

08/01/14

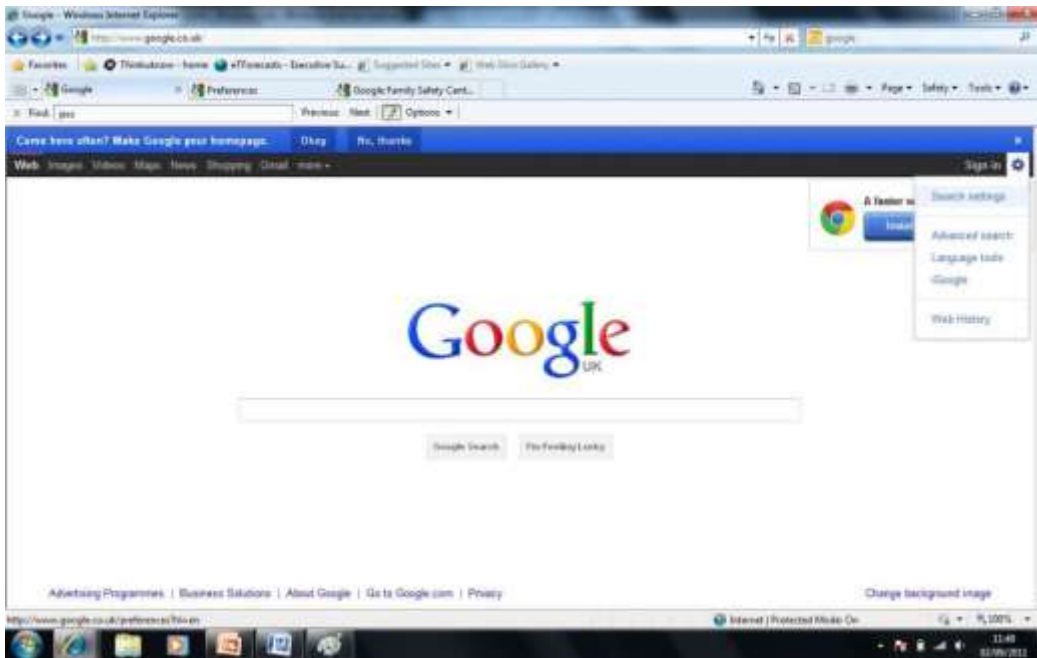
Dear Parent/Carer,

You will be aware the internet hosts many exciting opportunities for education. The online world is a wonderful place for young people to explore, with unprecedented opportunities for learning and creativity, but just like the real world there are risks and dangers they should be aware of and which we should all act to protect them from. As a school, we encourage the use of technology as an important part of our students' development but always want them to spend their time online safely. As a parent/carer you can play a significant part in ensuring this.

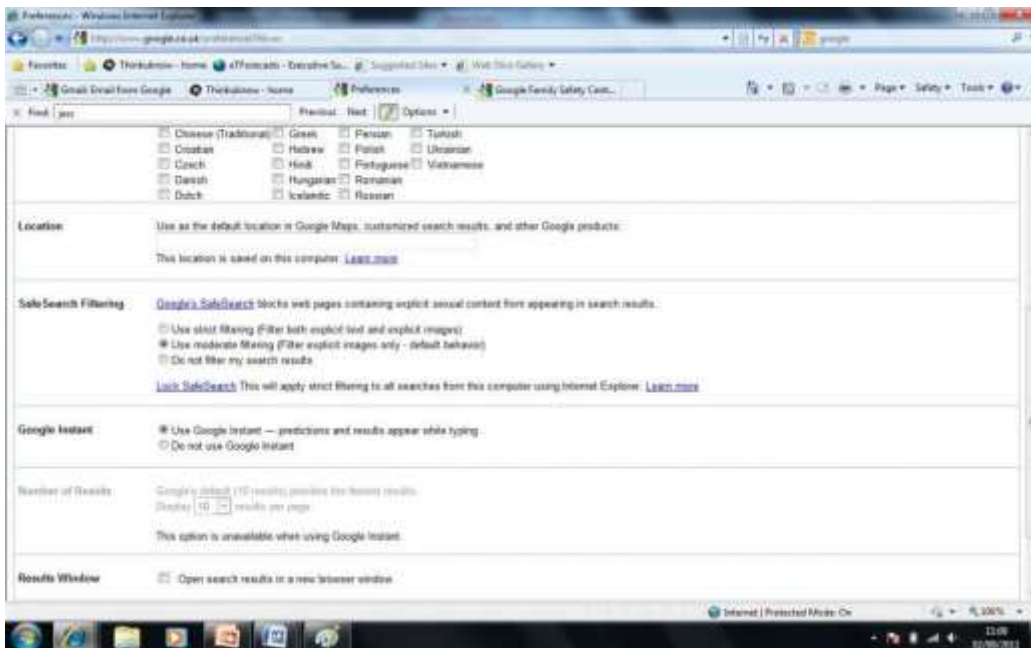
By using a few simple steps, you can help keep your children safe and give young people the awareness to know what to do if they feel uncomfortable about anything they encounter while on the internet. If you do not wish for your child to be able to access any inappropriate content online, please ensure that their computers, laptops and other devices with internet access are all fitted with parental controls. You can find free downloadable versions online or you can contact your internet service provider (such as BT, Talk Talk, Sky) for more information. As a **minimum**, please set parental controls on your search engines, youtube account and the mobile phone your child uses. One of the most popular search engines in the world is Google. You can visit Google's informative safety centre for **simple** step by step guides - www.google.com/familysafety/tools

