

Online Safety Newsletter

September 2024 Issue 1.

Welcome to the first of a new regular update from the school to support our parents and carers in keeping your children safe online at home. In each issue we will provide some **advice and guidance** about how to manage children's behaviour when using devices and how they can use the internet safely. This has come about after a growing number of incidents we have been made aware of which have happened outside of school which then spill into school.

Nobody is saying children shouldn't have devices or access to the internet. However, we believe this should be carefully managed and our intent with these newsletters is for them to run alongside our curriculum taught in school to enable our children to maximise the potential of the internet but at the same time keep themselves safe and develop routines and behaviours which will support them as they grow and move onto the next stage of their learning.



We have subscribed to a very useful resource – [National Online Safety](https://www.nationalonlinesafety.com). We will be using these resources to support our curriculum when teaching the children about keeping safe online.

They also have a free app available for parents and carers which is packed with insightful courses, explainer videos, webinars and guides on topics that will help you protect your children when they're online.

Let's get #OnlineSafetySavvy



Kind Resilient Respectful



Our focus for this issue is **TikTok** – an app that we regularly hear from our families causes distress and has resulted in some unkind behaviour between children outside of school. **Click on the graphic below** to download a helpful guide for parents and carers for what you need to know about **TikTok**.

What our children say...

We asked our school council reps for their comments about TikTok.

"It's important to understand that you're supposed to be 13 so you should get permission from your grown-ups before setting up an account. I have deleted TikTok for the time being as it was becoming a bit much. If you see something that upsets you, you should remove it by blocking them. However they can setup a new account and find you again – it's very tricky so my advice is to stay off it."

"It's very easy to become addicted as you find yourself just staring at a screen endlessly swiping. Set yourself time limits and stop when you feel you're becoming overloaded. I would recommend if you choose to have an account to make it private so you control who has access to it e.g. only people who follow you can see your content."

What Parents & Carers Need to Know about TIKTOK

AGE RESTRICTION 13+ (Certain features are restricted to over-18s only)

TikTok is a free social media platform that lets users create, share and watch short videos ranging anywhere from 15 seconds to 10 minutes in duration. The app gained notoriety for its viral dances, trends and celebrity comes, and can be a creative, fun platform for teens to enjoy. Now available in 75 languages, it has more than a billion active users worldwide (as of spring 2022) and is most popular with the under-18 age bracket. In fact, a 2022 Ofcom report found TikTok to be the most-used social media platform for posting content, particularly among young people aged 12 to 17.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

- AGE-INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT** While TikTok's "Following" feed only displays videos from users someone follows, "For You" is a stream of clips based on their previously watched content. Most videos are child's "For You" feed will therefore be light-hearted and amusing, but it could potentially surface something unsuitable. TikTok's guidelines prohibit the sharing of illegal or inappropriate content, but the sheer volume of uploads means they can't manually monitor and vet.
- DANGEROUS CHALLENGES** Due to TikTok's immense popularity, some young people have intentionally been influenced by videos challenging them to perform harmful or harmful to their health. One extreme example was the "blackout" trend, which encouraged users to hold their breath until they passed out from a lack of oxygen. It was two families filing lawsuits against TikTok over the tragic deaths of their children.
- CONTACT WITH STRANGERS** With around 1.1 billion users globally, the potential for contact from strangers on TikTok is high – especially on accounts created by teens (or young people using a false date of birth) who set to public by default. This not only means that someone's profile is visible to everyone else on the app, it also means their videos are accessible to others and enable anyone to comment on them or download them.

IN-APP SPENDING TikTok is free, but users have the option to buy TikTok coins, which can be used to purchase emojis in the app. These emojis are then sent as rewards (valuing their monetary value) to other users for videos they've created. Coin bundles range from £5.99 to an eye-watering £85. TikTok's policy is that they can't be bought by under-18s, but it's possible to bypass this with a fake birthday.

ADDICTIVE NATURE TikTok can be addictive, especially for young people, as it provides a constant stream of new content. The platform recently introduced an "autoplay" feature that limits users to 60 and 100 minutes per new member under 18 in the app, and with TikTok average 102 minutes per session in the app. But these restrictions can easily be removed in the settings.

TIKTOK NOW Introduced in late 2022, the "TikTok Now" feature lets users post a daily video or photo at the exact same time as their friends. Users receive a synchronised notification at a random time of day, giving them three minutes to take a video or real-time photo. This notification can not only be a distraction to young people but could lead to them inadvertently sharing private content such as their location.

Advice for Parents & Carers

- ENABLE FAMILY PAIRING** Family Pairing allows parents to link their TikTok account with their child's and control their child's account. For example, turn on Restricted Mode (reducing the content of a child's (or young person's) content), set screen time limits, and manage their child's ability to send messages (and be sent messages) if they can't alter these settings without parental approval.
- MAKE ACCOUNTS PRIVATE** Although under-18s will have their TikTok account set to private by default, bypassing this setting is relatively easy. These parents have the ability to manually set their child's account to private – meaning that their videos won't be visible to strangers and they won't be able to exchange messages with people who aren't on their Friends list.
- LIMIT IN-APP SPENDING** If your child is using an iPhone or Android device to access TikTok, you can alter the settings to restrict their in-app purchases. We'd recommend that you enable this feature, as it's also easy for a young person to accidentally spend what they're doing – it's a significant amount of real money being that coins so they can unlock more features of the app.
- DISCUSS THE DANGERS** If your child wants to use TikTok and you're happy for them to do so, it's crucial to talk about the potential risks in this type of app. For example, ensure they understand not to share any identifying personal information – and that they realise they could be exposed to inappropriate content. Thinking critically about what they see on TikTok can help children become generally more social media savvy.
- READ THE SIGNS** If you're concerned that your child might be spending too much time on TikTok, or that they've been emotionally affected by something inappropriate or upsetting that they've seen, it's important to know how to spot the possible signs of increased irritability and a lack of concentration are potential red flags, as are failing to complete homework or regularly not eating meals.

Meet Our Expert
Carly Page is an experienced technology journalist with a track record of more than 10 years in the industry. Previously the editor of tech tabloid The Inquirer, Carly is now a freelance technology journalist, editor and consultant.

National Online Safety
#WakeUpWednesday

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