

# MediaSmart

OPENING EYES

## Get Media Smart

Digital Advertising and Social Media: a guide for parents and guardians



[mediasmart.uk.com](https://mediasmart.uk.com)

# An introduction to Media Smart

**Advertising can be a creative and inspiring world, where ideas come alive with drama, excitement and humour to keep us entertained and engaged. Today, young people grow up in a world of commercial messaging that touches most areas of their lives – so it is more important than ever that they understand exactly what is being suggested, promised and sold to them through the adverts they see every day.**

Media Smart is a not-for-profit company, funded by the UK advertising industry, that creates free educational materials for schools and youth organisations as well as teachers, parents and guardians. These help young people understand the advertising they come across in all aspects of their lives using real case studies to teach core media literacy skills.

This Get Media Smart guide for parents and guardians is designed to provide a comprehensive and engaging introduction to digital advertising and social media for parents to share and discuss with their children at home.

We know that there are many challenges for modern families regarding digital media. You will be taken through the terminology, the reasons why there are adverts on social media and which techniques are being used to gain attention. After reading this, we hope your entire family will feel more confident and informed online.

Best wishes

**Mark Lund**  
Chairman – Media Smart



**Time to talk**

**Look out for the 'Time to talk' sections:**

An opportunity to explore the subject further with your family.



# Children and digital technology

**The amount of digital technology (e.g. tablets and smartphones) used by children has seen a dramatic increase. The report ‘Children and parents: media use and attitudes’, published by Ofcom in November 2016, found that:**

- 5-15 year olds spend around 15 hours each week online – the equivalent of two whole school days.
- 23% of 8-11 year olds have a social media profile.
- 73% of 8-11 year olds use the YouTube website or app.
- 24% of 8-11 year olds who use search engines correctly identified sponsored links on Google as advertising.

The use of digital technology and social media comes with many opportunities but it is really important that children understand the content they see to get the best out of their digital experience. Advertising takes many forms online and it is not always obvious. By talking about the different types of **digital adverts** you can help your child to understand the media they are using.



Engaging with your child as they use social media and digital technology can be an effective way to talk them through the opportunities and risks that they might be presented with. Discuss what they are seeing and why they think it might be there.

There are many different sources of support for parents on the wider topic of **e-safety** listed at the end of this guide.





# Why do companies advertise?



Whether online or offline, successful advertising means more sales for a company.



Advertising can also convince people to change brands, build loyalty to a particular brand and, ultimately, get people to pay more for products or services.

Not all advertising sells products and services – advertising can be used to share information (e.g. about our health), influence opinion (e.g. about building new things in our communities) or influence actions (e.g. promoting political parties and campaigns).





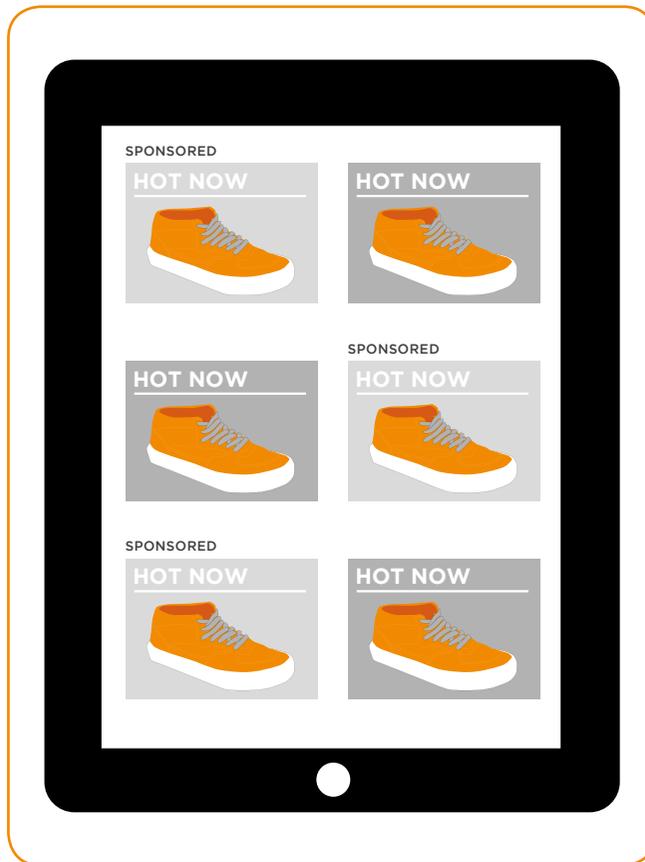
# When is an advert not an advert?



