



## Guidance for parents

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The Methodist Church recognises that the Internet is an integral part of children's and young people's lives. The use of the Internet opens up fantastic educational and social opportunities and experiences. There are numerous ways in which children and young people can access the Internet, through the use of school and home computers, games consoles and mobile phones. As the Internet and other forms of social media open up a whole new world of learning, opportunity and experiences, its use also opens up some risks.

In accordance with the Methodist Church Safeguarding policy, we are committed to protecting children and young people from harm. Details of this policy can be found on the Methodist website at [www.methodist.org.uk/safeguardingpolicy](http://www.methodist.org.uk/safeguardingpolicy).

We have developed these guidelines for parents to inform you about safe use of social media and to minimise the risk to children and young people. We have also produced a policy and guidance document for youth workers and have guidance specifically aimed at children aged 5-11 and for young people aged 11 and over. All these documents can be accessed online at [www.childrenandyouth.org.uk/?p=3733](http://www.childrenandyouth.org.uk/?p=3733). We strongly recommend that you read through the relevant guidance with your son/daughter.

As you strive to protect your child in the real world, we also want you to be able to protect them online. Like learning to cross the road, online safety skills are for life. If your son/daughter understands the risks, it will help them to make informed choices aiding them to stay safe whilst getting the most from social media.

Within these guidelines we frequently make reference to a website called [www.thinkuknow.co.uk](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk) which is run by the child exploitation and online protection centre (CEOP). The CEOP is a government law enforcement agency that aims to protect people from abuse. We highly recommend that you have a good look at this site. It has detailed guidance for parents, teachers, youth workers, children and young people. It provides up to date information on social media and has short films and games to stimulate thought and discussion about safe use of social media.

We recognise that for some parents the use of social media can seem a bit daunting and you may feel that your child knows more than you do. However we

would encourage you to learn as much as you can. Show an interest in what your children are doing online and ask them to teach you what they know.

For more information on different types of social media read the parents page at [www.thinkuknow.co.uk](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk) They explain what gaming, mobiles and social networking are, as well as their attendant risks and how to minimise them. They also explain grooming and why abusers use the Internet to target children and young people.

What follows is a list of tips; key things that we think you should be doing. This is followed by some potential issues and boundaries for you to consider and concludes with a list of professional organisations that you might find helpful.

## Top tips

- ⊕ Become social media literate. Engage with your child; find out what they are using and how. Encourage them to show you what they know.
- ⊕ As soon as your son/daughter starts to use social media technologies, start to talk to them about safety.
- ⊕ Find out your child's online habits; who they talk to, what sites they go to etc.
- ⊕ Install internet filtering software on your computer(s). Go for a software package that has a Kitemark. The Kitemark scheme is sponsored by the Home office and Ofcom, and filtering products with a Kitemark will have been independently tested.
- ⊕ Use parental controls and explain to your son/daughter why these are important.
- ⊕ There are age classifications to some social networking sites. Find out what sites your children use and see whether they are age appropriate (Facebook, for example, is only appropriate for people aged 13 and over).
- ⊕ Ensure that your son/daughter knows and understands what sort of information is private (such as postal or email addresses, home or mobile telephone numbers, or details of what school they attend and places where they like to spend their time) and why such information should be kept private. Explain that people may not always be who they say they are and people with bad intentions can use the Internet and other social media sources to get in touch with children and young people. When using social networking sites ensure your son/daughter has appropriate privacy settings set up. There is a short film on [www.thinkuknow.co.uk](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk) called *Consequences*, about a young man who found out all sorts of information about a young woman. This film demonstrates the importance of privacy settings. You could watch and discuss it with your son/daughter.
- ⊕ Ensure your son/daughter knows not to meet up with anyone they have met online. Even if they have been chatting to this person for a while they may think they know them but they don't; they are still a stranger. If they think they are going to meet up with someone they have met online encourage them to tell you or an adult they trust.
- ⊕ Make sure your child understands what spam or junk mail/texts are. Inform them never to believe, open or reply to spam, and explain why they shouldn't (they could get a virus or some inappropriate material on their computer).
- ⊕ Remind them that the Internet is a public space. This is easy to forget when you're typing away in the privacy of your bedroom. Ask them to consider if they would they feel happy for you to see pictures they want to upload, or messages

they are thinking of sending. If the answer is no, then maybe they shouldn't post them.

