vodafone

A guide to help your family live a happy and safe digital life

Digital Parenting

What's on the minds of kids?

Welcome to Digital Parenting: Vodafone's guide to help your family live a happy and safe digital life.

As parents, we rely on our mobiles and devices at work, and in our own social lives — and yet we often feel on the backfoot when it comes to managing our children's digital lives. It can be difficult to keep up with how kids are using the latest apps and devices, or to know what sorts of things they're seeing and doing online.

To help you navigate this exciting but daunting terrain, we've gathered brilliant people from across the digital landscape — doctors, researchers, teens, a cartoonist, even a popstar, and plenty of busy parents — to explore the different ways in which we can build happy digital lives. Since we launched our annual magazine nearly a decade ago, we've helped more than seven million families navigate this exciting tech landscape.

When used well, technology opens doors to a world of life-saving medicine, community building on an unprecedented scale and endless learning. But it's up to your family to set your own digital-life balance. Read on to get clued-up on all you need to know to keep your family happy and safe online. Also visit our Digital Parenting website where you'll find more advice tailored to children of all ages and plenty of expert tips to help you talk with your family about digital life.

We hope you find this guide useful. Let us know what you think by tweeting @VodafoneUK.

Visit vodafone.co.uk/digitalparenting for more expert-led advice on making your digital choices and to join the conversation throughout the year.

Helen Lamprell
General Counsel &
External Affairs Director

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How do I raise a digitally savvy child?

Technology has become part of our social world to the point that there's little difference between online and offline for a lot of young people. If used right, the digital landscape is an exciting place for children and teens to learn and play.

UNDER-6: CURIOUS EXPLORERS

People talk a lot about screen time with young children, but more important than time is quality of time.

Video chat with relatives, sharing colourful early learning apps such as Endless Reader, active games such as Just Dance in Kids Mode or Pokemon Go, or age-appropriate open-ended games like the Toca Boca range are great fun for small children along with a variety of other activities and time for uninterrupted rest.

6-12: GROWING INDEPENDENCE

As a child grows they explore their own tastes and enjoy discovering things for themselves. They are becoming more independent and developing focus so they can cultivate new skills through playing with tech.

They can have all the building fun of Minecraft with the messenger turned off. World of Goo is full of frantic cartoony action and will teach them about physics and engineering. Beginner's coding toys such as Technology Will Save Us's build-and-program-it-yourself Gamer console will give them feelings of control and accomplishment.

TEENS: YOUNG NETWORKERS

By the time a child has chosen their own friends and is used to making more decisions about how to spend their time, it makes sense that they'll want more liberty in their digital lives too. They will value the freedom to choose the digital meeting places that suit them best.

Visual social networks such as Instagram or Pinterest can be outlets for creativity as well as messaging media for chatting with their friends. The Stemettes app - OtotheB - is a fantastic resource for events and inspiration especially for girls interested in science, and the Hackspace Foundation, as well as hosting a lively discussion forum, has a superb map listing hundreds of community spaces where keen young makers and programmers can get together with like minds.

