Croft Playgroup

Parent's guide for keeping children safe online

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Keeping your child safe online

We know within today's society that the use of technology is common within many households. Our children are using our smartphones, computers or tablets to play games, use apps and watch their favourite TV shows. There are simple things you can do to make sure they are using the internet safely, this guide will provide you with some advice and useful tips.

The benefits of using the internet and technology
- Gives our children access to a wealth of information to build their knowledge
- Technology takes away physical barriers to social connections to make our children less isolated
- Exposure to tech has proven to improve children's learning and development.
- Online games and activites enhance creativity.

The effects of technology on our bodies
Effect on the brain- Screens can have a drug-like effect on our child's brains which can make them more anxious.

Effect on behaviour- Constant use of a device can form bad habits and can encourage your child to spend longer looking at a screen. This can have a negative effect on your child's behaviour. Switch off auto-play to remove the temptation to binge on programmes.

Effect on sleep- Blue lights from your devices can trick the brain into thinking it's still daylight making it difficult to unwind before bedtime. Recommendations suggest that you should stop using technology atleast 30 minutes before bed.

Why does it matter?
- On average 3 to 4 year olds spend over 6 hours online a week
- 54% of 3 and 4 year olds have their own device, often a tablet or console.
- Parental concerns about the internet are rising.
  (Children and Parents: *Media use and attitudes report* 2018)

Safe Search Engines
There are many safe search engines you can use such as Swiggle or Kids-Search. You can also activate safe search settings on google and youtube. You can save time by adding these to your 'favourites' or 'bookmarks'.

Explore Together
Talk to your child about what the internet is and explore it together so you can show them all the great fun and educational things they can do. Be an active role model and set a good example through your own use of technology.

Be Involved
Ensure your child is using devices in communal areas like the living room, so you can keep an eye on how they are using the internet, how long they are using it for and also share their enjoyment.

Put yourself in control
Install and check your parental controls on your home broadband. Most internet-enabled devices also allow you to set up parental controls so you can give your child a safe space to explore their curiosity online. Discuss the risks that your child may face based on their online activities.

Use Passwords
Keep your devices out of reach and set passwords on all your internet-enabled devices. Then you'll know when and where your child is accessing the internet. You can also make sure they are not making additional prchases when they are playing games or using apps.

Boundaries
It is never too early to start setting boundaries, set some rules about how long your child can spend online. The NHS recommend children aged 3 and 4 years old should have no more than 1 hour screen time a day, they also suggest that children should not be restrained for more than an hour at a time.

Protect your child when you are sharing images of them online:

- **Review your privacy settings on your social media account's-** Get in control of who can see your photos by applying the right privacy settings. For an extra level of privacy explore setting up a private social network group with just close friends and family.
- **Check your network of friends-** Make sure you are happy that all your social media friends who will see your photos are actual friends. If not, consider only sharing with a select group of people.
- **Remember profile photos are public-** Take a second look at the picture before you post it, to make sure it does not reveal any personal details like your road or house number or their school name.
- **Managing your child's digital footprint-** It is important to consider how posting photos of your child will affect them in the future. As they get older seek their permission before posting.

There are many good online safety resources that you could share together with your child:

 Smartie the Penguin- Join in with Mummy Penguin's song and follow the adventures of Smartie the Penguin as he learns how to be safe on the internet.

Online safety books- Once upon a time online, Chicken Clicking, Monkey cow and Troll stinks! (These are also available within playgroup)

 Jessie and Friends (4 years +)- Series animations that aims to give 4-year olds and over the knowledge, skills and confidence to help them respond safely to risks they may encounter online.

Circle times- Have discussions about staying safe online, ask questions which are relevant to that moment and most importantly, have fun staying safe together.