

Spring 2025

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## Providing parents with more detail about schools

**Ofsted works for children, parents and carers and we will always inspect with their best interests at heart. Our inspections give parents the assurance that their child's school is safe and doing a great job, but we will never shy away from calling out weaknesses that mean children are not getting the education, care or support they need – especially the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children. We believe that if a school is getting it right for these children, then they'll typically be getting it right for all children who go there.**

We also know that we can improve the way we work with schools and provide better information to parents about their child's school at the same time. That's why we're holding a consultation on major reforms to the way we inspect schools and other education providers, such as nurseries and colleges. Our proposals for change follow the Big Listen, our largest ever consultation, where we heard the views of thousands of parents, professionals and children. Since then, we've already made significant changes, including removing the overall "single-word judgement" from school inspection reports. The proposals in our current consultation aim to take these changes even further.

Parents gave us a clear message in their response the Big Listen – they want a more detailed report on their child's school, covering more areas. So, our proposals include a new five-point scale to grade schools' work across more specific evaluation areas,

such as teaching, attendance, achievement, behaviour and wellbeing. Grades for these areas and others would be clearly set out in our new inspection report cards, alongside a description of what we saw on inspection. As now, there will be no one-word, overall effectiveness judgement. Giving one judgement can mask the mixture of strengths and weaknesses that almost every school has. Instead, our new report cards will offer a more realistic and detailed picture of your child's school allowing you to focus on what matters most to you and your child. That might be how well children achieve, whether they're safe from bullying or whether the school is an inclusive and welcoming place for all children to be. You'll get both an at-a-glance overview and more detail for each evaluation area.

Over 4,000 children responded to the Big Listen and they told us support for pupils with special education needs and/or disabilities (SEND) was one of their top priorities. I was really heartened to hear how important high-quality SEND provision is to children, just as it is to Ofsted. And this is why one of the new evaluation areas we're proposing to include in report cards is "inclusion". This would focus on how well a school is supporting disadvantaged and vulnerable children, including those with SEND, helping us to shine a light on the experiences and outcomes of those facing some of the greatest barriers to learning.

Our proposed grading structure includes a new "exemplary" grade to help drive education standards even higher, allowing our inspectors to

highlight and share elements of the very best practice that other schools can learn from. And where we find weaknesses in provision, we'll continue to give parents reassurance that improvements are being made and with the urgency required.

We believe our report cards will give parents that greater level of detail you told us you want. But I would really encourage you to take a closer look at our consultation and share your thoughts. I am confident that our proposals strike the right balance between the interests of parents and children, and the views of teachers and headteachers, but nothing is set in stone. We will listen to feedback and continue to improve our plans before they're finalised ready for introduction in November this year. With your help, we can make sure we have an inspection system that works for schools, works for you as parents/carers and drives higher standards for all children.

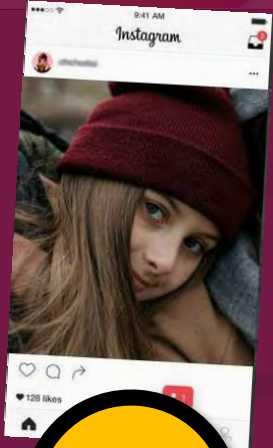


Lee Owston HMI  
National Director  
for Education



# Instagram

## Parent / Carer Advice



### What is Instagram?

Instagram is a social media platform which focuses on the creation and sharing of images, providing users with a range of filters and special effects popular among younger users.

Despite requiring users to be 13 or older, a study in January 2017 indicated that 43% of 8-11 year olds in Britain are using Instagram.



### Reasons for concern



#### Privacy settings

A key concern regarding children's use of Instagram is the fact that the default privacy setting for accounts is 'public'. As such, unless a child actively alters their privacy settings, all of the pictures they post to Instagram will be available to anybody. This could result in their images being seen by inappropriate individuals and might lead to receiving unwanted communication.



#### Follower lists

In a world where celebrity success is measured by numbers of social media followers, it is understandable that children might want to grow their own list of followers. A child's non-private account can quickly grow with followers, some of whom might not have entirely innocent motives.



#### Terms and conditions

Instagram's 5,000-word terms and conditions states that users agree that Instagram can use and sell their images for others to use (without paying or further consent). Instagram also retains the right to store, use and share the personal information and direct messages of their users.



#### Grooming

In 2019 the NSPCC reported that Instagram was involved in more online grooming cases than any other online platform. Where the police recorded the method of communication, Instagram was used in 32% of cases, in contrast to Facebook at 23% and Snapchat at 14%.



#### Mental health issues

A report by the Royal Society for Public Health found that Instagram rated as the worst social media platform when it comes to its impact on young people's mental health. Being image-centred the RSPH claimed that Instagram (along with Snapchat) appears to be driving feelings of inadequacy and anxiety in young people.

### Safety Tips



As with all Internet activity, talk to your child about how they use Instagram, the importance of not 'oversharing', and any issues they have faced.



It is safest to change the default privacy settings in your child's account from public to private. If your child is older and you agree for them to have a public account, you should discuss strategies for coping with negative feedback and for blocking users. You should also monitor messages they receive.



Given Instagram's reported impact on young people's mental health, keep an eye out for early warning signs of such issues with your child. Seek professional support or consult online services

such as **Shout** at the earliest point of concern.



Regularly spring-clean your child's Instagram account with them by removing any posts and images you agree are inappropriate and blocking any concerning contacts. If you have any concerns that somebody might be trying to groom your

child you should immediately contact CEOP.



# Discover a great read for your child...

## The Soul Collector

**Author: Helen Fairley**  
**Publisher: The Book Guild**



When siblings Sam and Jude are forced to leave London for a quiet village in the countryside due to their mother's illness, they expect boredom and isolation. But the village isn't as peaceful as it seems. Next to their new home is an old graveyard with dark secrets.

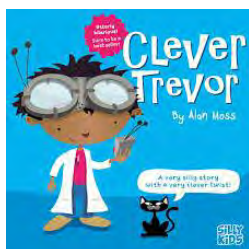
One night, Sam sees strange flashing lights in the graveyard. He realises the village has mysteries waiting to be solved. Sam and Jude team up to uncover a mystery that has haunted the village for centuries.

Can they help the spirits that wander the village? Can they stop the monster who's collecting souls?

With time running out, Sam, Jude, and their friends must act quickly to solve the puzzle before the Soul Collector claims his next victim.

## Clever Trevor Ages 4-7

**Author: Alan Moss**  
**Troubador Publishing**



He could juggle with soap and dance on a tightrope. He could make snails faster and outrun his schoolmaster. Like all the characters in the Silly Kids series of rhyming picture books, Clever Trevor lives up to his name. He gets up to all sorts of cheeky things that kids love to hear about, with infectious humour. Until, like most children, he tires of being clever and wants to be something else.

Children love to read his story again and again. He gives them licence to laugh out loud and an eagerness to read that parents and teachers love.

Clever Trevor and Unruly Julie are the first Silly Kids books to launch with lots more on the way to keep them entertained, engaged and educated in a fun way.