Five ways tech has changed the world

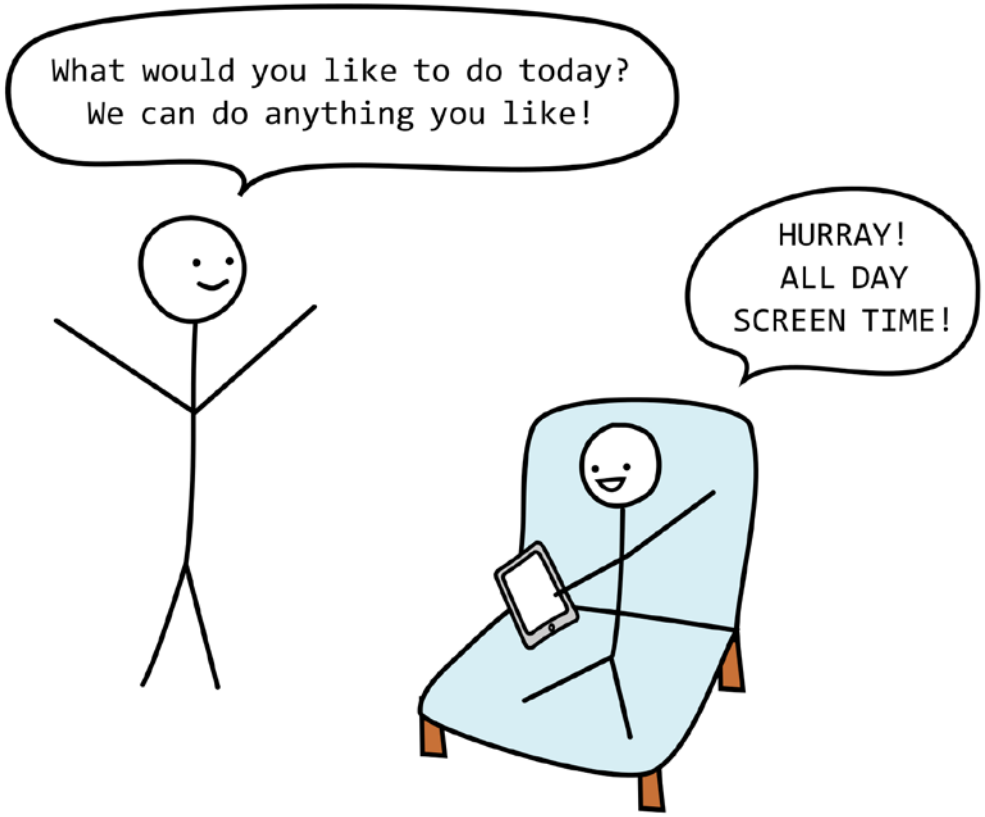
1) Code breakers
1944: Colossus, the world's first electronic computer, begins its code breaking work at Bletchley Park in Buckinghamshire, deciphering the messages between Hitler and his generals.

2) Mobile phones
1985: Vodafone makes the first ever mobile call on a UK network from Parliament Square to Surrey

3) Smart homes
2014: The world's first virtual assistant, Alexa, goes mainstream in our homes, making even the stateliest of old piles "smart", allowing us to set alarms, follow the news and reduce energy use... all while making dinner.

4) AI opponents
2017: AI AlphaGo Zero teaches itself to become the world's best Go player, despite never having played anyone or seen a real match, threatening to end family arguments over games forever.

5) Activists unite
2018: Young people around the world unite against climate change, using social media to coordinate their efforts.



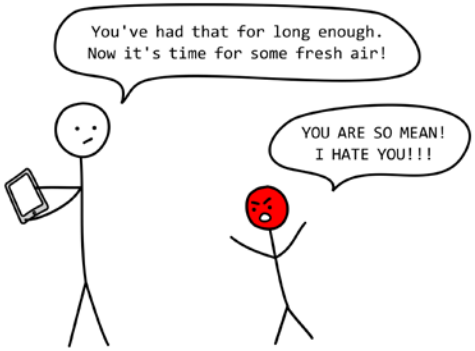
Every parent's top five concerns

We asked Sonia Livingstone OBE, Professor of Social Psychology at the London School of Economics, and author of Parenting for a Digital Future, to identify the top five fears parents have around digital life.

Is my child totting up too many hours of screen time?

This is the number one worry for all parents, especially those with little children.

But in fact, all the evidence points to the importance of balance. What children of all ages need is physical activity (at least 1 hour a day), good sleep (at least 9 hours) and – especially when it comes to the littlest – lots of face to face interaction with direct eye contact. If they're getting that, then relax. There is no evidence that screen time is a terrible thing.



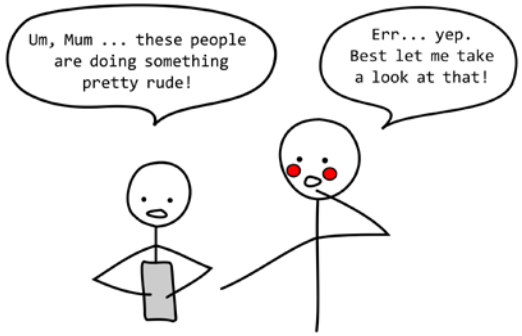
My child gets angry when I tell him to switch the screen off. Has she become a monster?!

