

For young people: Tips for digital self-care

Try some self-reflection

Spend time thinking about how different social media spaces make you feel. For example, does talking on a group chat in the evening make you feel energised, or would you rather switch off socialising once you've left school? Is there a point at which scrolling through Instagram or TikTok changes from being fun to making you feel down or bad about yourself? Are there certain accounts or activities that you'd rather not have to interact with or see?

Being mindful of these feelings can help you boost the positives, and reduce the negatives of online spaces. Read on for more ideas.

Set some boundaries

It's important to set boundaries for yourself and how you interact with others online. For example:

Using in-app timers which allow you to decide how long you want to spend on an app and send you alerts once you've exceeded your time limit.

Deciding not to reply to messages after a certain time each evening. You could also tell this to your friends so they know that you won't reply after a particular time.

You might feel like you have to respond as soon as messages arrive, but remember that it's absolutely fine not to respond straight away, or sometimes, at all! If you like, you could put a note in your whatsapp status to explain that you might not respond to messages on there, or that it might take you a while to respond.

Leaving your phone at home when you go on a walk.

It can be helpful to reflect on how this boundary-setting affects your mood, energy, and relationships.

Create a feed that works for you

If you've noticed that some accounts make you feel down, angry, or anxious, you can unfollow or hide them. If this doesn't feel possible, try following more accounts that make you feel good and well, so that as you scroll, the 'bad' accounts are mixed with ones that make you feel good.

Adjust your privacy setting according to what feels right for you

When you download an app it's often automatically set to the lowest privacy or highest visibility. So, when you're setting up your account remember to take a look at the settings to make sure they suit who you want to be able to contact you, see your profile and connect with you.

Privacy settings can often be confusing and difficult to navigate, and it's never too late to change them. Thankfully, there are lots of sites guiding you how to manage them. Check these sites for advice:

[Childline: Taking care of your privacy settings and digital footprint.](#)

[UK Safer Internet Centre: Password security - understanding the basics.](#)

[Report Harmful Content: support reporting harmful behaviours online.](#)

Talk to someone about how you're feeling

If there's anything online that's making you feel worried, uncomfortable, or stressed, try to speak to someone that you trust. That might be a parent, teacher, another trusted adult. It can be really hard to talk about things happening online that make us feel worried, uncomfortable or stressed. Sometimes we might wonder if that's just normal, or whether we might be in trouble if we say something to an adult. In those cases, some young people find it helpful to speak to an external adult at a support service too, where they often can keep things confidential. Here are some options:

Childline - on 0800 1111

Young Minds - for mental health support
- <https://www.youngminds.org.uk/>

Kooth - <https://www.kooth.com/>

If you're experiencing online sexual harassment there's advice and support services [via this link](#).

There are some exceptions to that confidentiality, though. You can find out more [here](#).

Look out for others!

Don't forget to safeguard the digital wellbeing of others, too. For example:

Respect other people's boundaries: if your friend has said they need to stop chatting and get to bed, leave them be!

Be a responsible digital citizen: it can feel so hard to be the person to call out abuse or bullying online, it feels so much safer to just stay quiet and hope people don't turn on us. But think about what you would want in that person's position - someone to speak up for you! The way we create that world is by doing that ourselves when we see or hear unkind things being said about other people. Be brave!

Remember that if everyone looks out for each other that can build safer and kinder cultures both online and offline.