## The Adventures of Snuffle Truffle & Friends

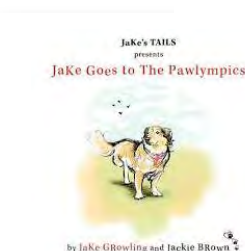
**Author: Paul Taylor** **Illustrator: Ashleigh Rose** **Troubador Publishing**

Paul's love for educating people and his affinity with wildlife shine through in this collection of rhyming stories. Through them, he seeks to educate others as to the behaviours and characteristics of some of our furry/feathered friends.

'a most charming and heart-warming collection of children's animal stories, beautifully written and very well suited for a young audience.

## Jake's Tails presents Jake goes to the Pawlympics

**Author: Jake Growling  
& Jackie Brown**  
**Troubador Publishing**



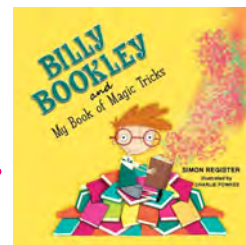
JaKe Goes To The Pawlympics tells the story of a disabled dog who has dreams to run as he used to before his accident. Now with only three legs JaKe had given up all hope of running again until his friend Charlie took control of the situation and inspires JaKe to try again, and train.

Charlie is a very intelligent Crow. He is JaKe's best friend but has only one leg himself which makes his landings a little scary. Charlie teaches JaKe that anything is possible, you just have to believe in yourself. As JaKe's self-appointed trainer, Charlie teaches JaKe to rest but not quit and other important skills like how to deal with bullies.

Throughout this heart-warming story, they show what can be done when you work as a team, demonstrating that dreams can be achieved. This unlikely duo shows the importance of friendship no matter what your differences.

## Billy Bookley and My Book of Magic Tricks

**Author: Simon Register**  
**Austin Macauley Publishers**



A fantastically fun story, full of warmth, adventure and the rising of an underdog. Billy Bookley is a poor and lonely young boy, whose long school days are cruelly spent being teased and bullied by the horrible boys and girls in his class just for the way he looks. Then one day, a magical twist of fate and fortune gives him the opportunity to finally turn the tables on his bullies – once and for all! This will change both his and their lives forever. Will he triumph against the odds? Will he dare to grasp this chance to take revenge on his bullies? Or will it all prove too much for this one quiet young boy to handle alone?

## The Only Monster

**Author: Matt Coyne**  
**Illustrator: Brendan Kearney**  
**Publisher: Quarto**



It's PHOTO DAY at monster school – time to mess up your monster hair and dangle your very best bogies from your nose, to get the perfect shot. But as all the monster brothers and sisters line up for pictures, one little monster realizes . . . she's the only one who's an only one.

That's when Daddy monster steps in to reassure her that no one family is the same – and just because their monster family isn't as big as all the others, it doesn't mean that it isn't just as special or full of love. In fact, if she measured her family by LOVE, it would be bigger than the earth, the moon and the stars above!

## Star Quest Academy

**Author: Adrian Lynch**  
**Publisher: The Book Guild**



For centuries, trillions of life forms throughout space have allowed humanity to believe we're alone in the Universe. Any alien who dared to befriend us has met an unfortunate end, eaten, squashed, sent to a zoo, or even planted in a garden pot. But our advances in space exploration now threaten every civilisation across the Cosmos.

Amelia, a savvy, street-smart orphan, is one of four exceptional children selected from around the globe to represent humanity in the Human Inclusion Programme at the intergalactic Star Quest Academy. Here, they'll unravel the Universe's wonders, explore strange new worlds, and encounter magical creatures. Earth's safety from invasion hinges on their success as cadets, but if any of them fail, Earth will be invaded by ruthless warlords.

When a series of sinister incidents jeopardise their mission, it becomes clear that someone – or something – wants them to fail. To save their world, the cadets must overcome their differences and combine their unique skills.



## Unruly Julie Author: Alan Moss Troubador Publishing Ages 4-7

She put something smelly behind the telly and rotten fruit in her uncle's best suit. Like all the characters in the Silly Kids series of rhyming picture books, Unruly Julie lives up to her name. She gets up to cheeky things kids will love to hear about, with infectious humour that adults will enjoy too. Until, like most children, she tires of being Unruly and wants to be something else. It's a very silly story with a very clever twist.

Children introduced to Unruly Julie love to read her story again and again. She gives them licence to laugh out loud and an eagerness to read that parents and teachers love.

## Bear

**Author & Illustrator: Natalia Shaloshvili**  
**Publisher: Quarto**



Bear is all set for a perfect day. The sky is blue, there's not a cloud in the sky and he has all of his most favourite things in the world by his side – a cookie to nibble on, a book to get lost in, a bright balloon to keep him happy and the perfect bench to take a rest on.

But no sooner has Bear made himself comfortable, than along comes Fox who wants to share the bench too. Bear agrees, begrudgingly. But no sooner has he overcome the idea of sharing his bench when Wolf pops up to ask for a bit of cookie . . . and then Rabbit jumps up to read his book . . . and then Elephant lumbers along to play with his balloon. And before Bear knows it, it's all become too much for him! AAAAAARGH! yells Bear.

## Messi Mania

**Author: Luis Miguel Echegaray**  
**Publisher: Quarto**



Messi's career has been built on hard work, resilience, teamwork, and determination, but his early years in Argentina were tough with many setbacks, including personal challenges that almost ruined his dreams of being a pro football player. Written by a top sports journalist, commentator and life-long fan, discover how Messi overcame these setbacks and went on to become one of the most successful, celebrated and decorated players of all time. Following his inspiring journey from Barcelona's youth academy to World Cup triumph with Argentina and then to MLS club Inter Miami, Messi Mania is the one-stop, ultimate guide to a motivating and inspiring global football icon...



# Making Phonics Fun: Engaging Children in Learning

with Sophie David | Little Happy Learners

## What is Phonics?

Phonics is a method of teaching children how to read and write by helping them understand the relationship between letters and sounds. It involves breaking words down into their individual sounds, and teaching children how to blend these sounds together to form words.

We like to think of phonics as 'cracking the code,' helping children see that they can always figure it out and master it with support. This approach gives them more opportunities to explore reading and spelling, rather than feeling like they must instantly 'know' the answer. By adding fun and exploration, we take the pressure off and make learning more enjoyable.

## Why is Phonics Used?

Phonics is used because it provides a structured approach to reading and writing, making it easier for children to recognise words and understand their meaning.

Phonics is especially beneficial in early childhood education due to its effectiveness in fostering independent reading skills.

## Benefits of Phonics

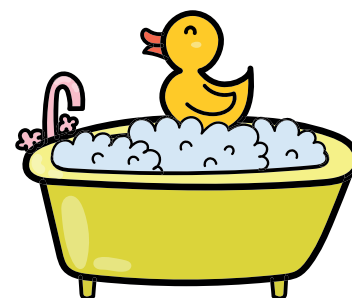
1. Enhances Reading Skills – By breaking words into sounds, children can decode and read new words independently.

2. Improves Spelling – Understanding sounds help children spell words correctly by recognising common patterns.

3. Boosts Confidence – Phonics equips children with the tools they need to approach new words, making reading less intimidating.

4. Fosters a Love for Learning – The repetitive structure of phonics sessions helps children enjoy the process and develop intrinsic motivation.

