



## **E Safety Newsletter November 2023**

Welcome back from our longer October Half term.

This month's newsletter we have selected some resources from our partners at National Online safety.

These are a Free guide focusing on fake news. The guide takes a look at how to tackle a range of potential risks such as embarrassment, negative influences on people's behaviour and negative emotions.

a free online safety guide focuses on Reddit. It highlights a number of risks such as harassment, trolling and fake news

The online safety guide focuses on Deepfakes. It highlights how to tackle a range of potential risks such as fake news, pornography and fraudulent use.

We also have a BT youtube video on how to turn on parental controls on your home Wifi and Internet

<https://youtu.be/ljJ1tDhjkBo>

Part of our Online Information Series



What you need to know about ...



# FAKE NEWS

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[www.nationalonlinesafety.com](http://www.nationalonlinesafety.com)

## WHAT IS FAKE NEWS

Parven Kaur, Kids N Clicks Founder

Fake news can be false information, photos or videos purposefully created to confuse or misinform. It can also be genuine information that has been manipulated to deceive. It is important that children learn how to distinguish between real news and fake news, so that they don't inadvertently share something which isn't true or believe something which could be misleading.



### FAKE NEWS ALERT!

For details, see page 13 ...



## KNOW THE RISKS

### SHOCK VALUE

Fake news can cause upset or shock to readers or viewers. Many fake news stories are written with appealing headlines and have content designed to create 'shock value', so the news spreads rapidly (common examples include the 'death' of a celebrity, company giveaways, news relating to supernatural events, or terror-related posts that provoke reactions).

### EMBARRASSMENT

Fake news is often deliberately created to misinform people – whether for fun, out of malice or to support an ideological or political agenda. As it's often difficult to tell the difference, young people can easily believe what they see and then share something which is a hoax or a joke, leading to embarrassment or ridicule.

### INFLUENCE BEHAVIOUR

Ultimately, fake news is designed to shape people's beliefs, thoughts and decisions: influencing them into believing something which has been misrepresented or which simply isn't true. This can shape how children think, behave or act in real life. It can especially affect their trust in the media or even in democracy itself.

## FURTHER SUPPORT

### REPORT THE CONTENT

Google and many social media platforms now have dedicated methods for fake news stories to be reported to them. This can range from sending a feedback message to Google via the page itself to the 'Report Post' buttons on Facebook and Twitter.

### PROVIDE REASSURANCE

If your child feels as though they have been negatively impacted by a fake news story, or has suffered some form of embarrassment because of fake news, it's important to be supportive and reassuring. Discuss with them how not everything that's posted online is true.

### IMPROVE THEIR DIGITAL LITERACY

If your child has been tricked by a fake news story, try to encourage them to think more rationally about what they see and hear on the internet. Advise them to question the motivation behind a story – such as why it's been written, and if it's trying to make them form a specific opinion or influence their actions.



## HOROSCOPES

New to page 18 ...  
Find out what's in your future!

## SPOT THE SIGNS

### CONSIDER THE SOURCE

Fake news stories can sometimes be identified simply because they are too ridiculous or outrageous to believe. Make sure that the website that published the story is a credible source, like a major news network or local paper which has the resources to fact-check published stories.

### CHECK THE URL

Does the website address at the top of the page look real? An easy way to spot suspect stories is if they're located on a news site with an odd domain name. So check the URL. Some shady websites try to incorporate a legitimate news source into their URL (such as [www.therealbbc.co.uk](http://www.therealbbc.co.uk)) or will slightly misspell a popular domain name.

### VERIFY FACTS AND IMAGES

Authentic news is usually backed up by official data or surveys and previous, similar instances of the occurrence being reported. Similarly, fake news stories often include photos which have been manipulated. Perform a Google reverse image search to see if the picture has been stolen from another source and doctored.

### RESEARCH THE WEBSITE

Be wary when a big story comes from a news organisation that you've never heard of. Some hoaxers will quickly set up a website just to spread fake stories and so-called 'breaking news'. Use the internet archive to research how long a site has been running – and check if the same story is being reported by more credible news outlets.