Here are a few options available to you; they truly are simple to set, promise. Visit the Google home page – www.google.co.uk and click on the 'search setting' tab in the top right hand corner.





Scroll down the page and change the filtering options to suit your family's needs. Make sure you lock the safe search; otherwise these settings can easily be changed without your knowledge.



You can also set this on your child's smart phone;





Please be aware that no filter is 100% accurate. CEOP advice that you talk to your child about the sites they use. Why don't you discuss:

- Their favourite online sites
- What they enjoy most, the fun aspects of being online?
- What they think can go wrong?
- How would they react if things got out of control?

Let them know that you understand that situations happen online and that seeing 'adult' material can make them feel uncomfortable. Make sure they know that you are there to help.

Visit The Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) parents' information website for more information -www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents

There is also an attached document with information on computer games for children.

Computer Games for Children

Further to the information given on E-Safety. It is apparent that many of our children use computer games for fun. We feel it is worth mentioning some of the recent studies and findings concerning computer gaming.

Computer and video games have come a long way since Space Invaders and Pac Man. Today's games are much more complex and interesting, and the technology has advanced to the point where a gamer can become immersed in a multimedia-enabled 'virtual reality' or 'alternate world'.

Do violent role-playing games make people violent? Does spending too long at the screen cause people to become overweight and unhealthy? Do games increase skills and knowledge? These are important issues because many young people spend many hours each week playing these games.

The Good Points

So why do people play games? Is there a positive side to video games?

Here are some of the good aspects of gaming:

- Let's face it - they are great fun.
- There is some evidence that playing computer games improves hand-eye coordination.
- There is some evidence that playing fast paced action games improves people's eyesight.
- Some games involve physical activity, like those with a wireless remote or dancing games, and this provides some exercise. But research suggests these games are not a good enough substitute for normal exercise.
- Being a good gamer is a source of self-esteem for some young people.
- Most games provide mental stimulation and require some form of problem solving.
- Playing with friends can be an enjoyable social interaction.
- Online games provide people with a way to communicate with others around the world, which is especially good for people with anxiety issues or disabilities.
- Educational games are a fun way to learn.
- Games will probably be used for training in the future (ie. as simulators), particularly as computer power increases.



Violent Games

Video games are not all violent, but most of the ones aimed at older children are, and many of them are pretty gruesome. It has been estimated that up to 90% of games contain some violent content.

People are concerned that violent games might be causing young people to become violent - and there is some evidence to support this. Up to date studies have shown that violent games can:

- increase physiological arousal (the 'fight or flight' response)
- increase aggressive thoughts and emotions
- increase aggressive behaviour
- reduce helping behaviour (where people become less likely to help others).

These effects seem to be stronger in young people who already tend to be aggressive. It has been argued that more hostile or aggressive young people will be attracted to violent games, and that it is not the games causing the problem. However, even taking into account the person's hostility, it is clear that exposure to violent games is linked to increased aggressive behaviour (as indicated by things like the degree to which they get into physical fights or argue with teachers).

Desensitisation to violence has been suggested as a large part of the problem, and probably the most worrying from a parent's perspective. Desensitisation is when someone gradually begins to feel that violence is normal. When games reward players for doing violent actions, it is easy to see how this could happen.

Whatever your feelings on this topic, these are a few things you may wish to consider:

- Know the recommendations of ages (see below).
- Be involved in what they are doing.
- Try the games yourself to see what they are like.
- Set parental controls on your X-box and Playstations.
- Limit the time your child spends on the games.
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There is also peer pressure especially for boys to have the latest games, so it may be worth speaking to the parents of your children's friends to agree certain limits.



PEGI Rating Symbols used by Xbox and Playstation

The PEGI age bands are:



Game content suitable for children aged 3 or over



Game content suitable for children aged 7 or over



Game content suitable for children aged 12 or over



Game content suitable for teenagers aged 16 or over



Game content suitable for adults aged 18 or over

We hope you have found this information useful. There will be an internet safety event for parents shortly.

Regards

Sarah Jones and Angelique Coatesworth
Striving Success group



