



Overuse and Gaming

Research from Ofcom shows that children aged 8-11 are online for an average of 8.4 hours per week and 15.6 hours for 12-15 year olds.

The pressure to be part of the digital world can be very strong for some children and young people, and for those left behind it can just add to the peer pressure of 'fitting in'. Some children and young people can end up feeling more at home in the online world than in the offline world. This can be especially true when children are able to play online, on computers and games consoles, against players from across the world. The realism and excitement of some games mean that some children can get so absorbed, they lose track of time or other interests.

What to look out for

You may notice some of these signs:

- Your child is losing track of time and forgetting to eat or drink
- They may feel angry or depressed if they can't go online or play
- You may notice them wanting a better computer or constantly wanting more time online
- There may be more arguments, lies, isolation and tiredness

As well as these signs, your child might see their online life as more important to them than their offline one and may develop a false sense of reality.



Consider setting parental controls – their main purpose is to filter content, but they can also be used to manage online time. For example, with the TalkTalk HomeSafe parental controls you can set limits on when your child can use online gaming and social networking websites: talktalk.co.uk/security/homesafe-demo.html

- Talk to your children and come to an agreement about how long they can spend gaming or surfing online each day – you may want to set different limits for each child and vary it at the weekend
- Think about how, where and when your family is online or gaming. Some families have one evening a week 'off' – no smartphone, social networking, gaming – you could give it a try and see how you get on, parents too!