## ARE ALIENS HARVESTING OUR WIFI?!



Supposed footage of alien craft

Our groundbreaking exposé on page 4 ...

## OUR EXPERT PARVEN KAUR



Parven Kaur is a social media expert and digital media consultant who is passionate about improving digital literacy for parents and children. She has extensive experience in the social media arena and is the founder of Kids N Clicks: a web resource that helps parents and children thrive in a digital world.

# What Parents & Carers Need to Know about

# REDDIT

Reddit describes itself as a social news website where users connect and share stories, opinions and support; debate issues; ask questions; and chat to people with similar interests. Discussion topics are organised into communities (known as subreddits) that are created, run and populated by users, who remain anonymous throughout. Free speech is encouraged, and users – or ‘redditors’ – can vote posts ‘up’ or ‘down’ so they get more (or less) attention. Reddit is free to join, although signing up to Reddit Premium unlocks an advert-free version of the platform.

AGE RATING

13+

R/PUNNY

R/TRENDING

R/MEMES

## WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

### MINIMAL MODERATION

As sharing opinions on Reddit is easy (and anonymous), offensive or age-inappropriate content is frequently posted. Moderation by admins and bots does occur, but can't cover every community – so Reddit relies on users voluntarily moderating these spaces. Subreddits marked NSFW ('not safe for work') can contain anything from profanity to pornography, so are not suitable for under 18s.

### HARASSMENT AND TROLLING

If someone on Reddit doesn't agree with your child's opinion, they may feel compelled to say so – in no uncertain terms. This could lead to a public bombardment of hurtful messages. Likewise, Reddit users are highly likely to encounter trolling (where someone posts a deliberately inflammatory comment to provoke a reaction) on the platform, which can be distressing.

### FAKE NEWS

Absolutely anyone can post a story on Reddit, so sub-reddits are occasionally prone to bias, misinformation and opinions being repeated as if they are facts. Fake news articles often grab users' attention with catchy or controversial headlines, and Reddit is no exception. It's important that young people are able to identify fake news – and disregard it rather than sharing it.

### GIFTING AND SPENDING

Users can gift awards to the authors of posts that they like (thereby encouraging their favourite redditors to keep contributing) by spending Reddit Coins. This virtual currency can be bought on demand (with real money) or received as part of the paid-for premium package. Users sending a gift can also leave an anonymous private message, a feature which has been abused by groomers.

### 'SUPPORTIVE' STRANGERS

By definition, Reddit users interact with strangers in public through their community – but also have the option to do so privately. Groomers could repeatedly up-vote a child's comments or respond encouragingly to their posts to win their trust. Once they've built a rapport, the predator then begins messaging the child in private to obtain personal details or try to lure them into meeting in person.

### NEVER-ENDING NOTIFICATIONS

Reddit's default is for all notifications to be on. There are a total of 26 types of notification on the platform, ranging from chat messages and comments to updates and mentions of username. This would lead to a child's device being pinged almost constantly with alerts, frequently causing them to be distracted by incoming notifications rather than being present in the moment.

## Advice for Parents & Carers

### SORT THE SETTINGS

Reddit's user settings can help ensure that minors don't view adult material. Under the 'Feed Settings' tab, switch the Adult Content toggle to 'off', and enable Safe Browsing Mode (this blurs out any explicit images). Also in settings, you can turn off all unnecessary notifications, to prevent your child being distracted by every post or comment on Reddit, allowing them some tech-free time.

### RISE ABOVE IT

If a person says something critical or offensive to your child on Reddit, it's natural that they'll want to respond. Explain to them, however, that is exactly the reaction that trolls look for. Don't give them the satisfaction; instead, report the comment to Reddit Support for investigation. Blocking a user stops them from messaging or following your child on the platform.

### ENCOURAGE CRITICAL THINKING

It can often be difficult to tell if something online is real or fake – particularly for young people. It's important to encourage your child to double-check with reputable sources if what they've read is genuine. Remind them to consider what motives might be in the message – and to watch out for scams. Chatting about this regularly helps to develop critical thinking skills and good online habits.

