

10 ways to make YouTube safer for Children



It feels rare that a day goes by without hearing horror stories about what goes on on the web— tweets and tales of spam, scams and strangers— but in the age of technology, where we carry all the information in the world in our pockets and being online is all but unavoidable, the most important thing we can do is arm ourselves and our children with the knowledge and tools to stay safe and secure whilst making the most of the incredible wonder that is the online world.

At Bright Stars Nursery, we want to make sure that you— the parents and carers of Bright Stars children— have these tools and tips too, which is why we will be regularly sharing handy information about online safety on our Facebook page for you to read and save, in turn keeping the internet as what it should be: an incredible learning resource.

To start off, we've compiled a list of 10 ways to make YouTube a safer place for your children. From toddlers to teens, YouTube has something for kids (and adults!) of every age, and by following these tips you'll ensure that their experience is as enriching and secure as it can be.

1. Use YouTube Kids instead of regular YouTube

Many are unaware that it exists, however there is in fact a dedicated platform, designed specifically for children to safely access YouTube. With a simpler, easier to use interface, a smart algorithm which only allows age-appropriate content and a plethora of parental controls, downloading YouTube Kids is the first step in making sure that little eyes and ears aren't accessing what isn't meant for them.



2. Viewing time

There are a few ways you can administer how long a child can watch YouTube videos in a day. In the YouTube kids' app, you can set a timer before handing your child the smartphone or tablet. Once the time has run out, the video will be paused.

You can also set limits on iPhones and iPads in the Screen time section of the settings. This not only enables you to see how long they play but specify how and when they can do this. You can apply similar limits on Android devices via the Family Link app settings.

As well as helping younger children not to watch longer than is healthy, this is a good tool for discussion too. Talk about how long is appropriate to watch in a day and then agree on the limits. This ensures they see them as helpful rather than being policed.

3. Pre-select the content

One of the best features on YouTube kids is the ability to select channels, videos, or collections of videos for your child to enjoy. This is a great opportunity to sit with your child and better understand what they want to watch. Are there particular topics or themes that resonate, or that you would like them to learn about? Then you can check through different options in this area and choose the best matching channels.



4. Turn off 'Search'

The YouTube kids app enables you to disable the 'search' feature, to avoid young children stumbling across content designed for older viewers. The app also avoids videos from inappropriate channels being suggested to watch next. If you have pre-selected content for your child, only those will come up. If you have set an age limit, only videos deemed appropriate for that age will be suggested.

5. Restrictions

As well as using the YouTube Kids app, you can also set up restrictions on other ways your family watches YouTube. Ensure you are logged in when using YouTube and turn on 'Restricted Mode' in your user profile. You can also set this at the bottom of the video page by clicking 'Restricted Mode: On'. Ensure that you also click Lock Restricted Mode on this browser to ensure that other users can't turn it off.

6. Watch Together

We always recommend that children are supervised online. One of the best ways to stay safe and to keep viewing a positive experience is to watch content together where possible. Try to engage in active viewing rather than passive viewing, commenting on or asking questions about what is being shown, pointing out what you can see and repeating key words and phrases. When used correctly, YouTube videos can be a valuable tool for learning in the early years, as well as being fun and seen as a 'treat'.



7. Advertisements

It's worth remembering that even in YouTube Kids, children will see adverts. These are marked as 'Ad' and preceded by an ad intro. These types of advertisements and products are checked to follow YouTube's advertising policies which exclude things like food and beverages. It is also important to note that there can be toys or other items included in videos directly by creators themselves to advertise them. You can remove adverts in YouTube kids, much like on the main YouTube, however this can only be done by subscribing to YouTube premium, which costs a monthly fee.

Alternatively, you can use them as a learning experience. It's a good idea to talk to children about what adverts are, how they work and how to recognise them— much like with TV ads, bus stop posters and billboards.

8. Comments

Comments, by default, are disabled on YouTube Kids. It is, however, still important to have the conversation from an early age about how we stay safe online. Some fantastic information and resources can be found at <https://www.childnet.com/> and we will be sharing some more helpful tips on the Bright Stars Nursery Facebook page in the coming weeks.



9. Guided Access

On iPads and iPhones, Guided Access limits your device to a single app and lets you control which features are available. You can turn on Guided Access when you let a child use your device to watch videos, to stop them from being able to access other apps or features you may have. By using the 'Touch' setting, you can stop others from playing, pausing, skipping, or exiting without a passcode, biometrics, or face ID.

10. Some recommendations...

As mentioned above, YouTube can be a really handy educational tool when used correctly. There are lots of channels out there dedicated to furthering children's learning in mindful and entertaining ways. We would always recommend exploring for yourself, watching the content that's out there, and choosing what you think is right for your child, but if you need somewhere to start, here are a few of our recommendations:

<https://www.youtube.com/user/CosmicKidsYoga/>
<https://www.youtube.com/c/TwinklKidsTV>
<https://www.youtube.com/natgeokidsplaylists>
<https://www.youtube.com/c/cbeebies>
<https://www.youtube.com/c/TheDadLab>