

# Online Safety News

April 2025

## Gaming Safety

Children tend to be much younger when they start gaming compared to accessing social media. Online gaming can be a fun and educational way for children to be online, but safety is key.



**Key things to watch out for:** Check the age ratings, be aware of chat functions, in-game purchases, and the risks of trolling or scams. Make sure they know how to report issues and where to get support. If you have more than one child, remember that what's suitable for one may not be for another.

### PEGI RATINGS



**Violence** - Game contains depictions of violence



**Discrimination** - Game contains depictions of, or material which may encourage, discrimination



**Sex** - Game depicts nudity and/or sexual behaviour or sexual references



**Drugs** - Game refers to or depicts the use of drugs



**Fear** - Game may be frightening or scary for young children



**Bad Language** - Game contains bad language

## Netflix's Adolescence

The Netflix series Adolescence offers a powerful look at the challenges children and teens can face today, from mental health struggles to online dangers and peer pressure. While tough to watch at times, it's a reminder of the hidden struggles many children face online and how different their online can be to ours.

### Key takeaways for Parents & Carers:

- ◆ Listening matters – Children and teens often struggle to express their feelings, so creating safe spaces for open conversations is crucial.
- ◆ Digital risks are always evolving– Social media pressures and online exploitation highlight the need for vigilance in all areas of our children's online lives.
- ◆ Early support saves lives – Recognising the signs and taking action early can make a huge difference.

If you're a parent or educator, Adolescence is worth watching—not just for the story, but for the important conversations it can spark.



## TikTok Challenges

TikTok challenges are tasks or activities—often involving specific audio clips, dance moves, or themes—that users perform and share as video content.

Whilst a simple 'dance challenge' can seem harmless and fun, as with all things on social media, the desire by users to create more shocking content to generate more likes, shares and comments can quickly lead to more dangerous and harmful challenges becoming viral.

Here's a few of some of the more recent dangerous challenges that have been trending on TikTok recently

**The Blackout Challenge** - Choke themselves or hyperventilate until they blackout, then film their adrenaline rush as they regain consciousness.

**The Skullbreaker Challenge** Three people, the middle person is told they are all taking a jumping photo, as the middle person jumps in the air, those standing on either side kick the jumper's legs from under them, causing a backwards fall.

**The Door Kick Challenge** This viral TikTok trend calls on users to kick someone's door to the beat of Ke\$ha's "Die Young" song.

**The Sunburning Trend, or No Sunscreen Challenge** Going outside and spending time in the sun without using sunscreen has been promoted by influencers to help reduce acne.

### DIY Dental Trends

Users on TikTok who have started spreading their own ideas about dental care. From filing down uneven teeth with a nail file and making dangerous concoctions to whiten teeth, to performing at-home cavity fillings and closing teeth gaps with rubber bands.

## What can you do?

### Talk!

Simple and short conversations provide children with time to begin processing before they are faced with a choice.

By making these conversation parts of daily life, it becomes normalised to talk about dangerous, silly or scary things they may see or hear about online.



### Conversation Starters

*Have you heard about the TikTok challenge where kids dare each other to eat Washing Pods? What do you think could happen?*

*Why is overdosing on medications dangerous?*

*Is it okay to break the law if a TikTok challenge requires it? Why or why not?*

Even if your child doesn't have access to TikTok, they will likely hear about it at school or from friends, so we want to speak to them first!

These conversations help guide children, without scaring them, through the dangers and possible outcomes of these challenges.

This helps teach them to think for themselves before they accept a challenge on or offline and question any other peer pressure they may face.

Remember, little and often, not heavy or projecting fear. This is a great step for building their **critical thinking skills** - a much-needed skill for all children growing up in the digital world today.