Part of our Online Information Series

NOS
Online Information
ⓘ

What you need to know about ...

FAKE NEWS

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WHAT IS FAKE NEWS

Parven Kaur, Kids N Clicks Founder

Fake news can be false information, photos or videos purposefully created to confuse or misinform. It can also be genuine information that has been manipulated to deceive. It is important that children learn how to distinguish between real news and fake news, so that they don't inadvertently share something which isn't true or believe something which could be misleading.

FAKE NEWS ALERT!

For details, see page 13 ...

KNOW THE RISKS

SHOCK VALUE

Fake news can cause upset or shock to readers or viewers. Many fake news stories are written with appealing headlines and have content designed to create 'shock value', so the news spreads rapidly (common examples include the 'death' of a celebrity, company giveaways, news relating to supernatural events, or terror-related posts that provoke reactions).

EMBARRASSMENT

Fake news is often deliberately created to misinform people – whether for fun, out of malice or to support an ideological or political agenda. As it's often difficult to tell the difference, young people can easily believe what they see and then share something which is a hoax or a joke, leading to embarrassment or ridicule.

INFLUENCE BEHAVIOUR

Ultimately, fake news is designed to shape people's beliefs, thoughts and decisions: influencing them into believing something which has been misreported or which simply isn't true. This can shape how children think, behave or act in real life. It can especially affect their trust in the media or even in democracy itself.

HOROSCOPES

New to page 18 ...
Find out what's in your future!

SPOT THE SIGNS

CONSIDER THE SOURCE

Fake news stories can sometimes be identified simply because they are too ridiculous or outrageous to believe. Make sure that the website that published the story is a credible source, like a major news network or local paper which has the resources to fact-check published stories.

CHECK THE URL

Does the website address at the top of the page look real? An easy way to spot suspect stories is if they're located on a news site with an odd domain name. So check the URL. Some shady websites try to incorporate a legitimate news source into their URL (such as www.therealbbc.co.uk) or will slightly misspell a popular domain name.

VERIFY FACTS AND IMAGES

Authentic news is usually backed up by official data or surveys and previous, similar instances of the occurrence being reported. Similarly, fake news stories often include photos which have been manipulated. Perform a Google reverse image search to see if the picture has been stolen from another source and doctored.

RESEARCH THE WEBSITE

Be wary when a big story comes from a news organisation that you've never heard of. Some hoaxers will quickly set up a website just to spread fake stories and so-called 'breaking news'. Use the internet archive to research how long a site has been running – and check if the same story is being reported by more credible news outlets.

ARE ALIENS HARVESTING OUR WIFI?!

Supposed footage of alien craft

Our groundbreaking exposé on page 4 ...

FURTHER SUPPORT

REPORT THE CONTENT

Google and many social media platforms now have dedicated methods for fake news stories to be reported to them. This can range from sending a feedback message to Google via the page itself to the 'Report Post' buttons on Facebook and Twitter.

PROVIDE REASSURANCE

If your child feels as though they have been negatively impacted by a fake news story, or has suffered some form of embarrassment because of fake news, it's important to be supportive and reassuring. Discuss with them how not everything that's posted online is true.

IMPROVE THEIR DIGITAL LITERACY

If your child has been tricked by a fake news story, try to encourage them to think more rationally about what they see and hear on the internet. Advise them to question the motivation behind a story – such as why it's been written, and if it's trying to make them form a specific opinion or influence their actions.

OUR EXPERT
PARVEN KAUR
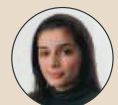
Parven Kaur is a social media expert and digital media consultant who is passionate about improving digital literacy for parents and children. She has extensive experience in the social media arena and is the founder of Kids N Clicks: a web resource that helps parents and children thrive in a digital world.

At National Online Safety we believe in empowering parents, carers and trusted adults with the information they need to hold an informed conversation about online safety with their children, should they feel it is needed. This guide focuses on one platform of many which we believe trusted adults should be aware of. Please visit www.nationalonlinesafety.com for further guides, hints and tips for adults.

Social media has its benefits for connecting with friends, sharing experiences and widening their understanding of broader issues beyond their local community. The challenge with connecting and sharing experiences via social media is that these shared experiences are often via images. Wanting to fit in and caring about their physical appearance is a perfectly normal part of adolescence. However, with the easy access of image changing software and filters, this physical appearance is often not the reality, further increasing the pressure for young people to gain or portray unreal perceptions.