Don't panic! This is a common concern, particularly for parents with children aged around six to ten and when it comes to gaming. Try finding out more about the structure of the games your child likes to play, and especially when they have natural pauses build into them.

If you stop him in the middle of a moment he's been building up to, right when he's going to let his friends down because everyone's got their armour and are about to go into battle, he's going to get understandably upset.

So, try moving away from saying: "two hours are up, it's time to switch off". Instead, have a conversation with him during a calmer time, explaining that when those natural pauses in games, videos or social media conversations arrive, you're going to want him to switch off.

"Some of them are really frustrated that adults imagine they're looking at porn the whole time."

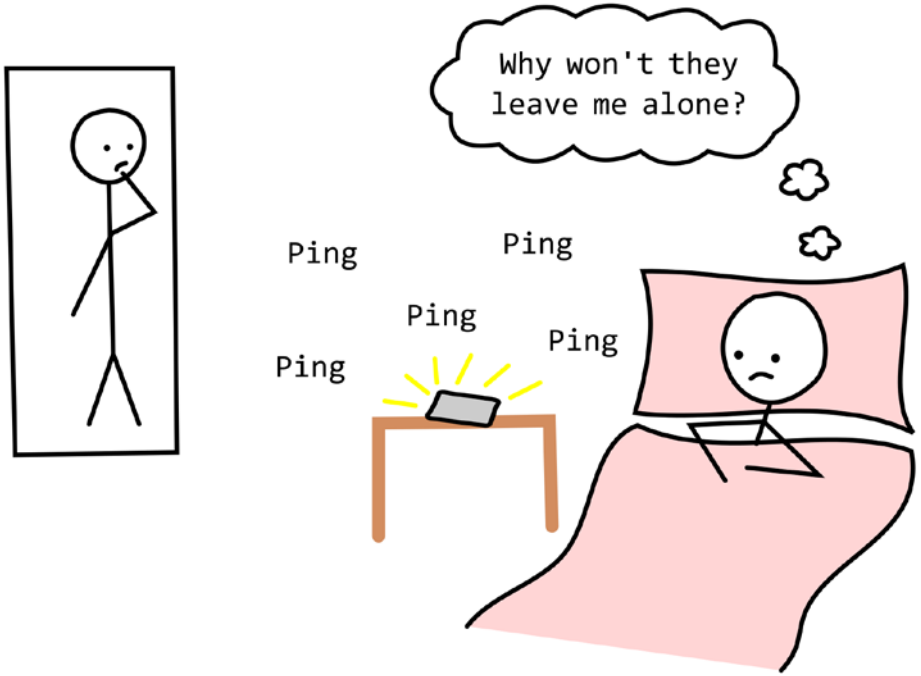


What if my child encounters sexual content that I'm uncomfortable with?

Teens' experiences are so varied. Some of them are really frustrated that adults imagine they're looking at porn the whole time. But if your child is looking at sexual content, it probably stems more from curiosity than anything pernicious. They are ready for a conversation with you, even if it's embarrassing for you both.

By about eight years old, most children are aware that everyone around them is worried about what they're looking at online. So start asking questions like: "have you seen anything on the internet that worries you, or might embarrass you if I took a look? If I borrowed your phone and took a look at your history, would that be a problem?"

Most likely, she'll say: "No, it's fine, take a look," but it's important to begin opening that the conversation up, so that when she's older you can discuss issues like sexting and pornography in more depth.



