Advice to Parents & Guardians – Using Parental Controls https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/article-repository/Parental-controls/

What do parental controls do?

These controls are designed to help parents and carers manage their child's online activities. There are various types, some of which are free but others which can be bought. However, nothing is totally fool proof so they don't replace the need for adults to support and advise children using the internet.

For detailed guidance on all the different types of control, you can use this online tool from Internet Matters . This gives you the chance to set up a personalised list of the controls used in your home on all your different devices.   There is also advice on how to use all the various controls, with videos and step-by-step instructions.

What can controls be used for?

Controls can either be for a device like a games console, or for a network such as your home broadband.

The way to access device controls can vary according to the manufacturer.   They can offer varying types of protection, from filtering out adult content from search results to preventing your child from buying things when playing games. You can generally find instructions on how to set these controls up on the manufacturer's website or use the Internet Matters app for help. These settings will apply whether the device is being used in your home our outside – but it's easy for them to be switched off, so talk to your child about trust and responsibility, making sure they understand the importance of why you have put the settings in place.

Most games consoles come with settings, which can be put in place for either the device itself or the games platform.   It's easy to forget that games consoles allow players to connect to the internet and talk to people all over the world so setting controls on devices and the platform itself (such as X Box) is important.

Broadband and network filters generally come free with your service. These can be used to prevent material coming into your home. For example, you could restrict anything with a horror or sexual content being accessible via your home broadband.   Instructions for accessing these filters can be found on the service providers' websites – look at the bottom of the page to find the "help" or "security" page.

Online controls

Search engines such as Google, Yahoo and Bing allow users to filter out certain types of search results. This means you can reduce the risk of your child seeing adult content like pornography,   or set limits on the time they spend online. Look for the cogwheel "settings" symbol where you will find the options for each provider. You can also encourage your child to use safer search facilities, such as SafeSearch Kids from Google.

Social media and other websites

As with search engines, social media and sites like YouTube have privacy and security settings. These can prevent your child from being contacted by strangers or from seeing inappropriate material. It is important to remember that content filters cannot prevent other people from sending offensive or inappropriate messages or comments to your child's account, so controlling who can contact your child is a key step.

Buying controls

It is also possible to buy filter programmes. These can be either solely for filtering purposes, but some virus protection software also offer filtering options.

What next?

Controls are not a single solution to staying safe online; talking to your children and encouraging responsible behaviour is critical. However, controls are a vital first step to helping to protect your child online, and here seven simple things you can do to use them effectively:

1.Set up home broadband parental controls and make use of controls on your home broadband.

2.Set controls on your search engine; encourage your child to always use child-friendly search engines, and activate and lock the safe search settings on the browsers and platforms they use.

3.Make sure every device is protected. Controls should be installed on every device your child uses, such as their mobile phone, tablet and games consoles (both home and handheld).

4.Use privacy settings. Activate the safety measures offered by different sites; social networking sites like Facebook have privacy settings that will help prevent your child seeing unsuitable advertising or sharing too much with other people.

5.Block pop-ups. If you're worried about your children accessing inappropriate content though accidentally clicking on adverts in pop-ups, follow the advice from BBC Webwise on how to stop these.

6.Find good sites and agree on them as a family. By talking to your child about their interests you can help them find suitable sites to visit and apps to use. Review these sites as they get older.

7.Manage their use and access. Children may be very worried that your response to a problem will be to take away their internet access. Whilst this may be an appropriate response in some cases, the threat may be a barrier for a child who needs help. Be aware of this when talking to them about their internet use, and reassure them that they can talk to you or a trusted adult whenever they need to.

Sexting

Just why do intelligent middle-class girls send explicit pictures of themselves to boys? We investigate the terrifying new trend that has swept Britain.

Beth White, 17, from Stockport, Greater Manchester, began sexting when she was just 15 - she would pose in her underwear after school

Jake Land, 21, from Buxton, Derbyshire, received around 100 pictures from five girls who were all under 16 when he was at school

One in four 13 to 17-year-old girls sent explicit pictures because they felt pressured to do so

http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-3430945/Just-intelligent-middle-class-girls-send-explicit-pictures-boys-FEMAIL-investigates.html

Social media has been blamed for spreading news of fights among schoolchildren. How can you help your child if they are involved?

http://parentinfo.org/article/social-media-and-group-violence-a-parents-guide

There have been reports recently of a violent craze sweeping across Liverpool and to some extent we are now seeing this here in Cheshire, where pupils film each other fighting and send the videos to Instagram accounts devoted to showing images and videos of the fights. It's even been referred to as 'Fight Club for children'.