- ⊕ Encourage them to think about the sort of photos they upload. Photos that have been uploaded can be forwarded, altered or shared with a lot of people; there is no getting them back.
- ⊕ Explain that they may see things on the Internet that may upset or distress them. Encourage them to talk to yourself or an adult they trust if they do see such things.
- ⊕ Encourage your son/daughter to tell yourself or an adult they trust about any online communications they may have had that made them feel uncomfortable or scared.
- ⊕ Make sure you and your son/daughter know how to save messages and images just in case they receive anything offensive/threatening or unsuitable. These may be needed as evidence if reporting incidents.

At [www.thinkuknow.co.uk](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk) there is information on how to set up help buttons on your computer so that if your child is scared or worried about anything online, they can immediately press the button and get help from CEOP. There are separate help buttons for children and for young people. The children's help button is called *Hector's World Safety*. For young people, there's the CEOP help button: [www.ceop.police.uk/Browser-Safety](http://www.ceop.police.uk/Browser-Safety).

- ⊕ Read through the Methodist guidelines for children and/or young people with your child. Discuss and make sure you all understand the points being raised.
- ⊕ Always try to keep communication open. Have regular conversations with your children about what they like doing and how they spend their time online. Encourage them to always tell an adult if something happens that they don't like or are worried about. Encourage them to speak out even if they think you will be angry with them.
- ⊕ The Methodist Church has a policy and guidance document for children and youth workers. This deals with the issue of appropriate communication with children and young people. Make sure you know how and when adults are in communication with your child (for example, their piano teacher, football club or church leader). Are you happy with the method of communication?
- ⊕ Check out the [www.thinkyuknow.co.uk](http://www.thinkyuknow.co.uk) website. This website has extensive guidance for parents, teachers, young people and children. If your son/daughter is aged 14 or above, get them to watch the short film *Exposed* on the website. It is about a young woman called Dee and what happened when she sent a photo of herself to her boyfriend. Discuss what happens in the film.

If you have serious concerns for the welfare of your son/daughter online, report it directly to CEOP using the 'report' button on our website.

## Boundaries to consider

As a parent, you will undoubtedly have to establish boundaries and manage the use of social media within the home. We have listed below a few points that may help you think through some of the possible issues.

- ⊕ Have computers and games consoles in public areas in the house, rather than in bedrooms. This may help you to keep track of what's happening online. It

may also help your child stay more accountable and not be tempted into risky behaviour.

- ⊕ Mobiles could be kept downstairs after an agreed time of night, maybe 9pm or 10pm. This could prevent your son/daughter staying up too late sending or receiving messages and phone calls at night.
- ⊕ If your son/daughter has a social networking account such as Facebook, consider encouraging them to have a trusted adult as friend, just to help flag up if they think they are doing anything unsafe or risky.
- ⊕ Work out realistic ground rules with your son/daughter.
- ⊕ Use the quiz for parents at [www.thinkuknow.co.uk](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk) to test your online knowledge.
- ⊕ Be aware of mobile apps and software applications that enable photo sharing, such as Instagram. Software packages such as these have led to an increase in cyberbullying and 'sexting'. Further info can be found at [www.thinkuknow.co.uk](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk)
- ⊕ ⊕ What is 'sexting'? It is defined as "the exchange of sexual messages or images" and "creating, sharing and forwarding sexually suggestive nude or nearly nude images".

## Different types of social media

### Instant messaging

Instant messaging (IM) allows you to 'chat' in real time over the Internet in a similar way to mobile phone text messages. Advanced systems allow webcam and voice communication. The main systems are: Windows Live Messenger (formerly MSN), Yahoo! Messenger and AOL Instant Messenger. Instant messaging can be great for staying in touch with friends – but like email, it carries risks.

### Chatrooms

Chatrooms are virtual places on the Internet where people can get together and 'talk' using text. Some use specific programs to access and use the facility; others are built into websites (including social networking sites).

