At National Online Safety we believe in empowering parents, carers and educators with the information they need to hold an informed conversation about online safety with their children, should they feel it is needed. Please visit nationalonlinesafety.com for further guides, hints and tips for adults.

Part of our Copyright & Ownership Series

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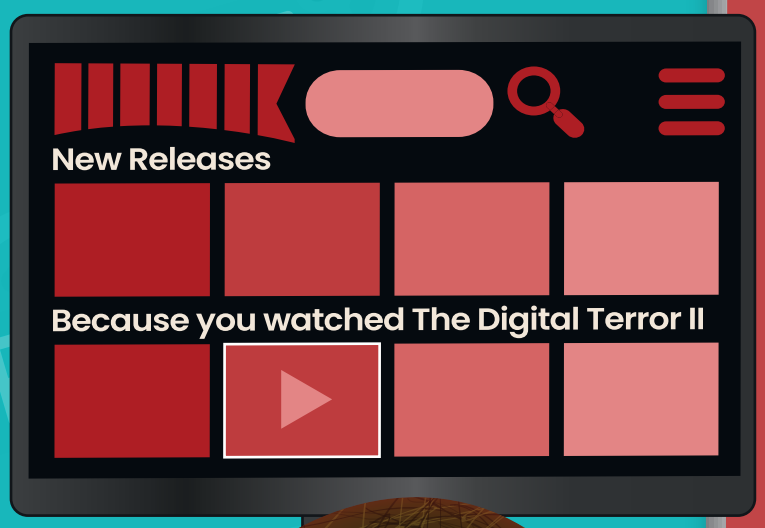
What you need to know about... STREAMING



What is it?

'Streaming'

Streaming is the latest step in a journey that's taken us all the way from records and cassettes to CDs and DVDs and, more recently, to downloads. It's a seamless way of watching or listening to all sorts of content such as TV shows, films, sports highlights and music, over an internet connection in 'real time', without having to download a file or store it on your device. You can either stream 'on-demand' or live. YouTube was one of the first video streaming services to go mainstream, but today many of the world's most popular websites are streaming platforms, including Netflix, Spotify, and BBC iPlayer.



Know the Risks

Open to scams

Children can usually Google a film or TV programme they want to watch online. Unfortunately, scammers have recognised this as an opportunity, and many unregulated and illegal websites try to persuade users to join their site with the promise of providing content for free.

Malware risk

Illegal streaming websites are usually loaded with annoying popups and inappropriate and potentially malicious ads. This can leave children vulnerable to viruses and the potential for sensitive personal information, such as login credentials and bank details, being exposed to fraudsters.

Addictive nature

Children who use legitimate streaming providers can find it easy to spend a lot of time on them. Streaming sites use an array of techniques to encourage you to watch or listen to as much content as possible, such as autoplay and related content recommendations, which can make it difficult for a child to know when to stop.

Inappropriate content

Most streaming sites host and produce content for all ages. They might have a huge library of content which can be searched, potentially opening children up to content which is adult themed and age-inappropriate.

Safety Tips

Use familiar platforms

Encourage children to stick to familiar platforms. If they're not sure which sites are legitimate and which aren't, tell them to research any platforms they're unfamiliar with before they start using them or come to you if they're unsure.

Implement parent controls

Set screen-time limits through the Settings menu of devices. Some streaming sites also offer child-friendly modes that limit what users are allowed to watch, and let you disable binge-watching features such as autoplay.

Use antivirus & update passwords

Always keep your antivirus software and computer security up to date. Perform regular scans and, if you suspect that a child has accessed as potentially dangerous streaming site, remove any malicious files that have been found. It's also good to practice to get into the habit of updating passwords on a regular basis.

Educate yourself

The best thing you can do is to familiarise yourself with the streaming landscape so that you have a good idea of which content is available where. Depending on which streaming services you subscribe to, in many cases you may instantly be able to work out off if something a child has been watching is available to them.



Conversation Tips

Discuss the risks

If you believe children have been using potentially dangerous websites for streaming, talk to them about the dangers they could be exposing themselves to. Remind them to only use reputable streaming services and that streaming content from unofficial sites is against the law.

Encourage other activities

If you're concerned that a child is spending too much time inside in front of a screen and finds it difficult to switch off from streaming, try to encourage them to take up other activities. This might be in the form of exercise outside, meeting friends or simply going for a walk to get some fresh air.

Our Expert



Barry Collins

Barry Collins has been a technology journalist and editor for more than 20 years, working for titles such as The Sunday Times, Which?, PC Pro and Computeractive. He's appeared regularly as a technology pundit on television and radio, including on BBC Newsnight, Radio 5 Live and the ITV News at Ten. He has two children and has written regularly about internet safety issues over the years.

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