

Head up Childnet Guidance - Parental guidance with Technology in the Home

With Black Friday and Cyber Monday over and Christmas fast approaching there are plenty of new gadgets that parents and carers may be thinking about buying for their children.

This blog contains advice for parents and carers to help them get to grips with the safety features available on the most popular gadgets this Christmas, as well as some key questions to ask before buying connected toys.

Smartphones, tablets and games consoles

The [parents' guide to technology](#) gives useful and practical advice when buying a new smartphone, games console, tablet, connected TV or other internet-connected device. This guide looks at some of the most frequently asked questions about devices as well as looking at the safety features that are available.

Top tip:

Have a look at the device before Christmas day. Take the time to install the [parental controls and safety settings](#) that you want onto the device. This way you know how the device works and don't have to worry about finding time to install parental controls once your child already has access to the device.

Setting up parental controls on your home internet

It's important to look at what parental controls you have set up on your home internet, as this will help reduce the chances of children stumbling across something inappropriate while browsing the internet. Internet providers offer free parental controls that you may find useful- you can [read the full guide to parental controls offered by home internet providers here](#).

Connected toys

Internet connected toys may also be at the top of your child's wish list and they can offer fun and interactivity, but also present new risks and challenges. It's important therefore that you ask questions about the toy in the shop before you make a purchase.

Some of the questions you may want to think about before you buy your child an Internet Connected Toy include:

- What information does the toy collect?
- Where will the information the toy collects be stored?
- Will the toy take pictures or store recordings of my child?
- Does it require location services to work or will I be able to turn this feature off?
- Who can interact with the toy and will it require a password?
- What parental controls are available and how do I access them?

It's always worth asking about what privacy controls and safety settings you can use to make the device work for your family. Speak to the retailer at point of purchase or explore the safety features online via the manufacturers website.

Top tip:

Play with the toy together, this way you can find out first-hand how the toy works as well ensuring that you have some knowledge of the toy and its safety features, if your child comes to you for help.

Whatever presents you're buying for your children this Christmas, one of the most important things you can do is have an [open and ongoing conversation with your child](#) about technology and the internet. By maintaining an open dialogue with your child and encouraging them to talk to you about their internet use you can help your children access the amazing resources the internet has to offer, whilst keeping them safe online. [These conversation starters](#) are a great way to talk about the internet with your children. [A family agreement](#) is also a great way to start a conversation with your whole family about how you all use the internet and discuss together how to behave in a positive way when online at home, at school or at a friend's house.