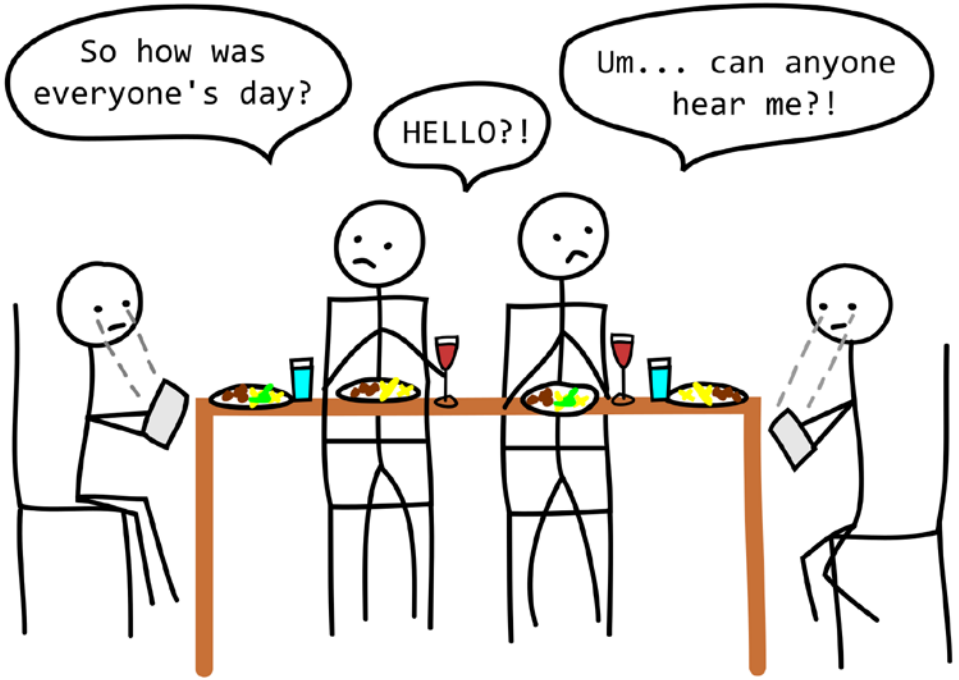
The internet is so huge, and I can't police it. Help?!

Grooming, bullying and extremist groups are every parent's nightmare, especially those with pre-teens and up. But bear in mind that, while a few kids are going to need a little intervention and help, it's very much the minority.

Children have got to develop their own moral compass and resilience, so you have to take that leap of faith and trust them. But while you may not be able to see everything that appears on their screens, you can still get a good sense of their wellbeing.

Are they sleeping? And they still in touch with their friends? Are they usually courteous and jolly with you when you have a nice family outing? These are all good signs that they're well and happy.

"Children have got to develop their own moral compass and resilience, so you have to take that leap of faith and trust them"



My child won't put the phone down at the table. What can I do?

You're not alone! So many parents are troubled by this feeling their child is disappearing into the matrix, rather than having real, face-to-face interactions.

But the screen is where their real-life friends are and where the drama is. It would upset any of us if we weren't allowed to be part of that conversation, so try a collaborative approach to setting boundaries.

Say: "I know I look at my phone too much sometimes, but my preference is that we all talk to each other at mealtimes. Can we give some thought to how we can make that work?" You may find that she answers: "Well ok, but you're always on it at night, or at the school gates."

The language you use will get more sophisticated as your child gets older, but children understand about fairness and reciprocity from a very early age, and a six-year-old will happily engage in a chat that simply starts: "let's find a time when we can all talk about how our day has been."

Read more about Professor Livingstone's tips for parents here: parenting.digital

What's on the minds of kids?

Top five concerns of teens and tweens and how to meet these challenges. By Emma and Charlotte Robertson, Digital Awareness UK Co-Founders'

At Digital Awareness UK, we speak to thousands of parents and young people every week about the ups and downs of growing up online. For the most part, we hear positive stories from young people about how technology has enabled them to embrace difference, stay informed, be creative or build friendships.

But what parents worry about may not match up to reality for young people, so we'll offer insight into the real-life concerns of teens today. Here are the top five issues we hear about regularly on the ground in our schools.

1 I'm not getting enough sleep

Students repeatedly tell us that sleep hygiene - ie things that affect the quality of their sleep - is their number one concern in the digital wellbeing space. We conducted research with the Headmasters' and Headmistresses' Conference in 2018, which found that 50% of 11 to 18 year olds check their phones after going to bed at night, with 25% of those staying on their phones for over an hour.

2 I'm getting sent messages and images I don't like

If we were to ask a room full of teenage students how many had been sent unwanted violent or sexually explicit content in the last 24 hours, the vast majority would raise their hands. The ease with which it's possible to access and share such content leaves many feeling distressed and disempowered.

