

Cyber safety, pornography and young people - a summary of facts and helpful advice parents may find useful.

- The average age for first exposure to pornography is 11
- 58% of all 14-17 year-olds have viewed pornography online, on mobile phones, in magazines, movies or on TV
- 71% of sexually active teenagers have viewed pornography
- 42% of sexually active teenagers view pornography regularly
- More than a quarter of the boys surveyed use porn at least once a week (5% of them every day)
- More than a third of teens say they rely on getting advice on sex from friends, the internet, magazines and via pornography
- 90% of children have accidentally viewed online pornography
- A third of teenagers say they learn about sex by viewing porn

(Figures from You Gov's sex education survey of 14 to 17 year olds and backed up by a separate survey by the Centre for Sexual Health, Sheffield in 2007)

Advice to parents

1. Prepare your child for accidental exposure to pornography. Explain that adults view pornography as some form of 'fantasy' rather than reality and that, in truth, porn does not reflect real life, real bodies, or real sex - it distorts them. Encourage your child not to hesitate about coming to you about anything they see online which upsets or disturbs them.
2. Make a real effort to get computer literate if you want to support and understand your kids, you need to have a reasonable understanding of their world
3. Demand information from retailers on adult-content filters whenever you buy a new computer for family use (see below).
4. Ask your internet service provider (i.e. BT, Virgin, Tiscali etc.) how to switch on the adult-content filters that they already provide.
5. Apply safe-search filtering to search engines (i.e. Google, AOL, Yahoo etc.) that your family regularly use (see below).
6. Set up different user accounts on home PCs/laptops for every member of the family and activate parental controls on the kid's accounts.
7. Shop around for software that provides extra adult-content filtering.
8. Keep an eye on your kid's browsing history - not to censor or spy on them, but to keep them safe online.
9. Don't forget **mobile phones** can be used to send around images of a sexual / pornographic type

Laws around sex, pornography and young people

(Please note, that not all laws can be included here - look at the links at bottom of this page for more detail)

The Age of Consent to any form of sexual activity is 16 for both young men and women and for both homosexual and heterosexual people. This means it is illegal to have sex under the age of 16, even if both parties involved agree. **However** if both people are under 16 and close in age and maturity, **OR** if one person is over 16 and one under 16 and both consent or are close in age and maturity, the police are unlikely to prosecute.

If one of the young people is 12 or under the age of 12, the older person will be prosecuted as it is considered by law that a child aged 12 or under is too young to give consent.

It is illegal for someone over 18 to have sex with a person under 18 if the person under 18 is in a position of trust. E.g. teacher, social worker, foster parent, residential home.

Grooming - it is an offence for someone over 18 who has been communicating with a child under 16 (e.g. in an internet chat room) to meet or travel to meet that child with the intention of having sexual contact with him or her.

Pornography- There are no restrictions around the sale of pornography. It is not illegal to possess pornography showing adults over the age of 18 engaged in consensual sex.

Offences may be committed where the material is particularly obscene, violent or degrading.

Owning pornography showing children aged 17 and under is illegal.

Date Rape Drugs or similar: It is an offence to give someone a substance without their consent and with the intention of stupefying or overpowering them so that any kind of sexual activity can take place

Further information

www.parliament.uk

www.homeoffice.gov.uk

National Sexual health line 0800 567 123

2003 Sexual Health Act

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2003/42/contents>

Feeling unsure /want to know more - use these weblinks.

Know IT All (KIA)

www.childnet-int.org/kia

A Government-funded suite of educational resources from Childnet designed to help educate parents, teachers and young people about safe and positive use of the internet.

Kidsmart

www.kidsmart.org.uk

Aimed primarily at parents and people who work with children, this site includes top tips, resources and some "SMART" rules to help teach children how to stay safe online.

Thinkuknow

www.thinkuknow.co.uk

A set of sites, each aimed at a different audience (children aged 5-16, parents and teachers) with age-appropriate safety tips. Includes a place which young people can use to report experiences where they feel uncomfortable or worried about someone they are in contact with online.

Internet Watch Foundation (IWF)

<http://www.iwf.org.uk>

IWF is the UK Hotline for the public to report child sexual abuse content on the internet. It works with the internet industry and the police in the UK and abroad to get the content removed. You can report on their website, anonymously if you prefer.

UK Council for internet safety

<http://clickcleverclicksafe.direct.gov.uk/index.html>

Site for parents and young people, with a section of information for both

Safe search filtering

SafeSearch filtering screens out sites that contain explicit sexual content and deletes them from your search results. SafeSearch claims to eliminate most inappropriate material, though filters are rarely 100% accurate.

Although Google, Yahoo and AOL have filters available, by default they only switch them on to moderate filtering. To properly protect your kids you have to switch on strict filtering yourself.

It's fairly easy - by visiting the preferences section of each Search Engine:

Google - <http://www.google.com/preferences>

Yahoo - <http://uk.search.yahoo.com/preferences/preferences>

AOL - <http://search.aol.com/aol/settings>

Your chosen preferences are saved to your computer, but make sure if you use different browsers on the same computer (e.g. Internet Explorer, Mozilla Firefox, Apple Safari) that you set up the preferences for each browser separately.

If you do have an account with Google, Yahoo or AOL, it is worth signing in before setting your preferences. This way your preferences are associated with your account ID and can be carried from computer to computer when you sign in. It's worth noting though that if you accidentally log out (easily done, for example with Google Sign Out is top right near the close window button) the strict filtering will be switched off, reverting to the moderate filtering default - so do keep an eye on whether you are properly signed in

Mobile phones

Another area you may need to discuss with your child is the fact that mobile phones can now be used to "sext" - send sexual and / or pornographic images (there have already been cases where this has led to older offenders joining the group of young people passing around these photos).

- Discuss with your child what information they should and should not give out on their public profile e.g. not to include their mobile number as this may be traced with GPS and location aware smart phones.
- Discuss the importance to their future of putting only appropriate pictures onto their profile and think about what information they may be sending into "cyberspace". It may come back to hurt them one day when applying for a job etc.

Look at this website about privacy settings on facebook.

<http://www.allfacebook.com/facebook-privacy-2009-02>