



Critical Thinking Online

Information for Parents



The internet gives our children access to more information than ever before. It's a wonderful resource for education and entertainment, but not everything your child sees online will be true.

Helping your child become a discerning and savvy internet user is a major step towards keeping them safe online. Developing good critical thinking skills will help them avoid online scams, uncover hidden agendas and steer clear of false information.

There are lots of things that your child will need to learn to recognise. Here are some of the main things to help them look out for.

Advertising

Advertising isn't always easy to spot in the digital age. Brands can pay for their products to appear at the top of a list of search results, sponsor content on popular websites or get endorsements from internet celebrities.

The law says that all paid-for content should be indicated, but it would be easy enough for your child to miss these warnings. Look for words like 'ad' or 'sponsored content,' or #ad or #spon on social media posts.

Clickbait

There's a lot of competition for clicks and attention online, and some media outlets exaggerate to get people to click on their stories. Your child should look out for headlines like...

'You won't believe what happened next'

'This might be the most epic thing [celebrity name] has ever done'

'Five shocking facts about...'

Catchy headlines don't always indicate unreliable stories, but it's a good idea for your child to think about how information is presented and why those choices are made.

Rumours

False rumours aren't an online-only thing, but the internet and social media can help them spread. Lots of sources all saying the same thing is a good sign, but a misunderstanding about something like a band breaking up or a celebrity death

can go viral in the blink of an eye – and corrections after the fact might not get the same amount of attention.

Official sources are generally more reliable, if not always immune to errors. On social media your child can look out for things like verified Twitter accounts (indicated with a blue tick mark) to show that people claiming to be public figures are who they say they are.

Find out more here: www.parentzone.org.uk/article/critical-thinking-online-parents-guide.

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