3 I'm afraid of being hacked

As with many adults, young people are increasingly concerned about how secure their data is and with whom it's being shared. Most students admit that they have been hacked and that they have felt anxious because they didn't know what types of information may have been compromised.

4 Abuse on the rise

Our research found that 57% of 11 to 18 year olds had experienced online abuse. Today, due to the proliferation of the use of platforms such as anonymous apps and private group chats, this number will undoubtedly be much higher.

5 The pursuit for perfection

Despite increased awareness of how much of what we see on social media has been staged, edited and perfected, mental health problems such as self-esteem issues experienced when young people compare themselves to others are more prevalent today than ever before.

So what can parents do to help?

Know what you're talking about: *"A huge barrier for discussing digital issues with parents is that you often don't know what we're talking about. You don't need to know the ins and outs of Snapchat, but taking an interest in how the app works helps us to have a conversation".* Jay, 15

Upskill yourself on the latest digital issues at **www.vodafone.co.uk/digitalparenting**

Keep talking about it: *"It's most useful when my parents allow me to talk about the problems I'm having online without judging me".* Finn, 13

Whether it happens on a car journey or before bed, talking to your child about their online life is so important. Remember to ensure conversations don't always lead to "tech-bashing" and take the many benefits technology has to offer into account.

Let us make mistakes: *"We are curious and will sometimes use apps we know we shouldn't, or say things we wish we didn't. Part of growing up online is learning from your mistakes".* Liv, 14

It's important that children are given the freedom to be resilient and self-moderate with an appropriate level of hand-holding, depending on your child.

Digital Awareness UK is one of the UK's leading digital wellbeing organisations, offering consultancy to schools and organisations around the world. To find out more please visit digitalawarenessuk.com

Pep Talk Tech Talk

A step-by-step guide on talking to your child

How to talk when things get tough
Modern childhood is complex. Maintaining a good level of communication will ensure that your son or daughter has the emotional resilience to get through tough times. Children can be reluctant to open up about difficult issues, even to their parents, but experts believe that taking a few simple steps can help protect and preserve your emotional bond. That way, when you need to raise subjects such as self-harm, violent game content or cyberbullying, your children will be ready to listen.

Follow this five-step guide to sparking open-ended conversations with children of different ages about their online activity.

1 Choose your time
A safe space will help your children to open up. "Talking in the car is good, as you aren't facing each other like it's an interview," says Andrea Chatten, emotional and behavioural child psychologist and founder of Unravel support. She adds that younger children may tell you more if you lay down on the bed with them after lights out.

For older children, parenting expert Lorraine Lee suggests a trip out to a café. "Pick one that also has board games, to give you something else to think about," she advises.

2 Start with reassurance
Begin your chat with words of support. "Children need to feel they are not on their own, that they have this strong army of support," Chatten says. "Give them the message that you will come through this together, that they aren't on their own."

"As a parent you need to acknowledge that this stuff is meaningful to your child. It has a time and place like everything else."

Andrea Chatten (left) is a child psychologist and founder of Unravel support. **Lorraine Lee** (centre) is a parenting expert and leads workshops for parents, teachers and children. **Alexander Kriss** (right) is a psychotherapist and author of Universal Play.

4 Step into their shoes
When you're having difficult conversations, such as those around cyberbullying or violent games, it can be easy to dismiss the technology and relationships that your child holds dear, causing confrontation and shutting down connections.

Alexander Kriss, a psychotherapist and author of Universal Play, a book about the effects of video games, suggests showing that you value your child's online life by asking open-ended questions about it, or even trying out games.

"This has to be done without judgement," he says. "As a parent you need to acknowledge that this stuff is meaningful to your child. It has a time and place like everything else."

3 Focus on one issue
Even if it's tempting to bring up everything that's bugging you during one conversation, Lee says it is vital to stick to a plan and not overwhelm your child.

"Pick only one area to talk about ," she says. "Don't give them 30 things to think about at once."

5 Leave the door open
Once you've had a difficult conversation with your child, take steps to ensure that good communication continues in the coming days and weeks.

With younger ones this might involve just showing that you are available, Lee says. "When we are at home with children we are often dashing about. If you just sit still, your child will know they can talk."