What parents need to know about
SOCIAL PRESSURES LINKED TO
'APPEARANCE'

ONLINE APPEARANCE AND MENTAL HEALTH

The opportunity to change physical appearance through social media apps is creating a high level of perfectionism for children to portray themselves faultless and compare themselves to images which are sometimes unreal. This can lead to anxiety, depression and poor self-image and an overall sense of never feeling good enough. Having poor self-image can affect the way that your child interacts with others and how we care for ourselves.

AIRBRUSHING

Refers to the retouching done to an image that changes the reality of the photo. It may include removing people, objects, altering body shapes or erasing blemishes like acne or scars. The digital technology to enable airbrushing is now widely and easily available for desktop computers and social media apps. It is sometimes known as 'Photoshop'.

FILTERS

Filters applied to manipulate a photograph are another way of creating a delusion of what is real. Software within social media apps reconfigure your face and skin to look more aesthetically pleasing. As innocent and fun as these filters may seem, they are sending a message that we are more attractive when our features are modified.

APPS WHICH CHANGE APPEARANCE

These relate to free downloadable apps or options within social media apps which create a fun and easy way to alter your appearance. They are designed to be fun and can become addictive because once an altered image is used, it is very difficult to revert back to an unaltered version of themselves.

@OscarNOS
56K Followers
15 mins ago

MULTIPLE PHOTOS FOR THE PERFECT IMAGE

Taking multiple shots to capture the perfect image to put onto social media is another way of disguising reality. Creating an image which receives approval from peers through multiple comments and likes exacerbates the desire for a perfect picture and the approval for continuing to achieve the perfect image.

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Safety Tips For Parents

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER BEFORE TALKING TO YOUR CHILD

• Do most of their social media photos have a filter/image changing app on them?
• How often do they talk about their physical image in a negative way?
• Do they often talk about wanting to gain comments and 'likes'?
• Are they excessively anxious about their physical appearance, to the point it impacts on their every day life?

If you have answered yes to most of these questions, then it would be a good idea to have a discussion about their use of image altering app's.

DON'T GO COLD TURKEY

Talk with your child about taking one unfiltered image of themselves and sharing it with family first and then posting on social media. Perhaps ask other members of the family to send or post on social media unaltered pictures of themselves.

BE COMPLIMENTARY

Whilst improving body image starts with the child's image of themselves, complimenting them daily on their personality and qualities will provide external, positive encouragement about themselves, away from just their physical appearance.

DAILY APPRECIATION

When we have the sense that we are not good enough, we can feel like we are always falling short. You and your child together might want to create a gratitude journal, board with post-it's or wipe board where you write down things that you are grateful for or appreciate. This could range from the weather to a kind deed or to a piece of work that went well.

CHANGE THE STORY

We all have a narrative or a story we've created about ourselves that shapes our core self-image. Sometimes automatic negative thoughts like 'you're fat' or 'you're ugly' can be repeated in your mind so often that you start to believe they are true. These thoughts are learned, which means they can be unlearned. You can start with helping your child reframe the story into a more positive assertion or story. This will link to complementing and daily appreciation.

WHEN TO GET HELP

If your child becomes overly despondent, withdrawn or there is a change in behaviour over a prolonged period of time, they may need some professional support to help them.
https://www.bacp.co.uk/search/Therapists
https://www.themix.org.uk/ is good organisation as a source of support if your child wants to reach out for support themselves

Meet our expert

Anna Bateman is passionate about placing prevention at the heart of every school, integrating mental wellbeing within the curriculum, school culture and systems. She is also a member of the advisory group for the Department of Education, advising them on their mental health green paper.

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Part of our Gaming & Gambling Series

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Gaming & Gambling

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What you need to know about...
GAMING STREAMERS & INFLUENCERS

What are they?

'Gaming Streamers & Influencers'

Streamers are people who stream themselves gaming, drawing, making things etc. for people to watch on the internet. Usually this will be done live, and others are able to chat with them in real time while they do so. Influencers are social media stars who hold influence over the people that follow them, like a kind of trend-setter or taste-maker, who companies often pay to promote their products. A streamer could also be considered an influencer in their chosen area.

JADAGAMING

LIVE

Know the Risks

Adult Content

Many streamers use platforms such as Twitch or YouTube to broadcast themselves. YouTube for example, is only for ages 13+ (YouTube kids is for under 13s) and may contain a lot of other adult content. Streamers themselves, may be unsuitable for younger audiences with the kind of content they make, and with many opting to stream live, anything can – and does – happen.

Authenticity Risk

A lot of streamers will have some kind of sponsorship deal in place with a company trying to sell their products to an audience. When the audience is mostly younger viewers, they may not realise that streamers are getting paid to promote a product and may not necessarily have their best interests in mind.

