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.

Thanks to the internet, there are now many ways for your children to watch TV, both the old fashioned way on a big screen and via the internet with on-demand programming. Restricting and controlling what your kids can watch is harder than ever, but with our help you can make TV safer for your kids and limit the amount that they can watch.

How to manage what your children WATCH ON TV

TRADITIONAL TV

Traditional TV covers programmes broadcast directly to your TV without having to use the internet. This is the standard way that most of us watch television programmes.

BROADCAST TV

Free-to-air broadcast television is delivered via an aerial or satellite to your TV directly or through a PVR that also handles recordings. Most modern TVs and PVRs sold in the last few years will have parental controls, which restrict the content available, requiring a PIN for unsuitable programmes. The exact settings vary by manufacturer, so check your TV or PVRs manual for full details. Parental locks work by checking the rating of a programme as it's broadcast. If a show is unrated or has an incorrect rating, some content may not be blocked.

SKY TV

The version of Sky that you have defines the options available to you. If you have a Sky+ HD box, you'll need to press the Services button and select Parental Control & PIN. From here, you can turn on the Family Setting, which gives you the option to remove Adult Channels and content, and requires a PIN to be entered to buy anything or for pre-watershed playback. More granular control allows you to block specific channels, either completely or only after 8pm, requiring a PIN to watch. You can also block programmes based on ratings, although this feature only works for programmes with correct ratings, so some shows may slip through. Sky Q owners have the more powerful Kids Safe Mode, which locks the system to show only kid-safe material. This includes locking the list of viewable channels and filtering recordings to only those suitable for children. Kids Safe Mode can be enabled either on the main box or on the Sky Q Mini boxes that you might have elsewhere in your home.

INTERNET TV

There are plenty of ways to watch TV online, whether that's via the likes of iPlayer or with streaming video services, such as Netflix and Amazon Prime Instant video. Here, we'll show you how to control each.

AMAZON PRIME VIDEO

Amazon Prime Video has Parental Controls available in the Settings section of the Prime Video website. The settings let you set the age range of content that can be watched without entering a PIN: U, PG, 12, 15 and 18. Settings apply to all devices (bar the Xbox 360, Wii U and Fire TV, which have their own settings), but you can opt-out devices of your choosing in the settings. For example, you may not want to have any restrictions on your iPad, which only you use. PINs can also be used to block purchases.

NETFLIX

Netflix lets you create profiles for everyone in your house. On the Netflix home screen, if you select Manage Profiles, you can change each one to show different content, defined by age group. Children should be encouraged to use their profiles only, particularly as there's no way to PIN protect adult profiles. However, you can PIN-protect content globally, so if a child does use your profile, they're blocked from watching inappropriate content. Go to Netflix, select Account from the drop-down menu by your name and select Parental Controls. You'll be prompted to enter a PIN, but then can select which content is PIN protected by age range: Toddlers, Older Children, Teens and Adults. You can also PIN protect specific programmes by typing their name in, which could be handy if you feel a programme is unsuitable or a child has been watching it too much.

ON-DEMAND PLAYERS

If your children are watching content from on-demand services, such as BBC iPlayer or All 4, you can turn on parental controls for each via the main websites. Controls work across all devices signed into your account. Controls vary by platform. With BBC iPlayer, the parental lock requires a PIN for anything marked as requiring Guidance by the BBC. ITV Hub parental controls let you PIN protect for content with a G-rating (a guidance ratin). For All 4, you can choose to protect programmes rated 16+ or 18+. If you use My5, you can set up a PIN to protect against anyone watching G-rated content. For UKTV Play, you can add a PIN to restrict content selecting one of two levels: all content that's rated 15+ or all content that's rated 18+.

HOW CAN PARENTS MANAGE THEIR CHILDREN'S TV TIME?

Particularly with on-demand content, it can be hard to restrict how much viewing time a child has. However, you can restrict internet time with parental control software, restricting how much time a child can spend online, whether they're using the internet or watching TV shows. Parental control software will generally only work on laptops, computer, tablets and phones. However, if you have parental control software that runs on the router, you can manage other devices, such as a child's smart TV and games console, and restrict time usage on these, too.

National Online Safety®
#WakeUpWednesday

Meet our expert

This guide has been written by David Ludlow. David has been a technology journalist for more than 20 years, covering everything from internet security to the latest computing trends and the smart home. A father of two (a nine-year-old and a six-year-old), he's had to control and manage how his children access online services and use apps.

You may also be interested in our smart home devices guide!

Users of this guide do so at their own discretion. No liability is entered into. Current as of the date of release: 17.07.2019