## First, we need to know what adverts look like.

In the past **adverts** in the media were separated from the main **editorial content**. Adverts appeared in the space between newspaper/magazine articles, or in the gaps between TV/radio programmes. It was easy to tell them apart.

Today, adverts and editorial content can look very similar. On social media it can be really difficult to tell which is which. For example, adverts can now appear in games, before videos or even through celebrity endorsement.



Ask your family to identify different types of advert (e.g. on social media, a search engine or in games). Discuss how they can tell the adverts are promoting something.





# What is social media?



Social media allows us to communicate and share ideas for free, as part of a network or community.

There are **five main types** of social media:



## MESSAGING

Allows users to send text, picture or video messages, in real time, to other individuals or groups.



## NETWORKING

Allows users to connect and share with people who have similar interests and backgrounds.



## GAMING

Games which connect to the internet now include a 'social element', allowing users to communicate and compete with each other.



## MEDIA SHARING

Allows users to share the photos and videos that they create. They also offer an interactive feature, so you can create a personal profile and comment on other people's posts.

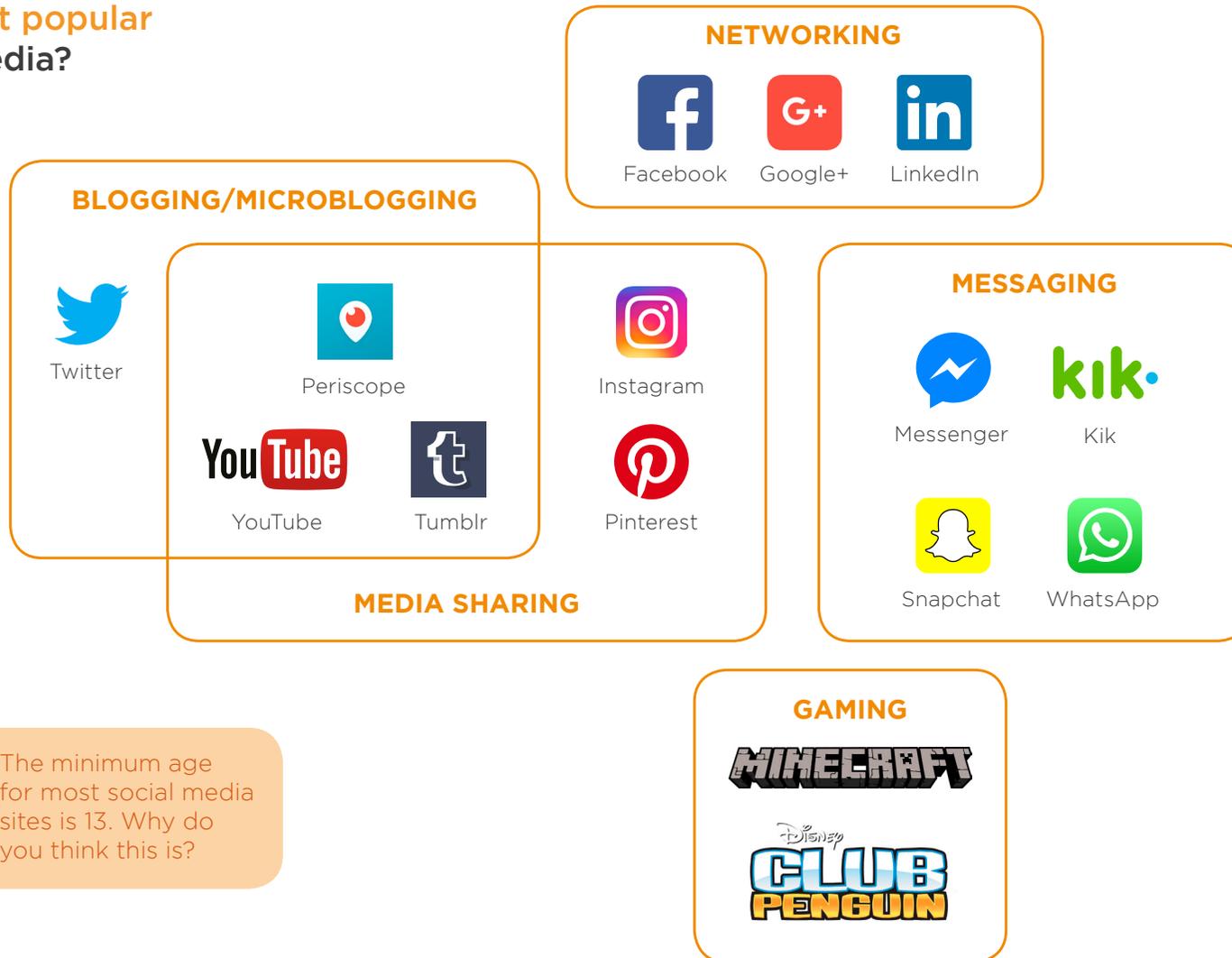


## BLOGGING/MICROBLOGGING

Allows users to share their ideas in a variety of formats including text, pictures, sound and video. Users can also include links to other information online. People who use these services are called 'bloggers' while those who upload video blogs are called 'vloggers'. Microblogging platforms like Twitter limit users to short posts.