5. Supports Language Development – Phonics helps expand vocabulary and improves comprehension skills by introducing a range of words and new rules.



bath

## Basics of Phonics

Phonics has been designed in Phases 1-6, ensuring children progress step by step. Key elements of phonics are:

- Phonemic Awareness: The ability to hear, identify, and manipulate individual sounds in spoken words.
- Letter-Sound Correspondence: Teaching children the sounds associated with each letter or group of letters e.g. 's' makes the /s/ sound and 'ch' makes the /ch/ sound in 'chip.'
- Blending: Combining individual sounds to form words e.g. /c/ /a/ /t/ blends into 'cat.'
- Segmenting: Breaking down words into individual sounds to assist with spelling e.g. 'dog' is split into /d/ /o/ /g/.
- Digraphs and Blends: Teaching letter combinations that form new sounds e.g. 'sh' in 'ship' and 'ch' in 'chair'.





## How Parents Can Help

The more confidence we can build in our children, the better. When learning is enjoyable, motivation naturally follows, so the best way to support your child with phonics is through play!

## Here are some fun ways to engage in phonics activities at home:

### 1. Reading – Mix It Up!

Why not add a fun twist to reading at home? Try extreme reading by challenging your child to find a fun new spot to enjoy their book, under the dining table, in the empty/full bath, or even under the bed! A simple change of scenery can make reading more exciting and boost motivation.

### 2. Incorporate Actions

Make phonics more engaging by adding actions to flashcards! Pair each sound with a movement to help children remember them more easily. For example, pretend to eat an apple for the /a/ sound or place a finger to your lips for the /sh/ sound. This multisensory approach makes learning both fun and memorable!

### 3. Multisensory Play

Enhance phonics learning by incorporating sensory elements into your sessions. Try placing magnetic letters in water, playdough, or oobleck, allowing children to explore letter shapes and sounds through touch and movement. You can also use sand trays for tracing letters, scented markers for writing, or textured surfaces like fabric or sandpaper for letter recognition. Engaging multiple senses helps children stay focused longer, making learning more interactive while strengthening memory retention.

### 4. Make Writing Fun

Encouraging children to write at home can be challenging, so try moving beyond traditional pen and paper! Make writing more exciting by using a whiteboard with dry-erase markers, a giant roll of paper with paint sticks, or chalk pens on windows. You can also take learning outdoors by writing on the pavement with chalk or use sensory trays filled with rice or sand for tracing letters. These creative approaches make writing feel like play, boosting engagement and confidence.

## 5. Make Phonics Active

At school, children are often asked to sit at tables and work with textbooks or paper. At home, however, you have the freedom to explore learning in more creative ways. I encourage you to incorporate a physical element into your phonics practice – go on sound hunts around the house, play phonics ping pong using paper cups, write letters and sounds on magnetic tiles or Duplo with a dry-erase pen, or play "bunny hop" by jumping on different sounds marked on the floor. Get active and have fun with it!



## Sprinkle a little phonics into every day

Children learn best when they are engaged and having fun and they retain more when given the opportunity to practice. Here are some ways you can sprinkle phonics into your every day:

- **Phonics-Based Games:** Play games like 'I Spy' using sounds e.g. "I spy something that starts with the /b/ sound"

- **Bath Time:** Bring phonics into the bath by adding foam letters! You can even buy foam sheets that you can write words on with a pen. Practice spellings or create your own sentences while enjoying bath time fun.

- **Blend Around the House:** Make use of everyday moments like car journeys, walks to school, or after dinner to practice blending skills. As you come across words, blend the sounds together and ask your child to identify the word you're blending. Then, switch it up by saying a word aloud and encouraging your child to segment the sounds in the word. This simple activity reinforces both blending and segmenting, helping to strengthen phonics skills while making the most of your time together.

- **Word of the Day:** Make learning fun by exploring a new word together each day. Pick a random word—perhaps one from their spelling list or a fun word you find in the dictionary. Examine its spelling, explore its meaning, and create a sentence using the word. This activity not only helps expand vocabulary but also encourages curiosity and deeper understanding of language.

By adding these little moments of phonics throughout your day, you'll help your child develop strong reading skills while having fun together!

Discover 100 fun and easy ways to make phonics exciting for children aged 3-7 in my new book, *Read, Write, Play*, releasing on June 5th. It's available for preorder now on Amazon and Waterstones.

For more fun ideas to try at home, be sure to check out [@littlehappy learners](#) on Instagram and YouTube!



Children today are growing up in a world of smart phones, tablets, online gaming and other hi-tech gadgets. Using these devices from an early age, they have access to an online environment that is rich and full of opportunity.

The online world is useful for learning, development and exploring subjects in great depth.

Young people are also able to connect with friends and family across the globe, form relationships through online gaming, messaging services like WhatsApp and social media platforms like TikTok and SnapChat.

The online world helps connect us like never before, but it is also important to be aware of the risks and dangers. While children might seem completely safe while immersed on their devices at home, the web can represent a very real danger.

### ONLINE THREATS TO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

If the safety settings on devices and apps are not applied robustly, children can quickly find themselves exposed to unsuitable and unsettling content such as pornography, violence and gambling. Advice and guidance about safety settings can be found on the NSPCC website.

But children are also at risk of being targeted and sexually abused and exploited through apps and social media. Online grooming crimes within the last few years have reached record levels across the UK, with offences recorded by police forces in 2023/24 topping over 7,000 for the first time. This is up by a shocking 89% since 2017/18 when sexual communication with a child online was first officially recognised as an offence.

While girls are being predominantly targeted by offenders, making up the majority of online grooming cases (81% in 2023/24), it seems boys are often at the receiving end of sextortion crimes, where children are blackmailed and threaten to share sexual images

Recent Home Office data shows 38,685 child sexual abuse image offences were logged by police during 2023/24 in England and Wales.



This is an average of more than 100 offences a day.

Often, the pattern of abuse starts when perpetrators befriend children on social media chat apps, video games, messaging apps on consoles or chatrooms. From there, they are encouraged to move onto private and encrypted messaging platforms such as WhatsApp, where abuse can proceed undetected.

### **THE IMPACT OF ONLINE ABUSE ON CHILDREN**

Often with these cases there is a feeling of shame and humiliation, as well as the fear of being punished and judged, which can often prevent targeted young people from asking for help.

The NSPCC's Childline service is available to offer support to children around the clock, and hears from children across the country who have been targeted, abused or exploited online.

One 16-year-old boy told counsellors: *"I was talking to this girl on Snapchat who I thought was my age, then she said she was actually much older and got angry I didn't want to speak to her anymore."*

*"She made fake sexual pictures of me and demanded I send her £200, or she'll send it to my friends. I've reported and blocked the account but don't know how to be sure they won't send the pictures."*

A 15-year-old girl told Childline: *"A stranger online has made fake nudes of me. It looks so real, it's my face and my room in the background."*

*"They must have taken the pictures from my Instagram and edited them. I'm so scared they will send them to my parents, the pictures are really convincing, and I don't think they'd believe me that they're fake."*

The emotional impact of online abuse crimes on children and young people can be traumatic and long-lasting with many feeling guilt, shame, depression, confusion, anxiety and fear. This can lead to larger problems such as self-harm, eating disorders and even suicide.