### AVOID PRIVATE MESSAGING

Through their Reddit profile, young people can control who's able to message them privately – with options including 'no-one' and 'accounts older than 30 days'. These controls help ensure potential groomers can't talk to your child in private, and that Reddit's admins and other users will be able to moderate and report anything they spot which causes them concern.

## Meet Our Expert

Dr Claire Sutherland is an online safety consultant at BCyberAware. She has developed and implemented anti-bullying and cyber safety workshops and policies for schools in Australia and the UK. Claire has written various academic papers and carried out research for the Australian government comparing internet use and sexting behaviours of young people in the UK, USA and Australia.



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Sources: <https://www.redditinc.com/policies/user-agreement-september-12-2021#EEA> | <https://www.redditinc.com/policies/content-policy>

# What Parents & Carers Need to Know about **DEEPFAKES**

A deepfake is an extremely convincing piece of media that is created using artificial intelligence (AI), based on pictures and recordings of the subject. The name comes from the deep learning approach to AI needed to generate them and the fact that they're used to create fake content. Deepfakes can be made as videos, static images and audio – where a person's voice is accurately mimicked to make it seem as though they have said something which, in reality, they have not.

## Fake News

FAKE

The most obvious use to date has been to spread fake news; a politician or well-known figure can be undermined by someone putting damaging words into their mouths. For example, in 2018, a video of Donald Trump advising the people of Belgium on climate change was revealed to be a deepfake, while in 2021 a convincing parody account supposedly belonging to Tom Cruise went viral on TikTok.

## Potential for Extortion

A sophisticated deepfake video could be used for extortion, even if someone has not done anything to be blackmailed over. A deepfake could believably show a person in a compromising position, and – even if that individual was never actually present – the mere threat of the video being circulated on the internet could be enough to coerce them into paying a ransom.

## Fraudulent Use

Deepfakes are mainly associated with video clips, but audio versions *do* exist and are in fact much simpler to create. These carry obvious criminal potential: to commit financial fraud, for instance. It is possible for someone to be fooled that a trusted person gave specific instructions or authorisation during a phone call, while a fake voice could be generated to bypass phone authentication at some banks.

## Pornography

A 2019 study by research company Sensity AI found that 95% of deepfake videos online took the form of pornography. This involves realistically superimposing the faces of other people (usually celebrities or public figures, but members of the public *have* been victims, too) onto the bodies of actors in porn movies. Not only could this be used as a type of extortion, but it is also an appalling invasion of privacy.

## Advice for Parents & Carers

### Keep Profiles Private

Ensure that you and your family maintain a relatively limited public presence on social media. By enabling privacy restrictions, you can help to prevent scammers from having access to images, video and audio clips from which they could easily copy your voice and facial likeness.



### Trust Your Instincts

Ask yourself whether the content of a video seems plausible. If the person in the clip is acting out of character (for example, using unexpectedly sensational or divisive language), it could be a sign of a deepfake. Investigate the source: newly created accounts or websites are often suspect. Check if any previous posts from that account display an ideology that would want to either glorify or discredit the speaker.



### Search for Other Evidence

If the video is supposedly of a prominent public figure, then it is probable that whatever they said on the clip would have also been recorded by someone else (especially if it was a political speech). Google the person's name with a few words of whatever they said in quotation marks. If no matching search results come up – and the video has not been covered by any news outlets – then it is likely you are looking at a deepfake.



### Look at Details

The process that creates deepfakes sometimes leaves obvious traces. Look out for blurry edges and flickering on faces – especially on textures that are difficult to replicate, such as hair strands. Oddly rendered teeth or a lack of blinking may also be clues. Pay close attention to whether the person's mouth movements directly correspond to the words spoken: many amateur deepfakes fall at this hurdle.



## Meet Our Expert

Alan Martin is an experienced technology journalist and the former deputy editor of technology and internet culture website Alphr. Now freelance, he has contributed articles to publications including the *New Statesman*, *CNET*, the *Evening Standard*, *Wired*, *Rock Paper Shotgun*, *Gizmodo*, *Pocket Gamer*, *Stuff*, *T3*, *PC Pro*, *Macworld*, *TechRadar* and *Trusted Reviews*.



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