### Gaming

Gaming has developed in leaps and bounds over the last few years. Now, many games consoles can access the Internet, enabling users to keep up-to-date with the latest games, downloads and tips and tricks. Games can also be played online through a PC, laptop or mobile phone.

### Instagram

Instagram is a free photo sharing application available on Apple iOS and Android devices. Users can upload photos to our service and share them with friends. They can also view, comment, and like photos shared by their friends on Instagram.

There is no private messaging on Instagram. Anyone 13 and older can create an account by registering an email address and selecting a username.

### Twitter

Twitter is a real-time information network that connects users to the latest stories, ideas, opinions and news about what they may find interesting. Users simply find accounts they find most compelling and follow the conversations. At the heart of Twitter are small bursts of information called tweets.

## Privacy and parental settings guide

For **computers** please see [www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/browser-safety/](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/browser-safety/) for some guidance on browser safety.

For **mobile phones** please relevant companies who can provide guidance on putting privacy settings. For Blackberry users, please check out [www.vodafone.com/content/dam/vodafone/parents/images\\_2012/pdf/howto\\_guide/set\\_up\\_blackberry\\_parental\\_controls.pdf](http://www.vodafone.com/content/dam/vodafone/parents/images_2012/pdf/howto_guide/set_up_blackberry_parental_controls.pdf)

For **gaming** please look at [www.ceop.police.uk](http://www.ceop.police.uk) for parental guidance settings and [www.vodafone.com/content/dam/vodafone/parents/images\\_2012/pdf/howto\\_guide/set\\_up\\_parental\\_controls\\_on\\_the\\_xbox360.pdf](http://www.vodafone.com/content/dam/vodafone/parents/images_2012/pdf/howto_guide/set_up_parental_controls_on_the_xbox360.pdf)

Here is a quick guide for **Facebook** privacy setting for your child's profile.

- ⊕ **Personal information and posts** Select “Only friends” for each item to make sure no one else can view information on your bio, birthday, religious and political views and more. Make photo albums viewable to only friends or customise further by specifying individuals who can or cannot view the album.
- ⊕ **Contact information** Select “Only friends” for each item to make sure no one else can view information on your phone number, email, address and more. You may want to select “Friends of friends” or “Only friends” under “Add me as a friend” and “Send me a message”.
- ⊕ **Friends, tags and connections** Select “Only friends” for each item to make sure no one else can view information on your relationships, education, hometown and more.
- ⊕ **Applications and websites** Facebook can share some of your information with other websites, and Facebook applications can also utilise details about you. Under “What your friends can share about you,” make sure no boxes are selected. Select “Only friends” for “Activity on applications and games dashboards.” Disallow the “Instant personalization pilot program” by unclicking the box that would “allow select partners to instantly personalise their features with my public information when I first arrive on their websites.”
- ⊕ **Search** Edit whether your profile can be found through search, both on Facebook and through a web search.
- ⊕ **Block list** Block individuals from interacting with you, if necessary.

Select “Preview my post” to see how your profile appears to others. According to Facebook, name, gender, profile picture, and pages that you “like” are considered public information and are impossible to hide.

CEOP have contributed to and are supporting Vodafone's *Guide to Digital Parenting*. Access a copy here [asp-gb.secure-zone.net/v2/index.jsp?id=727/899/1737&lng=en](http://asp-gb.secure-zone.net/v2/index.jsp?id=727/899/1737&lng=en) and you can also find 'How to' guides here [www.vodafone.com/content/index/parents/how\\_to\\_guides1.html](http://www.vodafone.com/content/index/parents/how_to_guides1.html). These are step-by-step guides to enable you to make the most of some of the safety and privacy tools available, including Vodafone Guardian, BlackBerry® Parental Controls and more Facebook privacy controls.

## Other professional sources of help

The Child Exploitation Online Protection centre (CEOP) deals with concerns about inappropriate contacts between children and adults. [www.ceop.police.uk](http://www.ceop.police.uk)

The Internet Watch Foundation removes illegal material from the internet. If you come across such material you can report it to them at [www.iwf.org.uk](http://www.iwf.org.uk)

[www.clickcleverclicksafe.direct.gov.uk/index.html](http://www.clickcleverclicksafe.direct.gov.uk/index.html) This is a government-run site which provides advice and information to parents and children.