### **WHY IS THIS HAPPENING?**

Many of the online platforms used by children are used by offenders because they have not been designed with children's safety in mind.

The NSPCC believes the tech companies have put the burden of online safety on the shoulders of parents and children themselves and wants to see regulator Ofcom ensure the firms have incentive to put child safety at the heart of their platforms.

We also believe the Government must be bold when it sets out how it will be upholding its responsibilities to children and ensure that private messaging spaces do not become a safe haven for the most egregious forms of online abuse. This needs to include how they will push Ofcom to strengthen tech companies' codes of practice.

Crucially, what will stop the increase in abuse is systemic change to all social media and messaging products so that they are firmly embedded with child safety features when they are designed and created as legislated in the Online Safety Act. All new online products must be properly tested before being made available for public consumption.

### **WHAT CAN PARENTS DO?**

Parents can do a lot to help their children navigate the online world safely, and that can start with regular, non-judgemental conversations with their children about what they are doing online.

As a parent, making it part of daily conversation, like you would about their day at school, will help your child feel relaxed.

It also means when they do have any worries, they're more likely to come and speak to you. Ask them about the games, apps or videos they're using – have they seen any inappropriate content, and if so, how did it make them feel?

Who are they talking to online? Ask about the friends they're playing or communicating with. Do they talk to people they haven't met in real life? Remind children they should not share private things online, such as personal information, links to join private group chats, and sexual photos or videos of themselves.

It is also very important to setup devices for children with parental controls and safety settings. You can find out more about how to do that on the NSPCC website, which has a huge wealth of advice dedicated to helping protect children online.

For the youngest children taking their first steps into the online world, there's Techosaurus – the online safety dinosaur who, along with an activity pack and some simple messaging, shares vital information in age-appropriate language.

There are also guides on how to start a conversation with your child about online safety. It might seem a daunting proposition but talking regularly with your child can help keep them safe online.

The **NSPCC Helpline - 0808 800 5000**, is free to call for parents, carers and teachers whenever they need advice with regards to child online safety.

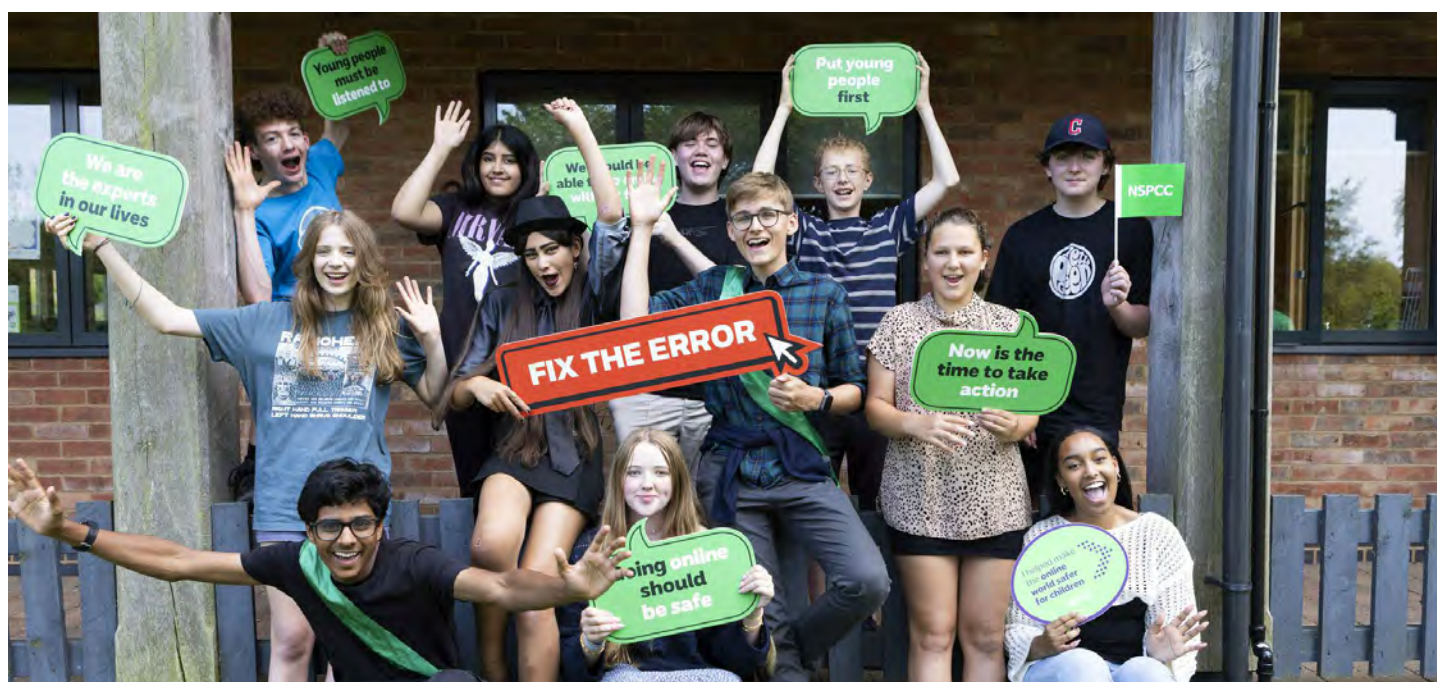
### WHAT CAN CHILDREN DO?

If children or young people have any fears or worries about the online world, there are lots of resources available. Simple measures can include blocking and reporting on social media, and the Childline website has lots of tips and advice including on mobile phone safety and guidance for when using social media.

Report Remove is a tool that enables young people to self-report sexual images of themselves, which they think may have been shared online. The Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) will then work to remove this content from the internet. Young people can access Report Remove by visiting the Childline website.



Children can also contact **Childline** on **0800 1111** at any time if they have any fears or worries about the online world.



# Snapchat

## Parent / Carer Advice








### What is Snapchat?

Snapchat is one of the image-based social media platforms which is incredibly popular with children. One of the key features of Snapchat is that, by default, messages sent through Snapchat disappear seconds after they are viewed by the recipient. The minimum age to use Snapchat is 13 but it is a popular and widely used platform among children younger than this.





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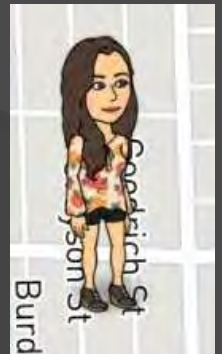
### Safety Tips


-  As with all Internet activity, talk to your child about how they use Snapchat, the importance of not 'oversharing, and any issues they have faced.
-  The default privacy setting of 'My Friends' prevents children from sharing 'snaps' with users unknown to them. However, children may change this setting and make their posts public. Ensure your child is aware of the importance of maintaining strong privacy settings and check the settings your child has selected.
-  In the settings options, ensure your child has Snapmap set to 'ghost mode'. This will ensure that nobody can see their current location.
-  Ask your child if they know how to report or block a user who sends them anything that upsets them. This can be done by going to the friends list, selecting the person creating the issue and then selecting the gear icon.
-  Remind your child that although Snapchat automatically deletes images once seen, somebody can copy the image and share it with others.