# What is social media? continued

What are the most popular types of social media?



Time to talk

The minimum age for most social media sites is 13. Why do you think this is?



# Why are there adverts on social media?



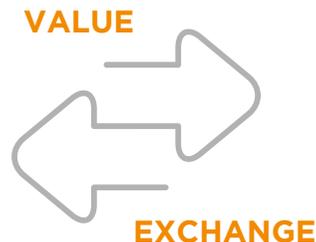
If you look in more detail at social media, you will see that most actually have **two elements.**



1. Networking and entertainment is the area where we spend our time.
2. Paid-for-promotion is the sponsored content which sits alongside the networking and entertainment area.

Many people do not consider both elements and the reasons why they exist, but it is important to recognise that when we are online, we are often seen as potential **'consumers'**.

Most of us are used to social media being free, but not everyone realises that there is a **'value exchange'**.



Whether social media is free or charges subscription fees, adverts usually finances them. This is why you sometimes have to pay to have a premium non-ad version.

Companies spend a large amount of money making sure their adverts reach their target audience and have the right sort of message to appeal to them. Because social media is able to learn a lot of information about their users, it is easier for companies to reach the desired audiences. Adverts on social media can be a useful way for consumers to find out more about the products, services and issues that interest them.

**Time to talk**

What do you think are some of the positives and negatives of the value exchange?



# What are the different types of digital advert?

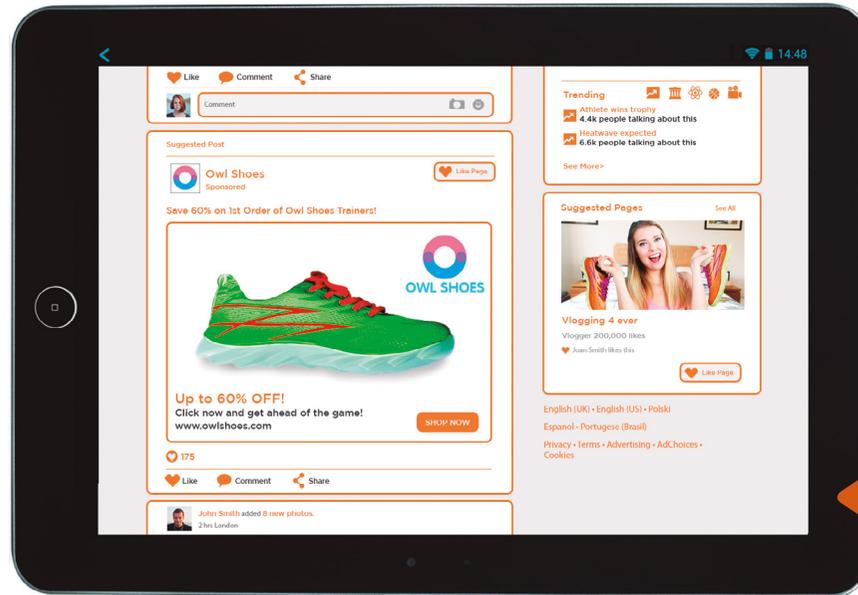


**Display advert:** Banners above web pages and pre-roll videos, such as those that play before watching something on YouTube.