For older children, you may need to slot in one-to-one time for talking on a regular basis. "If you are taking a younger sibling to an activity, make the time while they are there, or in the car on the way back," Lee suggests. "As children get older they need private space to talk."

How we make it work

Each family can make its own choices about the type of digital life that works best for them. Here, two families share their tech house rules.

Daddy and Dad: Jamie Beaglehole
Our sons, Lyall and Richard, have access to phones, tablets and games consoles, but only during weekends and school holidays. The phones are the first things to go when the boys are naughty, but they're also very useful devices for homework research and music, so we do encourage their use. The boys' phones are also a convenient time-filler on long journeys. Tom and I use our phones and laptops a lot - me for my work as a blogger and Tom as a director for a tech firm.

Nilly Dahlia: Muslim Parenting
Our children are small — ages 5, 3 and 11 months — so we have a long road ahead for internet safety. The most important thing we can do is talk to our children about that. They know that the internet can have inappropriate content so it is best to let a grown-up browse the Smart TV/tablet/phone with them. We activate parental controls on our devices when our children use them, so they cannot download anything or view anything PG upwards without a password. By managing what they view, we have the confidence to let our kids use the internet safely. As you can see, we don't show our children's faces online, either - that's for them to decide later!

Security checklist: what tools can parents choose from?

APP AWARENESS

Young children: Don't forget to establish your privacy settings on each new device or app.

Older children: Set the parental controls on your tablet to block any in-app purchases. Check whether their apps have 'geo-location' enabled, and make sure they're not sharing their location.

SMARTPHONE SAFETY

Young children: Google Family Link is a free app that helps you manage children's phone use. The content and privacy restrictions on iPhones give you similar control.

Older children: boost privacy by turning off location services. Remind them: once they've posted or sent something, they have lost control over it.

GET ON TOP OF GAMING

Young children: using 'airplane mode' on your tablet lets them play offline, uncontactable from strangers.

Older children: Your console's parental controls can help protect them from inappropriate games or material. Some games allow you to establish privacy settings, but make sure they also know how to mute, block and report players who make them uncomfortable.

SEARCH ENGINE SAFETY

Young children: Child-focused search engines like Swiggle and Kids-search keep them safe.

Older children: Install parental controls on your home broadband and activate Google SafeSearch.

SOCIAL MEDIA SAVVY

Help them report comments or block people (each platform has its own pathway for this; help your child find the way to do it on their platform of choice). Privacy settings help limit the people who can search for them or tag them in photos.

FOLLOW UP

Don't forget, even after you've set your controls, your child might encounter something they don't really like. Check the browser history on their devices regularly and ask them what they've been reading and playing, and what they thought of it.

Set digital house rules as a family

Pledge better digital habits today!

The Digital Family Pledge is a new interactive tool to get families talking about what they're doing online and agree some house rules.

Visit **vodafone.co.uk/familypledge**

Vodafone challenged the Bunton-Jones family to take the Digital Family Pledge and make a commitment to each other about how they will use tech and act online.

Here are Emma's top tips on how she makes it work for her family

1) Set ground rules as a family
My first tip would be to set ground rules as a family. Using the pledge helped us to work as a family to decide what the rules should be together, so we weren't just dictating them to Beau and Tate. It also got me and my partner, Jade, to think about our own habits.

2) Use tech together
Instead of worrying so much about what our kids are doing online, we now try to get involved. It's impossible to be there all the time, but we might watch YouTube videos together or Jade and Beau will game online.

3) Set realistic screen time guidelines
I used to think that it was all about managing the time the kids spent online. But I've realised it's more important to focus on what they're doing online rather than the exact amount of time spent. If they're watching and playing the right stuff, it can be really educational and beneficial to their development.

4) Lead by example
It's not just about the children, I realise that Jade and I are guilty of sneaking a look at our phones at the table or getting distracted by work emails. We're using the Digital Pledge to set limits for ourselves too!

5) Be kind online
Being in the spotlight, I've had plenty of experience with people being unkind online and I've worried about what Beau and Tate see there. My final tip is to remind everyone that they need to think about what they say online and remember that there's a person at the other end of the screen who might be upset by unkind comments.