### Reasons for concern


 **Abuse and bullying**  
As messages disappear shortly after being read, Snapchat has become a popular tool for abuse such as online bullying as abusers feel they will not be held to account for messages posted once they are deleted. This is supported by the fact that if somebody takes a screenshot of a message posted on Snapchat then the person who posted it is informed that this has happened, making it more uncomfortable for people to take evidence of abuse they have suffered or witnessed.

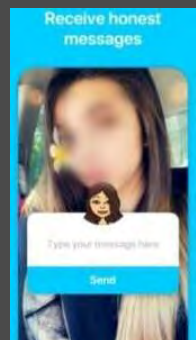
 **The Snap Map**  
The Snap Map allows users to see the live location of their friends on a map. Cartoon-style avatars are used to represent people in a move that was clearly designed to be popular with younger users. This feature can result in children sharing their location (including effectively their home address) with individuals.



 **Addiction-inducing features**  
Children are naturally more prone to addictive behaviour than adults. As such, the inclusion of features such as 'Snap Streaks' (where two users share pictures with each other on consecutive days) encourages addictive behaviour. Snapchat rewards longer streaks with special emojis. This can result in children increasing their daily usage of the app.



 **Risk of secondary apps**  
Snapchat allows users to link to secondary apps that can be used inside Snapchat. A recent concerning example is YOLO which allows users to offer people the opportunity to anonymously ask them questions. Such apps have led to online bullying and hate crime.





# 7 Reasons Adequate Family Time is Important for Kids

**It's no secret that adequate family time is paramount to building stronger bonds. It nurtures confidence and teaches our children the importance of interaction. Neglecting simple activities with the family can be detrimental to the healthy growth and development of children. Though most parents tend to be overly busy with either work or house chores, there are still ways on how to instil quality family time.**

Here are some reasons why you should make family time a part of your routine:

## 1 Bonding time = Quality Time

Spending quality family time creates lasting memories for your kids to cherish. It also creates a positive impact on their social well-being as it brings honest and open communication that they can incorporate into their social interactions with their peers. Be sure to never take bonding time with your little one for granted, no matter how full your plate is.

## 2 Makes the kids happier

The effects of having quality family time with your kids are far more rewarding than just buying them desired material items. While the entire family benefits from spending time together, it also can help to enhance your child's mood, attitude, behaviour, and general happiness. Increased family time can even help your child approach misunderstandings with peers with more maturity and less judgment, which can improve your child's overall disposition.

## 3 It boosts their self-esteem

Children are building their self-esteem at times that we may not even be aware of. Seemingly random experiences like a fun family weekend getaway, an "art sesh" afternoon, or a family karaoke night with the family can have more impact than you realize. These experiences carry over into their social lives and positively influence how children interact with their peers both in school and in the community. What matters most is that time spent together is enjoyed and cherished.

## 4 Improves the kids' mental and physical health

When children feel connected to the members of their family, they become more socially engaged and their academic performance gets better. Spending quality family time also plays a significant role in children's mental health. Behavioural issues decrease as children interact more positively with their peers in school. Positive family relationships at home can even decrease the likelihood that children will abuse drugs and alcohol when they reach adolescence.

With regard to physical health, children who are actively engaged with family receive guidance when it comes to personal food choices, which may decrease the chances of being overweight in the long run. No matter how simple the choice, when children are surrounded by positive nurturing family members, it will have an impact on their food selection.

## 5 Behavioural Problems Decrease

Spending quality family time together tends to improve children's general behaviour and yield a decrease in violent behaviour. The chances of children getting involved in dangerous activities like likely when they experience strong emotional connection during family time. As children continue to learn and thrive in a safe environment, they will incorporate these lessons into their everyday lives and gain self-confidence along the way.

## 6 Getting to know them better

There's no better way for parents to get to know their kids than by spending time with them. No matter how seemingly random, quick, or inconsequential, you are creating a lasting bond between you and your child... You can create this connection by simply reading a book together, and along the way, you will even learn about your kids' preferences, attitudes and attributes without much effort... Many parents ignore the value of spending time with kids and then end up asking why their children are not close with them.

## 7 Improves their academic performance

When children are guided in their daily activities outside of school, they are more inclined to strive for academic excellence because they have a strong support system at home. Even when they face failures along the way, they are more likely to receive positive guidance and mentoring. In effect, when children have meaningful discussions at home, their academic performance will benefit.

Children are gifts in which we invest – not just financially, but as in many ways... It is our duty to create lasting moments that they will cherish and carry on when they become parents someday. Start off by spending some quality family time and take it from there.

**Conclusion** - Family time is essential for the holistic development of children. It strengthens family bonds, supports emotional and social growth, and provides a foundation for lifelong learning and well-being. By prioritizing quality time together and engaging in meaningful activities, families can create a nurturing environment that fosters growth and happiness. **For more parenting tips to guide you through in parenthood, read more of our articles at Children Central.**

[www.childrecentral.net](http://www.childrecentral.net)



## Every adult can help keep children safer – Here's how

### Listen up, Speak up: A simple step that can make a life-changing difference

Every child deserves to grow up feeling safe, supported and valued. But emotional abuse - which is any type of abuse that involves the continual emotional mistreatment of a child - continues to impact the lives of thousands of young people across the UK.

That's why the NSPCC has launched Listen up, Speak up, a series of free online resources and in-person workshops, designed to help every adult spot the signs that a child might be at risk, and feel confident offering support or taking action. Whether you're a teacher, a neighbour, a family friend or a parent, Listen up, Speak up offers practical tools to help you look out for children and potentially change lives.

Emotional abuse – often unseen and unheard – can be subtle but devastating. From controlling behaviours to constant criticism or ignoring a child's emotional needs, it can leave invisible scars that last into adulthood. Listen up, Speak up shows people that protecting children isn't just a job for professionals - it's something we can all be part of.

#### THE EMOTIONAL IMPACT: WHAT THE DATA TELLS US

According to a new YouGov survey commissioned by the NSPCC, most UK adults - 94% - believe that emotional abuse during childhood can have a lasting psychological effect. But worryingly, one in six couldn't correctly identify key signs of emotional abuse when given examples.

These examples included being overly

controlling (25% failed to recognise this as abuse), persistently ignoring a child (11%), or pushing a child too hard (28%). The survey also found that two-thirds (66%) of adults surveyed said they'd never had any training or read any guidance about spotting the signs of abuse.

This lack of awareness is serious. NSPCC research estimates that around one in 15 children in the UK will experience emotional abuse - a figure that underscores the





importance of early recognition and support.

A 17-year-old girl who spoke to Childline shared: "Mum's never hit me, but it still feels abusive. She tells me I'm selfish and stupid. She breaks my things and controls my friendships. I feel so defeated and drained living with this every day."

Last year alone, Childline delivered almost 3,000 counselling sessions where emotional abuse was the main concern - a 5% increase from the previous year.

### REAL CONCERNS, REAL STORIES

While emotional abuse doesn't always leave physical marks, its effects can have a huge impact. Childline counsellors report that many young people contact them feeling isolated, confused, and unsure if what they're experiencing is "bad enough" to speak up about.

The number of Childline contacts show young people are living with these fears every day, and in many cases - their experiences are overlooked or misunderstood.