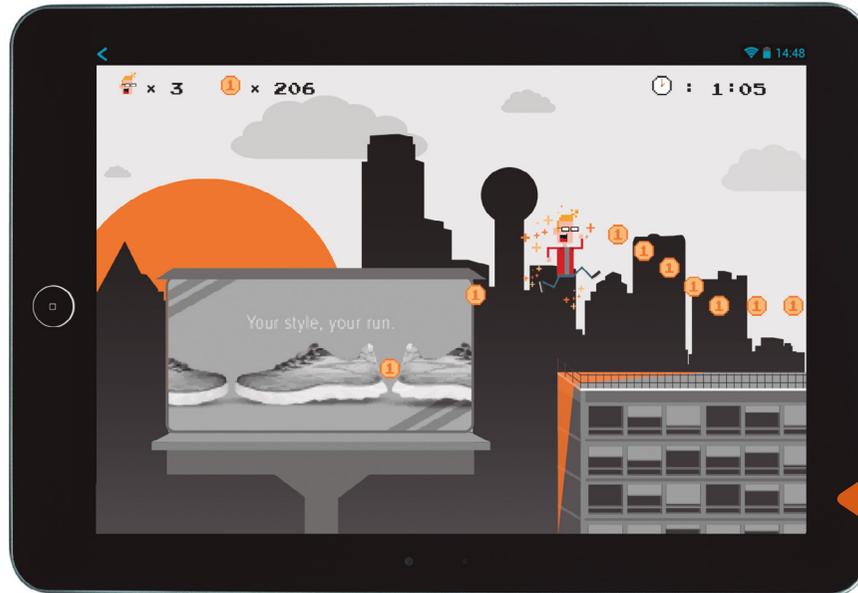
**Paid-for promotion:** Promoting a product or service in a post or within a social media 'feed'.

**Brand-owned content:** When a brand has a social media account and uses it to engage with consumers through messaging and networking.

**In-game advert:** Uses virtual advertising opportunities in commercial games, such as on pitch-side signs or by product placement.



Paid-for promotion



In-game advert

Time to talk

Think about which of these advertising techniques are successful and why. How do companies know which adverts to use for which products and services?

# Q

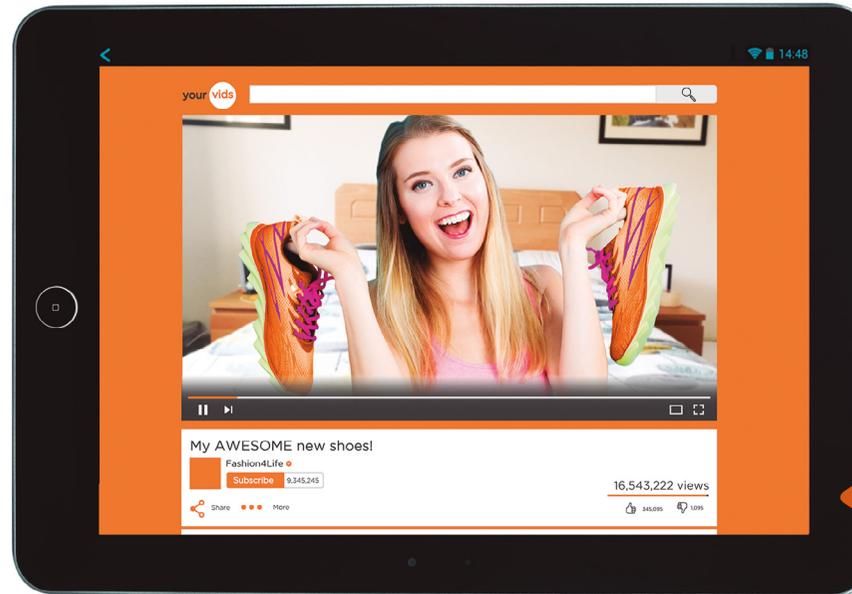
## What are the different types of digital advert? continued

