lot of their savings on buying it from an online site.

Young people under 18 who are worried that a sexual image or video of them may have been shared online can use Childline and IWF's Report Remove tool to see if it can be taken down. Visit: [Childline.org.uk/Remove](https://www.childline.org.uk/remove).

## Reporting harmful content

Read out the following quote to learners:

“If I could change one thing about the internet, it would be to remove all the negatives so everyone can enjoy themselves.” (17, she/her)

Do you agree or disagree with this?

Who do you think should take responsibility for removing negative or harmful content online?

Some companies remove negative content from their platforms but have strict rules to determine whether something is harmful or not. How would you decide what things are harmful and should be removed?

Have you heard of Report Harmful Content? ([reportharmfulcontent.com](https://reportharmfulcontent.com))

Note to educators: this is an opportunity to explore Report Harmful Content with learners. Schools/settings are also invited to embed the Report Harmful Content button on their websites following the instructions at: [rebrand.ly/RHCButton](https://rebrand.ly/RHCButton).



# What next? Creating a safer internet all year round

We hope these ideas will help kickstart conversations about the online world with learners in your school/setting but remember to keep making space for conversations all year round.

Make talking about the online world a normal part of your everyday work with children and young people and use what you learn to inform the support you provide in the future.

There are lots of fantastic and free online safety resources available to help you deliver key messages or follow-up on topics of interest.

Visit: [projectevolve.co.uk](https://projectevolve.co.uk) or [childnet.com/resources](https://childnet.com/resources).

Here are some other top tips for ensuring online safety learning continues throughout the year:

Bring online safety to life and help learners make links to the world around them with cross-curricular links. Visit: [childnet.com/embedding](https://childnet.com/embedding) for simple suggestions of how to do this.

Reflect on how to make online safety accessible and inclusive. You know your learners best so make sure your messaging and support reflects their needs and experiences.

Celebrate and show the value of online safety through displays and regular assemblies emphasising key messages.

Be interested and let learners know they can come to you if they have any concerns about their online lives. Keep an open mind and remain non-judgmental so learners know that support is available.

Keep parents and carers informed to help ensure learners are supported at home. Provide updates that are 'little but often' using your school/setting's social media or regular newsletters.





# Printer friendly resources.

# Tech timeline

Excluded from something online.	Part of a group chat.	Judged by the way you look.
Encounter online bullying.	Exposed to online pornography.	Chat to new people.
Livestream.	Exposed to (or witnessed) online hate.	Reported something/someone.
Start using social media.	Receive inappropriate comments from people online.	Use a filter.
Play a fighting or shooting game.	Get a laptop.	Get a phone.
Have a favourite YouTuber.	Play a game where you can spend real money.	Use emojis.
Learn a dance from a video.	Watch funny videos on a tablet.	Allowed to use a tablet on your own.
Allowed to use a tablet with an adult.	Have a video chat with family.	Take a photo.

# Tech timeline

Excluded from something online.	Part of a group chat.	Judged by the way you look.
Encounter online bullying.	Exposed to online pornography.	Chat to new people.
Livestream.	Exposed to (or witnessed) online hate.	Reported something/someone.
Start using social media.	Receive inappropriate comments from people online.	Use a filter.
Play a fighting or shooting game.	Get a laptop.	Get a phone.
Have a favourite YouTuber.	Play a game where you can spend real money.	Use emojis.
Learn a dance from a video.	Watch funny videos on a tablet.	Allowed to use a tablet on your own.
Allowed to use a tablet with an adult.	Have a video chat with family.	Take a photo.