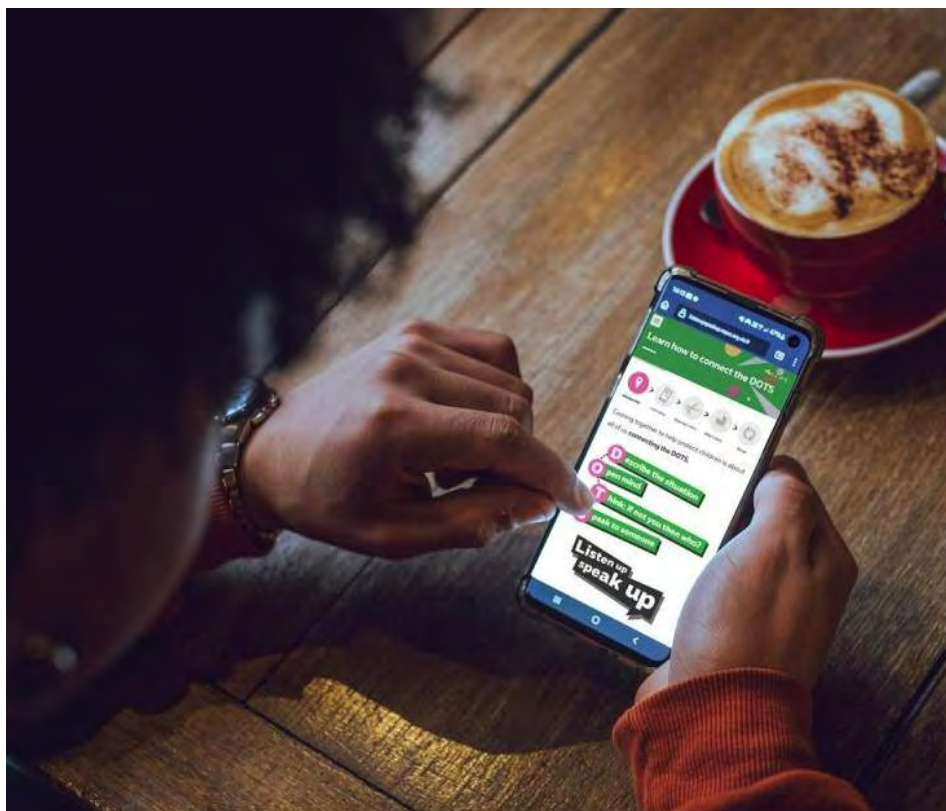
Recognising these moments is key, because when adults are equipped to identify these subtle signs, they can provide support before problems escalate.

### WORKSHOPS THAT CHANGE LIVES

This is where Listen up, Speak up comes in. A free, online 10-minute video is filled with tips on how to recognise abuse and equip you with the knowledge of what to do if you're concerned. For those who want to go deeper, the NSPCC offers free workshops, both in-person and online, through schools, businesses and community groups anywhere in the UK.

The sessions use everyday scenarios to help participants spot signs that a child might be at risk, as well as understanding how to approach a difficult conversation, and who to contact for help. They're designed for anyone and everyone, and organisations across the country are already sharing the simple safeguarding information with their staff.

Clarion Housing Group, one of the UK's largest housing associations, has already embraced the initiative. CEO



Clare Miller said: "By working with the NSPCC to share safeguarding advice, we've ensured hundreds of our colleagues are better equipped to support families and young people in our communities."

### LET'S BUILD A SAFER FUTURE - TOGETHER

At a recent NSPCC event to promote Listen up, Speak up, a panel of public figures, including TV presenter and Childline counsellor Anna Williamson and international swimmer Michael Gunning, opened up about why it's so important to speak up.

The goal of Listen up, Speak up is simple but ambitious: to create a network of a million people across the UK who know how to recognise and respond to concerns about children's safety. Whether you're a teacher noticing a change in behaviour, a neighbour hearing worrying arguments, or simply someone who cares, Listen up, Speak up gives you the confidence to act.

NSPCC CEO Chris Sherwood echoes this sentiment: "It is concerning that a sixth of UK adults aren't able to identify emotional abuse. With our Childline service delivering thousands of counselling sessions on this issue every year, we understand the scale and seriousness. That's why Listen up, Speak up is so vital. In just ten

minutes, any adult can learn to spot the signs and take action. Every adult has the power to make a difference."

The message is clear: You don't have to be an expert to help a child. You just have to be willing to listen up - and speak up.





# Spousal Maintenance - What is it?

**Dawson  
Cornwell**  
shaping  
family law

Navigating divorce can be challenging. Who gets what? What is fair? When does it end? One of the most difficult elements to negotiate is spousal maintenance. Spousal maintenance is paid according to a "Spousal Periodical Payments Order". Essentially, it's an order that requires one spouse to provide financial support to the other upon a divorce, usually on a monthly basis for a set period of time. It is to cover various expenses including mortgage, rent, household bills and general living costs.

Spousal maintenance is distinct from child maintenance. The Child

Maintenance Service, or "CMS" is the Government service in the UK that will make a calculation to determine the financial support required for children only. Usually the courts don't get involved with child maintenance decisions, unless the paying parent lives outside England and Wales or earns above £156,000 gross pa.

This article focuses on spousal maintenance. Specifically the concept, the factors the courts rely on when deciding how much (if any) maintenance should be paid and for how long. The notion of achieving financial independence on divorce is increasingly important.

## **KEY PRINCIPLES** **Financial needs**

The court applies the "needs" principle. Is the financially weaker spouse in need of financial support from the other spouse, as their own income (if any) is insufficient to meet their reasonable living costs once they are separated? If the answer is yes, then spousal maintenance could be payable.

For example, one spouse may need to be financially supported due to

them having given up their career to care for the children of the family or having worked in a significantly lower paid job during the marriage. An award for spousal maintenance should only be made by reference to needs. There is currently no entitlement to share in the other spouse's income on divorce. This is a common misconception on divorce – that there's a right to share in post-separation income. It is not the same as the right to share in assets that have been accumulated by the couple during their relationship.

There is no fixed formula setting out how to calculate spousal maintenance. This makes decisions about how much to ask for and over how many years difficult. The court exercises discretion by balancing the needs and the financial resources of both the parties. In particular:

### **a. Impact of age, income and earning capacity**

What is the current and likely future income of both parties? This is difficult to ascertain if one party hasn't worked during the marriage, so their potential earning capacity will be considered. This will involve looking at their age, any ill health,

qualifications, length of time since they were last in the workplace, recent work experience and the availability of jobs. Particularly, age can impact earning capacities as it can affect their chances of starting, maintaining or rebuilding their career.

Where a party's income is very insecure or unstable (for example a zero hours contract or income received through running a small family business) or where a parent has childcare responsibilities which mean they cannot work a 'normal' week, the court will take this into account when assessing reasonable earning capacity.

The court has to grapple with uncertainty about what the future holds for a separating couple and does its best to judge how much a person needs, whether it is affordable for the other spouse to pay this, and for how long.

#### **b. Standard of living during the marriage**

Standard of living applies in every case. Examples of factors considered when a court judges standard of living will be whether you own or rent a house, the amount you spend on groceries or holidays etc. Each party will be expected to complete a budget for themselves setting out what their monthly needs are. Their budget will be balanced against the income coming in. This assists the court in determining what is reasonable.