# A

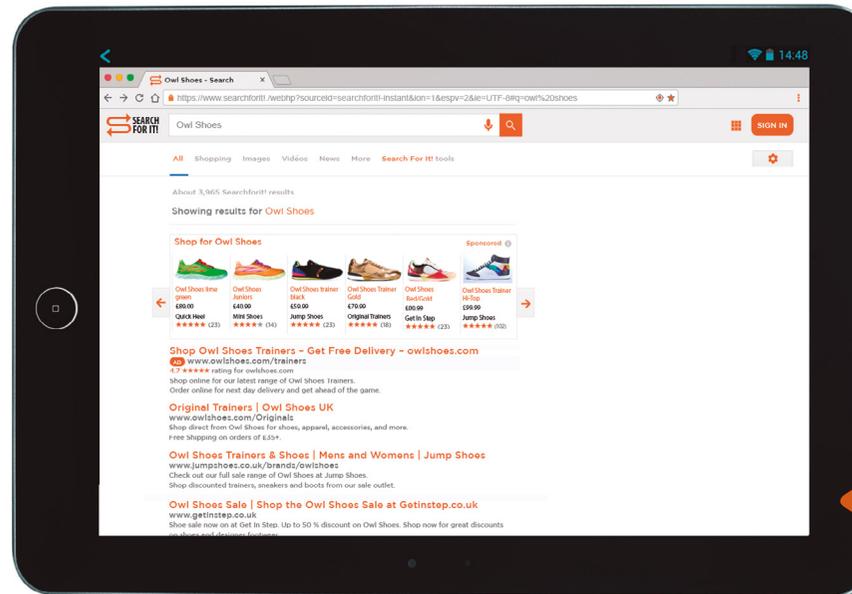
**AdvergAMES:** These are games produced specifically for a brand. They are designed to get customers to come back to a brand location regularly to play the game, win prizes, share information about themselves and invite friends to play.

**Vlog advert:** Where a video-blogger partners with a brand or company to advertise their product. Sometimes these are paid for and other times vloggers are given products for free in the hope they will talk about them.

**Search advert:** These adverts are based on the words put into a search engine, e.g. Google, Bing, Yahoo. They are usually among the first few results and should be labelled as an advert.



Vlog advert



Search advert





## How do companies know what we like?



On social media, any information we give will be used to generate adverts which are appropriate to us (based on things like our age, gender and location). Once we've signed up, our actions on the platform will influence the adverts we see; including what we choose to read, like, comment on and share.

This is why, when we sign up for a service, we should read the **terms and conditions** and think about the information we reveal online and only use **age-appropriate services**. We should also be aware of who the organisation is giving our details to, how it may be used in the future and how to control our **privacy settings**.



Once we've signed up, our actions will influence the adverts we see; factors include what we choose to read, like, comment on and share.



### Remember...



Read the **terms and conditions**



Use **age-appropriate services**



Control **privacy settings**



# How do companies know what we like? continued



## Did you know that our online activity outside social media can influence adverts we see within it?

For example, we might see an advert in our newsfeed for something we searched for on a different website.

The reason this happens is that any information we give online is fed into an **algorithm**, which then decides which adverts we will see in the future. However, you are able to control some of the information fed into the algorithm and aspects of the process itself. The most popular types of social media all have privacy settings that enable us to point out the system has made a mistake and shown an advert we don't wish to see or is not suitable for us.



As our online behaviour has evolved, products and services have been created to hide user information from online algorithms and stop people seeing adverts. These are often called **'adblockers'**.

**Using adblockers means that sites providing content and services, at little or no cost, do not receive the money they should expect through the value exchange.**



Discuss how advertisers collect information about you. What information are you happy to share and what would you like to keep private?





# Are there advertising regulations online?



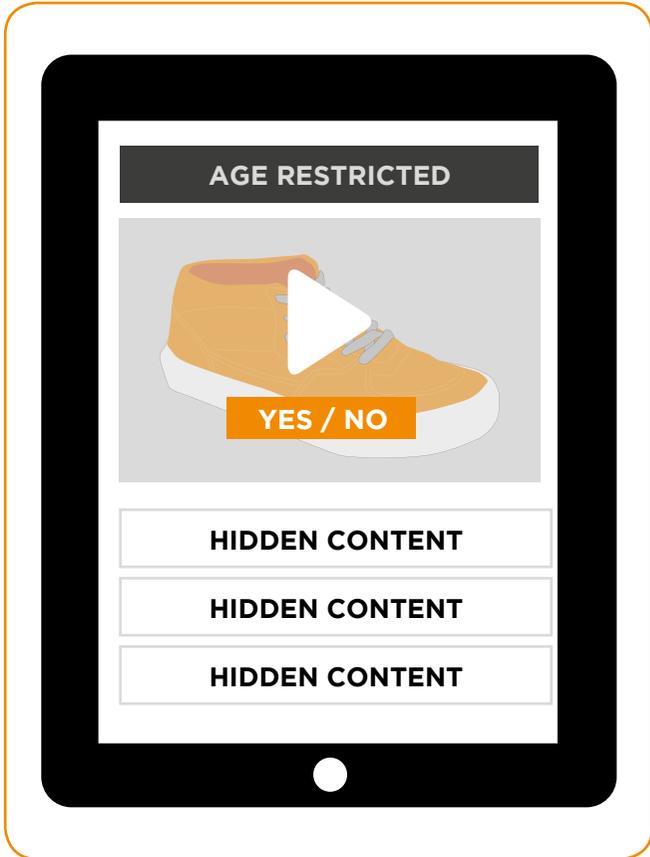
## All advertising is self-regulated by different organisations working together:

