

Create your own Family IT policy

Under 5

The big issues

- Create boundaries and rules for the amount of time your son or daughter can spend online. It's never too early to start putting limits into place.

The basics

- Choose an appropriate homepage on your family computer or table – for example, bbc.co.uk/cbeebies

Worth Checking

- The educational apps, games and TV shows on offer for pre-school children, and the age ratings and descriptions for them.

Talk it through

- Share your technology rules with grandparents, babysitters and older siblings, so that they stick to them when they look after your child or use the family computer.

And finally.....

- The rules and conversation you have now will set the tone for your child's internet use as they get older.

6 – 9

The big issues

- Compile a list of websites they're allowed to visit, and make sure they know why some websites are safer than others.

The basics

- Set parental controls on internet browsers by creating a user account for your child with appropriate settings. Check out Google's **safesearchkids.org** for stress-free browsing.

Worth Checking

- Online virtual worlds for children of this age, such as Disney's **clubpenguin.com** and **moshimonsters.com/parents**

Talk it through

- Discuss the benefits and limitations of using the web to help with homework and other school work.

And finally.....

- Other parents at your child's school are a source of information. Chat to them about how they help their children manage the digital world, and make sure you're all on the same page.

10 – 12

The big issues

- Discuss online privacy and the information they shouldn't share as they use the internet increasingly for homework and socialising.

The basics

- Make rules for the length of time they can spend on games consoles, tablets and smartphones, as well as the computer.

Worth Checking

- The kind of language and acronyms used by children in chat rooms. Make sure you know what to look out for. Head to **netlingo.com** for help demystifying cryptic teenspeak.

Talk it through

- Give the reasons behind boundaries, time limits and parental controls, and be prepared to start re-evaluating the restrictions in line with your child's maturity.

And finally.....

- Tablets and games consoles shouldn't become a regular 'babysitter'.

13+

The big issues

- Explain the pros and cons of Facebook now they have reached the age at which they can sign up for an account.

The basics

- Agree a budget for things like apps and music. Giving them control of their own spending money can be useful, but make sure your kids know how to manage their money responsibly.

Worth Checking

- Facebook's online privacy settings and how commenting and photo sharing works. Set up your own account to get a feel for it or go to **facebook.com/safety**

Talk it through

- Explain the dangers of sharing pictures and personal details online. And don't shy away from difficult subjects such as pornography, bullying and sexting. Childline's website can help: **childline.org.uk/explore/bullying**

And finally.....

- Technology will be second nature to your child by now. Try to stay up to date with new technology, social networks and websites. **Techmums.co** is full of useful information.