Whilst standard of living is not a decisive factor, it is relevant when considering how much maintenance should be paid. The standard of living should be carefully weighed against the objective of eventually reaching independence. Everyone will need to cut their cloth on divorce, and the court recognises this when it judges a reasonable standard of living.

The longer the marriage, the more potential there is for the economically weaker spouse to be financially dependent on the other spouse so the court will look at the length of time over which this standard of living has been maintained.

### **WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF SPOUSAL MAINTENANCE ORDERS?**

Spousal maintenance can be ordered by the court or made through a voluntary agreement e.g., through non-court dispute resolution methods such as mediation, negotiation between parties directly or through their solicitors, and private financial dispute resolution hearings (rather like a private court hearing).

There are different types of spousal maintenance orders, for example:

- "Fixed Term Orders". This is where a specific timeframe is set for payments, allowing time for the payee to obtain work or save money to achieve financial independence. A term (usually years not months) should always be considered unless the receiving party would be unable to adjust without undue hardship to the ending of payments.

- "Joint Lives Orders". This is where the paying spouse supports the financially weaker spouse for the rest of their lives until the first of them dies or until the receiving party remarries. These orders are now rarely ordered as there is a judicial push towards financial independence between separating spouses.

The court has the power to order different components of the above, for example part of the spousal maintenance may be a fixed monthly sum and part could be a percentage increase for bonuses or high short-term earnings i.e., footballers or athletes. Payments can also be index linked, so the payment sums will rise and fall with inflation. It is very important that, if considering a long period of time for maintenance to be paid, index linking is considered.

Spousal maintenance can be varied or terminated if there is a significant change in circumstances such as income, remarriage or sometimes cohabiting with another partner.

#### **CLEAN BREAK**

The court has a duty to consider whether it can achieve a clean break. This is a complete cutting of financial ties and it is often emotionally better

for the parties to achieve this. It is only permitted where it is affordable and fair. It is sometimes possible to capitalise a maintenance order to achieve this clean break i.e. pay one lump sum comprised of the total maintenance payments over a period of time, with the lump sum being discounted for 'early receipt'. It is important to take specialist advice if considering capitalisation as there are pros and cons.

#### **CONCLUSION**

Spousal maintenance is often the most contentious aspect of a divorce; however, the court's objective is fairness and to ultimately, promote financial independence so the parties can live separate lives.

It is crucial to instruct a family lawyer that understands your circumstances and will ensure that despite the end of your marriage you have the best shot at achieving a secure financial future.

*Please note that this article is provided for general information only. You must obtain professional or specialist advice before taking, or refraining from, any action on the basis of this article.*

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**Nutritious Packed Lunches & Fun Party Foods: A Practical Guide for Parents**

Is your child always super hungry when they get home from school?

Research shows that most packed lunches don't meet nutritional standards. Nutritious lunches support your child's ability to learn, concentrate, fight infections and help lay the foundation for a healthy future. Encouraging a love for healthy food from a young age strengthens the chance of lifelong healthy habits. Plus, a nutritious lunch doesn't have to be expensive or complicated; it can be both tasty and affordable.



A packed lunch needs to provide the sustained energy your child needs to stay active and engaged throughout the school day. Busy schedules, fussy eating habits, and the temptation of convenient snacks lacking essential nutrients can make healthy eating challenging. The key is to make healthy food fun, visually appealing, and easy to eat.

**Top Tips for Packing a Balanced Packed Lunch**

A nutritious packed lunch can be quick to prepare, affordable, enjoyable and well-balanced to support your child's growth, learning and energy levels. Here's how to make lunchtime both healthy and appealing:

**Portion sizes:** Use age-based portion sizes to get the right balance of nutrients. For example, a portion of fruit and vegetables for children age 5-11 is pictured on the right. Use your child's hands as a guide for other foods. Here's a handy guide for common foods:

Food	Portion Size
Fruit and vegetables	3 heaped tablespoons (80g)
Dried pasta/ rice/ noodles	Two handfuls
Cooked pasta/ rice/ noodles	Fit into two cupped hands
Bread	1-2 medium slices
Hard cheese	Size of two thumbs
Yoghurt	1 small pot (125g)
Chicken	Size of their hand
Ham / red meat	Size of their palm
Beans	Size of their palm

**Variety:** For better nutrition, try including a mix of different foods in smaller portions rather than a single large serving. For example, a small chicken sandwich with carrot sticks and hummus provides a more balanced mix of essential nutrients than a large chicken sandwich with just fruit.



Portion size recommendations adapted from the Caroline Walker Trust (CWT, 2010), British Nutrition Foundation (BNF, 2024), and British Heart Foundation (BHF, 2024)

**Energy:** Just like adults, children need energy (calories (kcal)) to fuel their body functions and stay active. However, their energy needs are higher in relation to their size because they're growing. So, a balanced packed lunch should provide about 30% of a child's daily energy needs. Here's a simple breakdown of daily energy requirements:

Age	Girls	Boys	Suggested Lunch (30% of daily needs)	What does this look like?
4-6 years	1,545 kcals	1,715 kcals	460 - 515 kcals	A sandwich, fruit, veg, water, yoghurt
7-10 years	1,740 kcals	1,970 kcals	520 - 590 kcals	A sandwich, fruit, water, veg, yoghurt, small oat bar
11-14 years	1,845 kcals	2,220 kcals	555 - 665 kcals	A sandwich, fruit, water, veg, yoghurt, slice of banana bread

Energy requirements adapted from The Caroline Walker Trust (CWT, 2010).

**Make it fun:** Presentation matters! Bright, colourful foods can make healthy eating exciting. Try shaping sandwiches with cookie cutters, adding colourful fruits and veggies to mini skewers or using animal moulds to shape rice. Involve children in meal prep to increase their willingness to try new foods.

**Healthy swaps:** Avoid foods high in sugar, salt, and fat. Use the traffic light system on food labels to help guide your choices - foods with green and amber labels are better options than those with red labels.

**Try these simple swaps:**

- Swap high-fat, high-sugar yoghurts for low-sugar, low-fat versions.
- Opt for plain popcorn instead of crisps.
- Make a trail mix with dried fruit, seeds, and a few chocolate chips for a healthier alternative to biscuits or chocolate.
- Be mindful that hard cheeses are high in fat and salt. Try reduced-fat, reduced-salt options like cream cheese or ricotta.

## GUIDELINES FOR A WELL-BALANCED PACKED LUNCH

A healthy lunch should include various food groups your child needs to stay active, engaged, and focused throughout the school day. Here's what to include:

**STARCHY FOODS:** Choose high-fibre options (like wholemeal bread, pitta bread, wraps, or pasta) to release energy slowly. This will keep your child more energised throughout the school day. In contrast, refined carbohydrates (like white bread or pasta) can cause short energy spikes, leading to tiredness later in the school day. Opt for lower-salt bread, or choose potatoes, wholegrain pasta/rice.

**PROTEIN:** Include lean meats (e.g. chicken, turkey), fish or vegetarian alternatives like eggs, cheese, lentils, tzatziki or hummus. Protein is essential for cell growth and repair. It also keeps your child feeling full throughout the day.