- The **Committee of Advertising Practice (CAP)** and the **Broadcast Committee of Advertising Practice (BCAP)** make the rules. These committees are made up of representatives of advertisers, agencies, media owners and other industry groups.
- The independent **Advertising Standards Authority (ASA)** makes rulings and enforces them, working with **Ofcom** to regulate TV and radio advertising.

If you're interested in discovering more, the ASA publishes its decisions and provides information about its work on their website: [asa.org.uk](http://asa.org.uk).

**Time to talk**

Discuss why there are age limitations on some websites and not others. What if users say they're older than they are? What difference might this make to the adverts they will see?



## Want to find out more? Then take a look at:

The **NSPCC** provides a range of useful information including: **Share Aware**, a campaign for parents, offering information and advice on how to keep young people safe online.

Link: [nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/share-aware](https://nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/share-aware)

**Net Aware**, a research tool with detailed information about each social media platform, including the pros and cons of use.

Link: [net-aware.org.uk](https://net-aware.org.uk)

**ParentPort** has been set up by the UK's media regulators. They have joined together because they share a common purpose: to set and enforce standards across the media to protect children from inappropriate material.

Link: [parentport.org.uk/top-tips-for-parents/online-safety](https://parentport.org.uk/top-tips-for-parents/online-safety)

**Insafe** is a European network, comprised of 31 national awareness centres. Every centre implements awareness and educational campaigns, runs a helpline, and works closely with young people to ensure an evidence-based, multi-stakeholder approach to creating a better internet.

Link: [betterinternetforkids.eu](https://betterinternetforkids.eu)

**Your Online Choices** is a guide to behavioural advertising, the practice based on internet browsing activity that allows brands to deliver adverts to web users which reflect their interests. It includes tips for managing the adverts you see and how to use the privacy settings on your computer.

Link: [youonlinechoices.com/uk](https://youonlinechoices.com/uk)

**KidSMART** is a website designed for children from **Childnet International**. Childnet is a charity set up to equip children and young people to navigate the online world safely and develop new technologies that promote and protect the rights of children.

Link: [childnet.com](https://childnet.com)

Link: [kidsmart.org.uk](https://kidsmart.org.uk)

**Parent Portal** gives parents, teachers and guardians the tools they need to ensure the children in their care are safe on Facebook. It includes information and advice on what to say, when to do it and how to be a good role model, as well as offering connections to safety experts.

Link: [facebook.com/safety/parents](https://facebook.com/safety/parents)



# With thanks from Media Smart

**Thank you so much for taking the time to read our digital advertising and social media guide, we hope you have found it both interesting and useful. If you have enjoyed it, why not share it with your friends and contacts?**

This parent guide is part of a range of Media Smart's free educational resources and has an accompanying classroom resource. Please do let your child's teacher know about this opportunity – all they need to do is visit [mediasmart.uk.com](https://www.mediasmart.uk.com) for full information and to register.

For the latest news, follow us on our own social media accounts:

 @mediasmartuk

 ukmediasmart

Best wishes  
Team Media Smart



## One final tip:

Whenever you're about to post something online, pause and just imagine someone in authority, someone you respect, reading that post or looking at that photo. If that feels uncomfortable, don't do it.

Online security specialist Tom Ilube

# Acknowledgements

Media Smart wishes to thank the many organisations and individuals who have made these resources possible.

## The Expert Panel

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