



WHATSAPP PARENT GUIDE

AGE RATING: 13+



ENCOURAGE CRITICAL THINKING

Have a conversation with your child about treating messages from unknown numbers with caution. When we receive a message from an unknown number, we should ask the following questions:

Does this message sound like something a friend or family member would send?

Is this message asking me to share information or click on a link?

Agree with your child that if they ever have a funny feeling about a message they receive, they will tell you about it.



TALK ABOUT IT

Open and regular conversations about your child's activity on WhatsApp are a great way to minimise potential harms and keep them safe when using the platform.

Talking with your child about what they are using WhatsApp for is valuable because it can create a safe space in which they feel comfortable in sharing any concerns they have.

Once this dialogue and trust has been established, it will make it easier for them to come to you with any issues they encounter while using WhatsApp.



BE A DIGITAL ROLE MODEL

We can be a digital role model by becoming more intentional about when, and how much we use our screens around the home.

To manage screen time, you could set clear rules such as agreeing a specific amount of time your child can spend on WhatsApp each day or agreeing periods during the day when no one will use their smartphones, for example this could be during meals, homework time, or before bed.



CHECK PRIVACY SETTINGS

WhatsApp has a range of settings to help users stay safe, so why not set these up on your child's account?

A good place to start is to go to Settings -> Privacy -> Groups.

You can then select specific contacts that can add your child into groups. This can help prevent the challenge of being added into lots of different groups, sometimes with strangers.



MINDFUL MESSAGING

When in a Group Chat on WhatsApp, it's all too easy for young people to get swept along and join in with unkind jokes or negative comments.

Encourage them to be mindful when they send messages with these strategies:

Think Before You Send: Encourage the habit of taking a moment to think before sending a message. Particularly if we're feeling upset or angry, taking a moment to breathe can help us to make a better choice.

Set a Positive Example: Model mindful messaging in your own behaviour. You could show your child some of the messages that you send, and show them how to communicate in a considerate way.

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