



Online Safety Newsletter



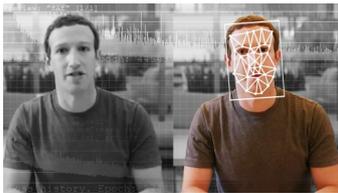
Summer2020

It's been a very challenging time for online safety . Children may feel isolated, bored, anxious and may seek to find ways of feeling better by participating in risky behaviours, being unkind to others online or researching information from unreliable sources. Whilst there have been many positives to technology during lockdown, we know it has been a concern for many parents too.

Deepfakes—What are they?

Deepfakes are convincing fake videos, audio or photos. It is a step up from photoshop that uses artificial intelligence known as 'deep learning'. While many deepfake videos can be amusing or entertaining, there is a huge risk of misinformation for young people in particular. It doesn't even require a particularly skilled person to create a convincing deepfake. Young people are sometimes heavily influenced by celebrities and information that appears to be coming from them may be trusted without question.

It's important for children to understand how important it is to fact check anything they hear on the internet from reliable sources.



It is not always what it seems

Pre 2017, Disney had a online community called 'Club Penguin' but it was discontinued in 2017. The Disney version was a well moderated, safe and fun environment—a good introduction to being social online. It wasn't long after it was decommissioned, that fan based servers popped up. These privately owned servers were using Disney branding but the game contained inappropriate material, bad language and bullying due to the lack of moderators. It has since been removed (after being active for a few years) after Disney threatened legal action but it highlights the importance of checking games and apps online are designed for children and have the appropriate safety measures in place.

Websites like Common Sense Media can help you make decisions but it is always advisable to have regular conversations with children and monitor the games they play.

Say what?

Swatting—a hoax whereby a person makes a phone call causing the emergency services to arrive at someone's door—usually when they are live streaming so everyone can see.

Helpful links:

www.innetmatters.org

www.saferinternet.org.uk

www.thinkuknow.co.uk



In-depth look at TikTok

TikTok has been a source of entertainment and creativity over lockdown. Users create short sharable videos often lip syncing popular music. It's more of an entertainment app than a lifestyle app (such as Facebook or Instagram) and what attracts so many users is the ease of creating content. The app is easy to use and there is an impressive array of filters and effects to make your video stand out. Users range from families, celebrities, older generations, even the emergency services have been known to take part in trending dances! It's easy to see why during lockdown it has become such a popular app. Along with Zoom, it has been one of the most downloaded apps of this year.

It is worth noting that the minimum age of TikTok is 13 but it is always worth knowing the dangers of new apps.

- By default, profiles are public which means any video shared can be viewed by anyone. This can be changed in the settings.
- There is a risk of inappropriate language/images on videos. There is a restricted mode that can be activated in the settings.
- Hashtags are designed to group videos together. However by clicking on a hashtag, you are taken to another video that may have extra hashtags. Within a few curious clicks, you might find videos that are inappropriate. Whilst TikTok work hard to remove videos that breach their community standards (they reportedly removed 49 million videos last year), some will inevitably slip through the net.
- Misinformation is easily shared. Again TikTok are proactive in removing videos that are reported but young people are not always familiar with recognising fake news and may take the misinformation as true.
- It is easy to become addicted to creating or watching videos. The average user spends 52 minutes a day on the app but most people use it multiple times a day. With autoplay a feature, it can be easy to lose track of time.
- Just like Facebook and other social media apps, there is a like button and an option to comment. Children may take more risks to gain more likes and shares or become fixated on reaching a certain number of likes which can have a negative impact on their well-being.

TikTok can be fun, entertaining and a good way to channel creativity if you are aware of the dangers and take steps to protect yourself. TikTok are proactive in trying to make the app safer for their users with the introduction of more stringent safety rules for those under 16. There is some more useful information at this website:

<https://www.internetmatters.org/hub/esafety-news/tik-tok-app-safety-what-parents-need-to-know/>

With so much information available online, children sometimes have access to upsetting information. Some simple tips for when a child comes across upsetting news stories:

1. Encourage them to talk about it
2. Reassure them it is normal to feel worried or anxious
3. Help them find more positive stories surrounding the incident (for example looking for the helpers)