Inappropriate, illegal or offensive content

Guidance and information to help understand inappropriate or offensive content online, including help and support.

Part of Keeping safe online

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Overview

Inappropriate or offensive content is widespread across the internet. It can appear unexpectedly during everyday online activity. It may take the form of:

- bad or inappropriate language
- upsetting or graphic imagery
- sexual content

- violent content

Examples of illegal content and communication offences include:

- abuse or exploitation images
- sexual communication with a child
- material that promotes terrorism or extremism
- speech or other forms of media inciting violence, discrimination or hatred
- harassment (repeatedly behaving in a way intended to cause distress or alarm, such as name-calling, threats, stalking or sexual harassment)
- online fraud and scams
- creation or sale of illegal and fake goods
- illegally streaming or downloading content

With the emergence of technologies such as **generative AI**, it can be quicker to produce and share these types of content.

The Online Safety Act 2023 imposes new legal duties on online platforms to protect users, particularly children. As of 25 July 2025, platforms have a legal duty to protect children online. Platforms are now required to use highly effective age assurance to prevent under-18s from accessing:

- pornography
- content that encourages self-harm or suicide
- eating disorder content

Platforms must also prevent children from accessing other harmful and age-inappropriate content such as:

- bullying
- hateful content
- content that encourages dangerous stunts or ingesting dangerous substances

Platforms must also provide parents and children with clear and accessible ways to report problems online when they do arise.

Reporting illegal or offensive content

Report Harmful Content can be used to report offensive or upsetting content such as:

- online abuse or threats
- self-harm or suicide content
- unwanted sexual advances

Inappropriate or sexual images or videos of someone you believe to be under 18, can be reported to the **Internet Watch Foundation**.

See our **help and support page** for further information on how to:

- report harmful online content
- access free and confidential helplines and services

Support for young people

Advice for children and young people: online issues and worries

Explains some risks to be aware of and where to go for help.

Support for schools

Seeing inappropriate content can have a negative and long-lasting impact on a child or young person. To help them navigate the digital world safely and responsibly it's important to equip them with the necessary:

- skills
- behaviours

- awareness

Learning and teaching resources

Resources to support classroom lessons about online safety.

Support for families

Supporting your child

If your child has viewed or shared illegal or offensive content, they may feel overwhelmed, embarrassed or unsure how to talk about it. Some children may worry about being judged or losing access to their device. Others may not understand why it's a problem. It's important to offer calm, supportive guidance.

As a parent or carer, you may feel a mix of emotions about what has happened. When talking to your child:

- find the right moment to discuss with your child what they've seen and how it made them feel
- stay calm and non-judgemental to help them open up
- reassure them of your support
- find out whether they came across the content accidentally (reassure them that it's not their fault) or went looking for it (explore what led them to seek or create it)
- talk about how to report the content and what they can do to reduce the possibility of it happening again

If your child is reluctant to talk, you may want to suggest organisations like **Childline** or **Meic**. They have trained counsellors your child can talk to about what they may be feeling.

App guides

App guides for families

Guides on popular apps children and young people may be using.

Help and support

Help and support

How to report harmful online content and access free and confidential helplines and services.

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DO the right thing

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