Bullying and hate

#BULLY #HATE

While some streamers do employ moderators to try and combat hateful comments or bullying in their comments sections, they can still be very hectic. Hateful language is quite common, and people looking to groom children or engage in online bullying behaviour, could frequent the live chats.

Subscriptions

Streamers also make money through subscriptions on websites like Twitch, where fans will donate them a small amount as little or as often as they like. Called 'bits', they can be bought in bundles of varying prices which can be gifted to streamers via 'cheers'. Children could buy these 'bits' in large amounts without realising what they're doing, leaving a big bill behind.

Safety Tips

Discuss what's real online

Be sure to teach kids the difference between what's real and honest, or fake and untrustworthy online. Photoshopping fake images and videos and bragging about themselves online is unfortunately quite commonplace so it is difficult to tell what is real or fake. People with large followings can be promoting unhealthy or unattainable lifestyles to children to boost their own online influence.

Use filters

There are filters that can be put in place to block out a lot of adult content on streaming sites. Just make sure you have access to children's accounts so you can set the parameters and keep track of what they're seeing yourself. Usually, parental controls will be located in the settings portion of an account's menu.

Check age settings

Both YouTube and Twitch state that they are not suitable for children under 13 years old, but other sites might be different. YouTube Kids, for example, is for ages 13 and under, and offers much of the same kid-friendly content that YouTube does without the risk of running into something improper.

Affiliate links

Keep an eye out for affiliate links in social media posts and tags like #ad. UK influencers have to follow the CAP Code for advertising standards, but many don't. It can be hard to tell who is working through legitimate channels because it's almost impossible to regulate. Many streamers encourage fans to buy merchandise through online shops and stores.

Action & Support

Name check streamers

If your child has begun showing an interest in a streamer or influencer, check their names on Google. Some popular streamers have been discovered flouting industry regulations and using their young audiences to enhance their personal wealth through scams whilst others may swear on streams or promote drinking, substance abuse or links to gambling sites they operate to their young audiences.

Talk to your child

Initiate an open dialogue with your child about the kind of content they're consuming online. Ask about their favourite streamers and whether they like their personalities or the games they play and the community they have. Also remind them about what they should and shouldn't be sharing about themselves online and that just because social media stars do it, it can also be damaging.

Block and report

If you suspect a streamer might be taking advantage of their audience, or worse grooming children in any way, and have irrefutable evidence, do not hesitate to block and report them. First, block your child from being able to view their content and alert other parents to your concerns. Go immediately to the police or local authorities with the evidence of what you've seen.

Our Expert
Mark Foster

Mark Foster has worked in the gaming industry for 5 years as a writer, editor and presenter. He is the current gaming editor of two of the biggest gaming news sites in the world, UNILAD Gaming and GAMINGbible. Starting gaming from a young age with his siblings, he has a passion for understanding how games and tech work, but more importantly, how to make them safe and fun.

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What Parents & Carers Need to Know about
FACEBOOK MESSENGER

Facebook Messenger is a communication app through which users can exchange messages and send photos, stickers, and video and audio files. Messenger allows both one-to-one and group chats, has a stories feature and – via its latest addition, Rooms – can host a video call with up to 50 people. As of 2021, the app had 35 million users in the UK alone (more than half the population!) among its 1.3 billion users worldwide. Whereas Messenger is integrated into Facebook on desktops and laptops, it has existed as a standalone app for mobile devices since 2011.

AGE RATING 13+

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

ADDICTIVE NATURE
Messenger's numerous features can encourage children to spend more time on the app – and therefore on their phone, increasing their levels of screen time. It also invokes FOMO (the Fear of Missing out), especially among older children, who will almost certainly have a high proportion of their friends communicating via the app.

LIVE STREAMING
The new Rooms feature lets Messenger users hold video calls with up to 50 people. A young person can join any room they see, but the other people in these rooms don't even necessarily need to be Facebook account holders. This live streaming development heightens risk factors around privacy, security and the possibility of exposure to inappropriate content.

REQUESTS FROM STRANGERS
If the Facebook profile which accompanies their Messenger app is set to public, there's a possibility that young people will receive message requests from individuals they don't know. There have previously been reports of grooming attempts on Facebook, with predators using fake profiles to engage children in conversation.

OVERSHARING PERSONAL INFO
If the app is given access to their device's photo library or location services, young people can unintentionally share sensitive information (private photos, videos, their number or current whereabouts) with people on Messenger who they don't know. Even among friends, shared photos or videos don't always stay private: the recipient(s) could save and re-share them with others.

