



# Online Safety Newsletter

## When should a child get their own device?

If you are thinking about giving your child their own phone/tablet, then you might find the latest article from the Education Team at Childnet useful:

<https://saferinternet.org.uk/blog/4-tips-for-giving-tech-gifts-this-christmas>

Christmas is such a wonderful time of year, excitable children and time to relax with family and friends. And of course, there are new toys to play with.

### Learn your way around

Most devices have controls to ensure that kids can't access content you don't want them to. Make sure your "in-app" purchases are disabled to avoid a nightmare surprise in the new year.

As with all mobile devices, set a time limit.

<https://support.apple.com/en-gb/guide/ipad/ipad37239c84/ipados>



## If you have given Your Child a Smartphone for Xmas

It's the 'Christmas Holiday' and many parents have given their kids their first smartphone as a gift. And for many, this has been a fraught decision, as there are many pros and cons.

On the one hand, life will be much easier when your child can go out on their own — and you can always reach each other if needed. They can stay connected to their friends, share content, and participate in online spaces together, which is pretty much all they talk about, anyway.

There are a million apps that they can use in support of academic goals, curiosities, and creative pursuits. And it puts an immediate end to any badgering and/or borrowing your phone which, let's face it, can get pretty annoying! But there are also some risks.

While the research is not yet conclusive on the effect of smartphones, video games, and social media on adolescent/teenage brains, parents and educators continue to report escalating problems, including exposure to inappropriate content, online bullying, disrupted sleep, distraction, and addiction among others. These factors can significantly complicate a young person's wellbeing and the wellbeing of your family.

Remember— a gift is something you give to someone else — the ownership of the thing transfers from you to the other person in an instant.

With smartphones and kids, the "gift" idea of going from zero to instantaneous ownership can lead to problems. Kids' brains are not fully developed — they don't have a lot of impulse control or higher-order thinking skills yet — and a smartphone is like a bottomless bowl of sweets that they may not have the skills or dispositions to manage.

Set a time limit beforehand to avoid disagreements that will most definitely happen.

## Group chats and WhatsApp

Chat apps allow the user to send messages, photos, videos and documents, as well as creating large group chats. Some apps allow users to message people they don't know, so your child could receive messages from strangers - most apps have settings to allow this to be changed so that they only receive messages from people they know. With your child, make sure these settings are in place and show them how to reject requests from an unfamiliar person. A study by Internet Matters found that parents of children aged 11 to 13 are the most concerned (85%) that bullying can take place in group conversations on social media. Even with friends, your child might see something that upsets them. There are many safety settings that you may not know about.

Advice on key issues around online safety can be found [here](#). Teach your child to be kind online. Children learn from adults!

Be kind online— [View here](#)

BBC Own It –being kind online [view here](#)