Finding your community online

So much of the lives of today's children plays out online, and parents worry that they have little face-to-face interaction, making them lonely. But these five young experts - and veterans of YouTube, Twitter and Fortnite - show how they've found their community online.

NIKKI LILLY: THE EDUCATOR

Aged six, Nikki Lilly was diagnosed with a rare condition called arteriovenous malformation. It dramatically altered her appearance and left her in and out of hospital, often unable to go to school.

Two years later, she started a YouTube channel, hoping that her make-up tutorials would make herself and others feel "less alone in the world". Now 15, the London teen has nearly a million subscribers, has interviewed prime ministers, won Kids Bake Off and received an Emmy award for her documentary, My Life: Born to Vlog.

Last year this inspirational YouTuber became the youngest person ever to win a Bafta special award, for her work as a presenter and charity campaigner.

Nikki Lilly has joined forces with Prince William to combat cyberbullying

JADEN ASHMAN: THE GAMER

Until recently, Jaden Ashman was just an ordinary 15-year-old school boy from Essex. Infuriated by the long hours her son spent playing video games, his mother once threw out his Xbox and snapped his headset.

However, after beating nearly 14 million others to qualify for the Fortnite World Cup, Jaden came second in the duos round in July, winning £1.8m to share with his Dutch teammate. Jaden, whose gamer name is Wolfiez, now plans to buy his mum a house and become a professional esport player.

BELLA LACK: THE ENVIRONMENTALIST

After seeing a video about the impact of palm oil on orangutans, 11-year-old Bella Lack set up a Twitter profile. Today, the 16-year-old Londoner calls on over 150,000 followers to reconnect with nature and protect the planet.

It's led to posts as a youth ambassador for the Born Free Foundation, RSPCA and the Ivory Alliance, and speeches before world leaders - all while doing her GCSEs.

"Young people entrust adults with the responsibility to make mature and effective decisions," she said at the Illegal Wildlife Trade Conference. "Currently, that trust is being betrayed."

ALEC STEELE: THE CRAFTSMAN

Alec Steele was 11 when he first saw a blacksmith at a country show and was entranced. His father helped him set up a primitive charcoal forge in their Norfolk garden and Alec scoured the internet for tutorials.

His passion for the hobby grew, but his enthusiasm for school did not. So after leaving formal education at 16, he created his own YouTube channel, documenting his adventures in blacksmithing. Now 21, he has over 1.8 million subscribers, and is a world-renowned blacksmith and entrepreneur.

AMIKA GEORGE: THE CAMPAIGNER

In 2017, London teen Amika George read a BBC report revealing that British girls were skipping school because they couldn't afford menstrual products.

Now 19, she has spent two years campaigning for free sanitary products to be provided in schools, using the social media hashtag #freeperiods on Twitter.

TIME magazine listed her among the 25 most influential teenagers in the world and in March, the UK government promised to end 'period poverty' in English secondary schools. She is now taking her campaign worldwide.

And now to bed

By Holly Scott

Light helps our bodies keep track of when it is time to sleep and when it is time to wake up. Using a screen at night exposes you to light, which can trick your body clock and leave you feeling more alert.

That said, studies have shown that the effect of this light is quite small. It seems that reading from a screen instead of a book only makes people fall asleep a few minutes later.

> "Combating sleep displacement should be simple – just switch off our devices. In fact, it's more challenging than that because using tech feels so rewarding"

Some stimulating tech activities, such as using social media, can make us more alert at bedtime, when really we should be trying to relax and slow down. If we are still thinking about what may be going on or whether we are missing out, that can make it harder to fall asleep.

In just the same way that you wouldn't feel relaxed and sleepy immediately after having a heated debate, hearing exciting news or having a sudden fright, you probably aren't ready to fall asleep immediately after you've just engaged in lots of busy online social interactions, or streaming a scary movie.

The most important factor is displacement: when our digital lives steal sleep time. Now that our devices are portable and constantly available, our activities can directly compete with sleep.

Combating sleep displacement should be simple – just switch off our devices. In fact, it's more challenging than that because using tech feels so rewarding.