CYBERBULLYING
Like many communication apps, Messenger can be an avenue for cyberbullies or trolls to target children. This might take the form of harassment, abusive messages or being purposely excluded from (or targeted in) group chats. A 2021 Ofcom report revealed that more than half (55%) of 12–15-year-olds had suffered such negative experiences online in the preceding year.

SECRET CONVERSATIONS
The Secret Conversations function lets Messenger users have encrypted exchanges that no-one else can read. Unlike regular chats on the app, these can only be viewed on the device being used at the time. Messages can also be set to delete once read (although screenshots can be taken), so a child could chat privately with someone without any record of that conversation having taken place.

Advice for Parents & Carers

USE ADDITIONAL SECURITY
Messenger's App Lock feature uses your child's fingerprint or face ID to ensure that nobody else can access their messages without permission. Messenger has also added a variety of optional tools to increase young people's safety on the app, including two-factor authentication, login alerts and filtered message requests.

REPORT INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR
If your child experiences anything negative on Messenger, you can help them report it. Facebook can then take action such as disabling the offender's account, limiting their ability to send messages or blocking them from contacting your child again. If your child doesn't want to display to others that they're online, they can switch off Active Status in the app's settings.

ADJUST PRIVACY SETTINGS
Make your child's Messenger stories visible only to their friends. Avoid adding your child's phone number (so they can't be found by someone using their number to search for them), and not syncing contacts lets your child choose who to add (or not) individually. Via Settings, you can control who appears in your child's chat list, who goes into the message request folder and who can't contact your child at all.

REVIEW THE CHAT LIST
Some parents regularly check their children's Messenger conversations (to see who they're talking to, rather than what they're talking *about*). While this is certainly safe, it *can* seem intrusive. If approached in a sensible, collaborative way, however, it can help parents and carers to keep an eye on exactly who their child is communicating with.

DISCUSS LIVE STREAMING
Talk with your child about safe and secure video calling. When setting up calls on Messenger Rooms, only invite people who your child knows and trusts. Show them how to lock a room if they don't want other people joining – and how to remove anyone they don't want on the call. Remind them about behaving responsibly during a live stream, even if it's with people they know.

ENCOURAGE SAFE SHARING
Ensure your child knows to send pictures and videos *only* to family and trusted friends, and not to publicly share images which compromise their location (showing a landmark near home or clothing with identifiable logos, like a school or local club crest). Encourage them to pause before sharing anything – if there's a chance it could harm their reputation (or someone else's), don't send it.

Meet Our Expert
Alex Wright is a former Facebook employee and social media expert with more than 15 years' experience in digital media. He has worked with some of the biggest organisations on the planet and has a vast understanding of how social media platforms work and how they engage their audience.

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Twitter is a social networking site where users can post 'tweets' or short messages, photos and videos publicly. They can also share 'tweets' written by others to their followers. Twitter is popular with young people, as it allows them to interact with celebrities, stay up to date with news, trends and current social relevance.

AGE RESTRICTION 13+

Oscar
@oworks_oscar28
Social media is really fun and I love sharing all my fave things with my friends. Just be sure to keep safe when online #onlinesafety

511 PM · 04 Feb 17
133 RETWEETS   1,170 LIKES

What parents need to know about Twitter

TWITTER TROLLS

A 'troll' is somebody who deliberately posts negative or offensive comments online in a bid to provoke an individual for a reaction. Trolling, can include bullying, harassment, stalking, virtual mobbing and much more; it is very common on Twitter. The motive may be that the 'troll' wishes to promote an opinion or make people laugh, however, the pragmatics of what they post could be much more damaging, posting anything from racial, homophobic to sexist hate. Trolling can lead to devastating consequences for some victims.

INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

Twitter gives users the opportunity and freedom to post their personal thoughts and opinions, meaning they can pretty much post anything they want despite restrictions on the platform. Swearing and inappropriate language is allowed if it does not violate the rules. If your child sees any inappropriate content, they might feel the need to replicate it at home or amongst their peers. Additionally, there are also a number of unofficial pornographic profiles on the platform that can easily be found and viewed without restrictions.

FAKE PROFILES

Fake Twitter accounts are made to impersonate a person, celebrity or public figure. As the accounts are not endorsed by the person they are pretending to be, they can often be used to scam or take advantage of young people who think that they're the real deal.

FAKE NEWS

The speed in which 'tweets' are shared on Twitter can be unbelievably fast, meaning that fake news can often be circulated across the platform very quickly. Fake news articles and posts can often be harmful and upsetting to young people and those associated with the fake news. In addition to this, it's very easy for people to quickly and unexpectedly retweet a tweet posted by your child, meaning there is no going back.

