

## 15 things parents need to know about phones, apps & being online

- 1 Although some parents allow it, it's illegal and unsafe for kids under the age of 13 to have their own social media accounts.
- 2 Kids can be online using music-playing devices, mobile phones, 'tablets', any computer, game consoles, home TVs, most apps, and some other devices, including watches and some clock radios.
- 3 Parents must keep up with the fashions in new social media apps and platforms. The longer your kid stays off social media, the longer you postpone potential problems, and your own need to monitor it.
- 4 Apps and social media are only as safe as whoever has access to it, and that's everybody. Most apps aren't for kids. Apps and games can collect personal information, solicit money, and identify your kid's location. Strangers use various ways to con photos out of kids, and arrange meetings.
- 5 Anything that's posted online, even a family photo, should be considered 'public'. Its use and who sees it is out of your control. Kids need to understand this.
- 6 Kids under 13 should use their parents' email address. When a child gets their own, it shouldn't include their full name, year of birth, or reveal they're a child. Parents should monitor any account. To avoid 'viruses' or 'malware', parents should teach kids to delete any email from anybody they don't already know, *without opening it or clicking on any link in it.*
- 7 Some girls under 13 use social media apps on their parents' phone. Icons/avatars should not be a child's face. Parents should follow, and keep checking privacy, location and safety settings of every device, app and social media website their child uses. Kids should not be in contact with anybody you don't know personally.
- 8 Parents need a record of all their kid's account names, PINs, and passwords for all email addresses, social media accounts and devices. Kids should always use the computer in a family part of the house.
- 9 A parent or guardian should be the only one to 'top up' phone credit or know any PIN numbers, and keep track of the usage.
- 10 All kids will strike problems online. Parents should aim for an attitude of calm, collaborative problem-solving, to encourage full disclosure.
- 11 More than an hour a day on screens and lack of outdoor play can cause eye damage and failure to develop proper long-distance sight. Too much screen time affects social skills and reduces time for sport, art, playing, daydreaming, being inventive and reading books.
- 12 All screen devices should be off an hour before bedtime. No wifi or screen devices, music players or TVs should be in kids' bedrooms overnight. All phones and other devices should be inaccessible all night, preferably in the parents' room.
- 13 All webcams should be disabled and covered with a piece of tape or plasticine so it can't be used by strangers to spy inside your house. Kids should use a mainstream product, such as Skype, to chat with only known friends, under supervision.
- 14 Parents need to tackle, not ignore, any online or phone bullying and if necessary get help and info from the relevant staff member at their kid's school.
- 15 See the More Info section for parents at the back of this book for more info about online and phone safety. And see the list of things kids need to know, coming up.

