Frimley Green Pre-School

Play together · Learn together · Grow together

Online Safety and Screen Time Guidance

Screens can be a big part of children's lives. They include televisions, phones, tablets and computers. Screens can be fun and educational, but too much screen time can affect how children develop, learn and communicate. It's important to find a balance between using technology and supporting your child's development.

Recent research continues to show that **very young children are increasingly present online**, spending more time online than ever before. Many parents have understandable concerns about screen time and online safety. Even in the early years, many children regularly use the internet to watch videos, play games, and use apps.

Building healthy habits early, with clear boundaries and adult support, can help children develop positive and safe relationships with technology as they grow.

📖 What the Research Tells Us:

Ofcom's **Children and Parents – Media Use and Attitudes Report (2024)** found that:

- **84%** of 3–4-year-olds go online
- **27%** of 3–4-year-olds have their own mobile phone
- **YouTube** is the most popular video platform for this age group, with **49%** watching content there
- **79% of parents** of 3–4-year-olds are concerned about how much time their child spends online

Ofcom's **Children's Media Literacy Report (2025)** highlights that:

- Online and streamed video now plays a major role in how children engage with media, even from a young age
- Some children aged 3–5 are exposed to social or video-sharing apps, usually with a parent present
- Parents recognise both benefits (such as learning and entertainment) and risks (including age-inappropriate content)

- Active parental involvement and supervision are especially important in the early years, as young children cannot yet understand or judge online content independently

Key findings from the **Department of Education, *UK Children of the 2020s – Home Learning Environment and Screen Time at Age 2 study, January 2026*:**

- **Almost all two-year-olds (98%) use screens every day**, including TV, videos, or other digital content, with an average of about 2 hours per day - more than double the WHO recommended maximum of 1 hour.
- Only about **one third** of toddlers meet the recommended screen time limit of 1 hour or less.
- **26%** of parents did something else while their children were using screens.
- **Higher screen time is linked with lower spoken vocabulary** scores at age 2, even after adjusting for background factors.
- Shared activities such as reading, singing, playing, and talking together are strongly associated with better early language skills and can help balance screen use.

It is important to recognise that these screen time figures are approximate, as parents were asked to estimate their child's screen use on a typical day. This method is more likely to involve error and response bias than direct observational assessments.

These reports confirm that **time spent online continues to increase** as children grow, reinforcing the importance of establishing healthy routines and boundaries early.

❓ Why this Matters:

- Screens (TVs, tablets, phones, computers) are common in children's lives.
- Screens can be fun and educational, but too much can affect **development, learning, and communication**.
- Young children are spending **more time online than ever**, and this can reduce opportunities for interaction and shared learning.

⭐ Key points for parents of young children

- Very young children are spending more time online than ever before
- Many parents share concerns about screen time and online content
- Clear boundaries and close supervision are particularly important in the early years
- Online experiences should always be age-appropriate and guided by adults
- Children should know they can tell a trusted adult if something online makes them feel worried, confused or upset

---

🩺 WHO (World Health Organistaion) Screen-time Guidance

- **Under 2 years:** Screen time should be discouraged, except for video calls with family and friends
- **Ages 2–5 years:** Limit screen time to **no more than one hour per day**, ensuring it does not interfere with sleep, physical activity and play

---

Using YouTube Safely

If your child watches videos online, we recommend using **YouTube Kids**, which is designed for children under five. It offers:

- Age-appropriate content
- Additional parental controls
- Reduced exposure to unsuitable videos compared with the main YouTube app

Young children should not access the main YouTube app independently.

✅ Simple online safety checklist for home

You may find it helpful to check the following:

- ☐ Screen time is limited and follows NHS guidance
- ☐ An adult supervises screen use wherever possible
- ☐ YouTube is accessed via **YouTube Kids**, not the main YouTube app

- ☐ Parental controls and filters are set on home Wi-Fi and devices
- ☐ Your child knows they can tell you if they see something online they do not like

Step-by-step guidance for setting up filters with UK internet providers is available at:

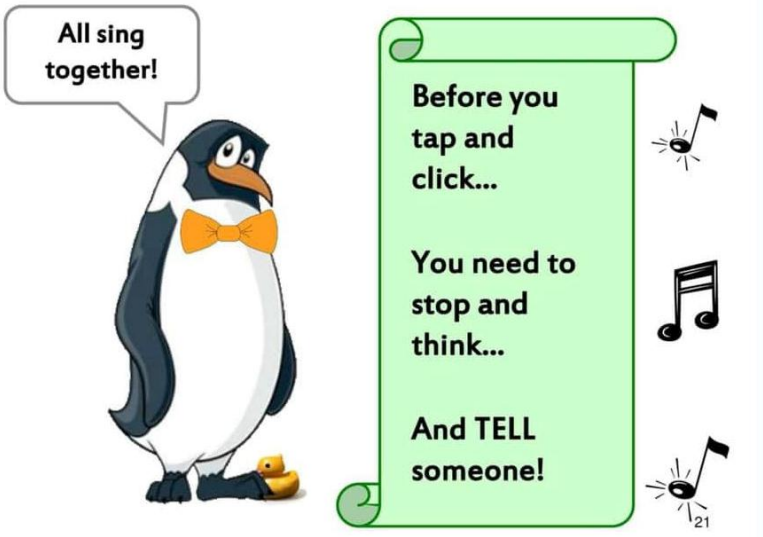
👉 https://saferinternet.org.uk/

🐧 What We Are Doing in Frimley Green Pre-School

At pre-school, we use **Smartie the Penguin** from Childnet, to help children understand that they should tell a trusted adult if they see something online that makes them feel worried, unhappy or scared.

If something appears while they are online, they should not click on it and should ask an adult instead.

We would really appreciate your support in reinforcing this message at home, helping children feel confident to speak up and ask for help.





Thank you for working with us to support children's wellbeing and safety online.

References and Further Information

Ofcom

- Ofcom Media Use and Attitudes Report 2024
- Ofcom Media Use and Attitudes Report 2025
- Ofcom Online Nation Report 2025

Childnet

- Childnet International. *Smartie the Penguin – Early Years Online Safety Resources* https://www.childnet.com/resources/smartie-the-penguin/

UK Government / Department for Education

- Department for Education (2026). *Children of the 2020s: home learning environment and screen time at age 2 – research brief* https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/695fc42241ddb40d13f76527/COT2020s_-_home_learning_environment_and_screen_time_at_age_2_-_research_brief.pdf

Online safety support

- UK Safer Internet Centre – parental controls and filters https://saferinternet.org.uk/