HIJACKED HASHTAGS

One of the most commonly used aspects of Twitter is the hashtag (#) – these allow users to easily search for specific trends, topics or subjects. However, due to the astronomical number of Twitter users, many hashtags can have 'different' intentions. One person may use a seemingly innocent hashtag, and before you know it, hundreds of people could be using the same hashtag for something inappropriate or dangerous that your child shouldn't be exposed to. This is common with 'trending' tweets, as people know that their tweet will be seen by a greater number of people.

MEMES NORMALISING RACISM, SEXISM AND HOMOPHOBIA

Twitter is a popular platform for sharing Internet memes, helping to make concepts or ideas go viral across the Internet. However, despite most meme's being innocent and harmless, some often include sexist, racist or homophobic messages. Although they are typically sent as a joke, this type of content is contributing to the normalisation of topics including racism, sexism and homophobia.

PROPAGANDA, EXTREMISM & RADICALISATION

Social media offers a continuous stream of real-time coverage of extremist activity. Twitter is one of the many platforms that is exploited by extremist groups to help promote violence, radicalise and recruit people to support their cause. These groups cleverly target vulnerable victims, often young people, and find a way to manipulate them into supporting their beliefs.

EVERYONE HAS ACCESS

Twitter has over 335 million monthly active users across all age groups. When a user signs up, tweets are public by default, meaning anyone can view and interact with posts instantly. Your child may change their mind about a tweet they have posted but even if they delete it, there's always a chance that someone can screenshot, retweet it or post it onto another platform.

Top Tips for Parents

CHECK ACCOUNT SETTINGS

We strongly advise that you thoroughly check your child's privacy settings. To take away some of the fear of your child's tweets being shared by anyone, you can always make their account protected. This means that anyone who wants to view what your child has posted, it requires approval from them. In addition to this, you can change the settings so that they cannot receive 'direct' messages from anyone on the platform and that their location is not shared.

BLOCKING & REPORTING

If a particular account is causing your child trouble on Twitter, whether it's cyberbullying or upsetting content, you can simply block and report them. Blocking them will help to prevent them from viewing, messaging or following your child, and vice versa. Reporting an account will alert Twitter to investigate the profile.

MUTING ACCOUNTS

The 'mute' feature allows your child to remove an account's tweets from their timeline without unfollowing or blocking them. This means your child will stop getting notifications about a particular conversation but can still view it in their timeline. This can be useful if they are friends with someone but don't really like what they share. The other user will not know that they have been banned.

TWITTER TROLLS & THE LAW

From 2016, the CPS were able to exercise new laws that could see those who create "derogatory hashtags" or post "humiliating" photoshopped images jailed. They also announced the launch of a hate crime consultation, issuing a series of public policy statements centred on combating crimes against disabled people, as well as racial, religious, homophobic and transphobic hate crime. It's important your child knows about building a positive online reputation, as well as showing respect for others online and offline.

SENSITIVE CONTENT

By default, if Twitter has found a tweet that 'may contain sensitive content', Twitter will hide the content in the news feed and you will be shown a warning that states the content is sensitive. You then have the option to view it or not. This gives a chance for you to moderate potentially harmful images/videos before your child sees them. Unfortunately, some content may slip through the cracks and will be shown in the news feed. So, if you do see any sensitive content, you can report it. Twitter should then inspect the tweet and decide whether they deem it to be 'sensitive'.

MUTE HASHTAGS & PHRASES

Within the account settings, you have the ability to block certain words, hashtags or phrases from your child's timeline or notifications (e.g. swear words, inappropriate phrases, emojis, etc.)

TURN OFF VIDEO AUTOPLAY

'Autoplay' is a feature that automatically starts playing a new video seconds after another one ends on the platform. To avoid your child going from watching something innocent and harmless to something much more graphic or disturbing, you can turn this feature off in the settings and easily moderate the videos your child watches before they see them.

CONVERSATION & MONITORING

We always promote that you have regular open conversation with your child about their online activity, ensuring that they understand what healthy relationships are, what respect is, and how to be sensitive towards others' feelings. It's also important to monitor what they're doing online, including what they use the platform for, who they are talking to, and if they are viewing/taking part in anything that they shouldn't be. Discuss the dangers of the online world, such as fake news and online bullying - why do people involve themselves in these activities and what your child can do to prevent them.

TWITTER LISTS

Twitter lists allow your child to create other feeds besides the main timeline that only include certain accounts – this is a great way to segment followers based on common topics and interests.

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