Cybermentors offer support to young people who are being cyberbullied. [www.cybermentors.org.uk](http://www.cybermentors.org.uk)

This policy works in conjunction with the Methodist Church social media guidelines, which can be downloaded here: [www.methodist.org.uk/socialmediaguidelines](http://www.methodist.org.uk/socialmediaguidelines)

MTV's *A Thin Line* campaign empowers kids to identify, respond to, and stop the spread of digital abuse in their own lives and among their peers. The campaign is built on the understanding that there's a 'thin line' between what may begin as a harmless joke and something that could end up having a serious impact. [www.athinline.org/](http://www.athinline.org/)

[Childnet-int.org](http://Childnet-int.org) works to track and bring offenders to account either directly or in partnership with local and international forces.

[Commonsense.org](http://Commonsense.org) provides trustworthy information, education, and an independent voice helping kids thrive in a world of media and technology.

[ConnectSafely.org](http://ConnectSafely.org) is an online forum designed to give teens and parents a voice in the public discussion about youth online. It also offers [social-media safety tips](#) for teens and parents, the latest youth-tech news, and many other resources.

The [Cyberbullying Research Center](#) provides up-to-date information about the nature, extent, causes, and consequences of cyberbullying among adolescents and serves as a clearinghouse of information about the ways adolescent's use and misuse technology. [cyberbullying.us/](http://cyberbullying.us/)

The Family Online Safety Institute works to make the online world safer for kids and families by identifying and promoting best practices, tools and methods in the field of online safety that also respect free expression. [FOSI.org](http://FOSI.org)

The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) serves as the US's resource on missing and sexually exploited children, providing information and resources to law enforcement and other professionals, parents, and children, including child victims. [NCMEC.org](http://NCMEC.org)

[NetSmartz.org](http://NetSmartz.org) is an interactive, educational programme from NCMEC, which provides age-appropriate resources to help teach children how to be safer on- and offline. It is designed for children aged 5-17.

[OnguardOnline.gov](http://OnguardOnline.gov) is a program of the (US) Federal Trade Commission providing practical tips from the government and technology industry on protecting against internet fraud.

[TRUSTe.org](http://TRUSTe.org) is a company that helps businesses promote online safety and trust, and guides consumers to sites that protect their online privacy.

[WebWiseKids.org](http://WebWiseKids.org) is a non-profit providing innovative and effective tools to help young people make wise choices in a world of media and technology.

[www.wiredsafety.org/](http://www.wiredsafety.org/) is a non-profit providing innovative and effective tool to help young people make wise choices in a world of media and technology. Three popular programs are [stopcyberbullying.org](http://stopcyberbullying.org), [teenangels.org/](http://teenangels.org/) and [wiredkids.org/](http://wiredkids.org/)

*That's Not Cool:* This website has been created to help young people and their parents understand how mobile phones, instant messaging and online profiles are all digital extensions of who we are. It aims to give the tools to help people think about what is, or is not, okay in their digital relationships. [www.thatsnotcool.com](http://www.thatsnotcool.com)

*The Good Gaming Guide:* With the rise in online gaming, PEGI recently created an online logo, which any gameplay service provider can display providing that the website meets the requirements set out in the PEGI Online Safety Code (POSC).

[www.pegi.info/en/index/id/media/pdf/241.pdf](http://www.pegi.info/en/index/id/media/pdf/241.pdf)

*Videogamers in Europe 2010:* Interactive Software Federation Europe:  
[www.isfe.eu/sites/isfe.eu/files/video\\_gamers\\_in\\_europe\\_2010.pdf](http://www.isfe.eu/sites/isfe.eu/files/video_gamers_in_europe_2010.pdf)

Find out more from the Insafe network:  
[www.saferinternet.org](http://www.saferinternet.org)

## Contact Us

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Our [www.facebook.com/pages/Methodist-Children-Youth/126895266084](https://www.facebook.com/pages/Methodist-Children-Youth/126895266084)