So much of our tech time is really social time. We are constantly interacting with others. Teen brains in particular are primed to find tech interactions rewarding, making it very easy to give a few minutes more to social media, rather than switching off and going to sleep. Add to that the usual expectations and etiquette around social interactions, and we can easily feel stuck online, even when we want to disengage and go to sleep.

Holly Scott is a psychologist at the University of Glasgow, studying the effects of social media on teens' sleep and wellbeing.

Our top tips

1) Ban phones from the bedroom. Charge devices outside.

2) Set a routine. This is for people of all ages: toddlers to teens to retirees. Consistency is good for your sleep. Try having a final check of messages and notifications and then leave your phone in the kitchen before brushing your teeth and getting into bed. If teens balk at this, try putting phones in night mode or try Forest, a productivity incentive app which grows a virtual tree on your phone and plants trees in real life as a reward for not fiddling with the device. This app is also useful when studying.

3) Don't encourage sleep-tracking apps. These are likely to be inaccurate and so a waste of time. Keeping an old-fashioned diary of how you're spending your time for a week will be far more instructive in helping your figure out out what aids your sleep and what doesn't – include not only tech use but also play, naps and exercise, too.

4) Draw up a family contract. Make a family pact so everyone is following the same rules. For guidelines in creating your family's plan, use our interactive Digital Family Pledge tool → vodafone.co.uk/familypledge.

What to do if...

Things will go wrong online. How you respond when they do will make all the difference in the long term.

... YOUR CHILD HAS BEEN SEXTING

Sexting - also known as 'trading nudes' or 'dirties' - is when someone shares sexual or naked images or videos of themselves or others. It may seem harmless but it's illegal, even if it's a child doing it.

It's not nice to hear your child has been sexting - but it's likely they will be embarrassed and worried too. Stay calm and reassure them that you can help.

Try to find out who the images or videos have been shared with and if it's someone from school, notify a teacher to stop it spreading further. Visit thinkuknow.co.uk for more.

... YOUR CHILD HAS SEEN INAPPROPRIATE OR UPSETTING CONTENT

From violent videos to porn to extremism, children of all ages may see things online that upset or worry them.

As a first step, find out how they've come across it. It may have been an accident or simply that curiosity got the better of them.

If it was intentional, stay calm and have an open conversation about why they wanted to look at this type of content. Avoid punishment and let them know you're always there if they want to talk.

... YOUR CHILD HAS BEEN TROLLING OR BULLYING SOMEONE

Most children do unkind things at some point but this isn't necessarily a reflection on them as a person. They might be unkind to others for attention, to fit in, or even because they're being bullied themselves.

Don't beat yourself up but it's important to deal with the issue. Give your child a chance to explain. Keep an open mind and find out the facts.

The main goal is that your child learns from their mistakes. Make sure they know it isn't acceptable and that we should be kind online as well as face to face.

Visit internetmatters.org for more

Are you smartphone secure?

AUTO-LOCK

Is your phone set to auto-lock? Protect your device with a pattern, PIN code, password or fingerprint.

PASSWORDS

Are your passwords tough enough? Use upper- and lower-case letters, numerals and special characters (!*%). Keep them different for each site.

CAMERA

Do you think about what you snap? Images accidentally shared can can give away private information, such as location (e.g. school uniforms, street signs and door numbers).

PRIVACY

Are you keeping things private? Social media privacy policies and settings change regularly, so check them every term!

LOCATION

Have you turned off location-sharing functions? Only leave location-related services on when you need them, and only for those who need them. Otherwise, turn off!

BLOCKING

Do you know how to block people? They won't be told you've blocked them so don't worry about making them feel bad or angry.

Has your family got the right digital-life balance?

Our Digital Family Pledge is an online activity that helps families think about how they're using tech and pledge better digital habits.

Visit **www.vodafone.co.uk/familypledge** to create your pledge today.

For further help and support

Digital Parenting website
www.vodafone.co.uk/digitalparenting

Internet Matters
www.internetmatters.org

The Mix
www.themix.org.uk

Digital Awareness UK
www.digitalawarenessuk.com

Think U Know
www.thinkuknow.co.uk

Child Net
www.childnet.com

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