The craze is reminiscent of the 'happy slapping' trend in the early 2000s, when teenagers filmed others punching and slapping victims and then shared them on their mobile phones.   'Social media is changing things. It used to be word of mouth but now when people talk about it on social media it attracts so many others.' Before social media, rumours of fights may have spread across a school year group, or maybe even a whole school, but young people's permanent social connectedness means more people can become involved more quickly. And it can help people plan and organise these sort of 'events' or activities.

Mob mentality

Social media is not only a way of spreading news of fights. The relative anonymity and public nature of sites such as Twitter and Instagram allow the videos to be spread by people with no emotional connection to the people featured in them. This can result in an online 'mob mentality' similar to what happens when bands of strangers gang up to shame people on social media sites. A combination of this lack of face-to-face interaction and the relative anonymity that social media offers, together with young people's desire to belong to groups or gangs, may well help promote the sharing of these often upsetting images and videos showing violence between peers. It's worth remembering, though, that this same online 'mob mentality' can also be a force for good. Social media users are just as likely to come together to back up and support someone who is seen to be being picked on online, or support something they feel strongly about.

Publicly recorded

It's not just that social media allows for more people to find out about these kinds of fights, it's also the fact that the fight itself will often be broadcast across social media once it's happened. Sadly, video footage like this is gold dust to certain YouTube users, with groups devoted to 'girl fights' on the site.

What can parents do?

Remind the children and young people in your care that…

Smartphones are everywhere. It is really easy for someone to take a photo or video of a young person involved in something spontaneous like a fight and share it with others online. This can have a permanent effect on their online and offline reputation. How would the video or image be viewed by a future employer or university recruiter?

Drama between friends can seem so important at the time, but in a few weeks, they'll look back and won't remember why they were so concerned about it.

If they hear plans of a fight, or something similar, spreading across their social media feeds, they should let an adult know about it. They won't get into any trouble.

It can be really easy to get irate and self-righteous on social media and become caught up in an unhealthy group mentality. It could be because of someone's comment that they found offensive, or to fight for a collective cause. But things aren't always as they seem – often comments only seem offensive after being taken out of context, for example.

When you're part of a group, it's easy to join sides and become aggressive. Advise your child that things can quickly escalate and move into the territory of group attacking or bullying.

Young people should be encouraged to think before they post on social media, and be reminded that silly comments they'll probably regret in the future can have a permanent effect on their online [reputation](#).

What If your child has been involved?

If you find out your child has been involved in a fight, the first thing you'll worry about is whether they're physically OK. After you've established that, you'll need to have a serious conversation with them about why they got into a fight. Try not to seem too accusatory, or upset, as this may prevent them from opening up to you. As always, making sure all lines of communication are kept open is a priority with this kind of issue.

If there is footage of your child in a fight – whether they're the perpetrator, or the one being tar-

geted – it isn't something you want online for other people to see. Find out who posted the content, and ask them to take it down. If the incident is linked to school, they can help you do this. If the person who posted the content is unknown, contact the social media platform to ask them to take it down. Find out how here (link is external).

It may be that you can't control the spread of the footage. If that is the case, support your child. As with all bad experiences, there are lessons to be learnt. Make a plan together of how they will avoid situations like this in the future. Good plans usually focus on getting rid of negative influences and avoiding high risk situations. Discuss with them how they can spend more time on positive friendships and activities.

If your child sees this sort of content on social media and tells you about it, remind them that this sort of violence is never acceptable, even if it is a joke or prank and the chances are that somebody has got hurt. Encourage them to always report the content to their school, as well as the social media network they're using. Instagram in particular has a very strong stance against bullying.

Both resorting to physical aggression as a way of dealing with a problem, or fighting just for the 'fun' of it, may point to a deeper emotional issue. You may want to ask them if there's anything else in their lives that's worrying them. Remind them that it's very important they find other ways of dealing with problems, such as communication, negotiation and compromise, as carrying this violent behaviour into adulthood could get them into serious trouble in the future.

You may feel your child needs professional help with anger or other problems. Young Minds has some good advice (link is external) on anger, aggression and violence in young people and what parents can do to help their children.