**FRUITS & VEGETABLES:** Aim for at least one portion of vegetables (e.g., carrot sticks, cherry tomatoes, cucumber slices) and one portion of fruit (fresh or dried e.g. raisins, apricots) to help your child meet their five-a-day. These provide essential vitamins and minerals for healthy development.

**HYDRATION:** Offer water or milk for improved mood, concentration and memory. If your child finds water too plain, try adding a slice of lemon, berries, or dilute juice with no added sugar to increase the taste.

**HEALTHY SNACKS :**

Swap sugary snacks for healthier choices like pumpkin or sunflower seeds for healthy fats to support brain and heart health. Other good options include plain popcorn, celery, cucumber, yoghurt or fromage frais (a good source of calcium for strong bones). For children with higher energy requirements e.g. those playing sports, energy-dense foods like guacamole, hummus, or cheese may be more appropriate.



Offering a variety of flavours and textures can make lunchtime enjoyable and nourishing. Planning ahead can help achieve this.

**EXAMPLE PACKED LUNCHES**

- CHICKEN AND SWEETCORN SANDWICH WITH PEPPER STICKS AND PINEAPPLE CHUNKS
- TUNA AND SWEETCORN PASTA WITH CARROT & CUCUMBER STICKS, FRUIT YOGHURT
- CREAM CHEESE BAGEL WITH BOILED EGG, CUCUMBER AND CELERY STICKS, MALT LOAF AND A PEAR.
- CHICKEN SALAD WITH PITTA BREAD, SWEETCORN, APPLE, YOGHURT AND HONEY.
- CHICKEN AND RED PEPPER RICE (KEEP WARM IN A THERMAL FLASK!), SERVED WITH CHEESE CUBES, GRAPES & CARROT STICKS



## Tips for Fussy Eaters

If your child is a picky eater, try these strategies to make healthy eating easier:

**Get them Involved:** Let children choose, prepare, or pack their lunch. They'll be more excited to eat what they helped make. Growing your own fruit or vegetables together can encourage interest in healthy foods – it's also a way to stay active!

**Sneak in nutrients:** If texture and appearance put them off, try blending berries into a smoothie, adding grated carrots to sandwiches, or mixing mashed sweet potato into muffins

<https://worldshealthiestafternoontea.org.uk/muffins-cupcakes/sweet-potato-muffins>

**Introduce new foods gradually:** If they're hesitant about certain veggies, offer small amounts alongside familiar favourites without pressure e.g. cucumber and celery sticks. If they dislike wholegrain bread, try half white, half wholemeal bread as a middle ground.

**Offer choices:** Instead of forcing a food, let them pick between two healthy options so they feel in control.

## NUTRITIOUS & FUN PARTY FOODS

Birthday parties, Easter celebrations, and playdates don't have to mean sugar overload. You can create delicious, nutritious party foods that kids will love with a few simple swaps.

**Watermelon Pizza:** Blend together frozen mango pieces and yoghurt. Cut a slice of watermelon into wedges. Spread the yoghurt on top and garnish with berries.

<https://worldshealthiestafternoontea.org.uk/desserts/watermelon-pizza>

**Banana and Chocolate Bites:** Mix oats, soya milk, and wholemeal flour. Fold in mashed bananas, raisins, and dark chocolate chips. Spread into a lined dish and bake. Cool, cut into chunks, and serve.

<https://worldshealthiestafternoontea.org.uk/biscuits/banana-and-chocolate-bites>

**Vanilla Date Caramel Popsicles:** Blend softened dates into a smooth purée. Mix with Greek yoghurt, vanilla extract, chopped almonds, and a chopped date. Pour into popsicle moulds and freeze.

<https://worldshealthiestafternoontea.org.uk/desserts/vanilla-date-caramel-popsicle>

**Egg and Parsley Sandwiches:** Hard boil and peel eggs. Mash with Greek yoghurt, mayonnaise, parsley, salt and pepper (optional). Spread onto wholegrain bread and cut into small sandwiches.

<https://worldshealthiestafternoontea.org.uk/sandwiches/egg-and-parsley-sandwiches>

**TIP:** Keep party food bite-sized and colourful to encourage kids to try a variety of options!

Visit the Caroline Walker Trust website for more ideas, recipes, and practical tips. You can also download our publication 'Eating Well for 5 to 11-Year-Olds' for more ideas, recipes and practical tips. It's an excellent resource for parents looking to make healthier food choices.



### MYTH-BUSTING:

MYTH: "Healthy food is too expensive."

TRUTH: Nutritious meals can don't have to break the bank. Try batch cooking, tinned/dried/frozen fruit and veg, and cheaper protein sources like beans and eggs. Buy seasonal produce, use leftovers creatively, and prepare snacks in bulk.

Tip: If your child dislikes crusts, save them for homemade breadcrumbs!

### MYTH-BUSTING:

MYTH: "Pre-packaged snacks are more convenient."

TRUTH: While convenient, many snacks are high in sugar, fat, salt and additives. Homemade oat bars or boiled eggs are quick and healthier!

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Many thanks to [www.cwt.org.uk](http://www.cwt.org.uk)



## What is WhatsApp?

WhatsApp is a free messaging app. It allows you to send text and multimedia messages (video, images and voice recordings) to people in the contact list on your phone. It also allows users to set up group chats where the administrators can invite up to 256 people to share messages and images publicly within the group. Although the age limit for WhatsApp was recently raised to 16 it is popular with primary age children and above. So what are the risks?

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## Safety Tips

**!** As with all Internet activity, talk to your child about how they use WhatsApp and any issues they have encountered.

**!** With your child, look through the groups they are members of and discuss any areas of concern you have. You may agree that it would be best to leave the group.

**!** Go to the settings (by pressing the three dots in the top right of the screen) and ensure your child's profile is set to 'contacts only'.

**!** To leave a group: Open the group in WhatsApp. Press the three dots in the top right of the screen and select 'Group Info'. Scroll down to 'Exit group'.

**!** If an admin adds your child back into a group they have left, your child can ask them not to do this. If they keep adding them then you can prevent it by blocking the admin. To do this, WhatsApp provide the following guidance:

1. Go to the group in WhatsApp, then tap or click the subject of the group.
2. Tap or click the phone number of the admin you wish to block.
3. If prompted, tap or click **Message {phone number}** or **Send Message**.
4. A blank chat with the admin will open up. Tap or click the phone number at the top.
5. Tap or click **Block > Block**.

## Reasons for concern

**!** Group administrators can invite people your child does not know into group chats. Some of these people may not have innocent intentions or may be older and post age-inappropriate messages.

**!** Some WhatsApp groups can contain images and messages which can cause distress to children. These might include violent images or videos, abusive messages and sexual content.

**!** Chain messages are often shared through WhatsApp. These pressure children to post them on to their contacts, e.g. by claiming that failure to do so can result in the child or a family member dying. Many children find such messages distressing but also feel they must share them with others due to fear of the threat.

and killed him. A girl named Loran got this message. She laughed and deleted it. I later came to her house and killed her and buried her in a desert. A boy named

**!** WhatsApp does not allow users to decide whether to join a group. Your child will be automatically added to any groups that their contacts add them to. If your child leaves the group the administrator can add them straight back in.

**!** Your child may be in WhatsApp groups in which huge numbers of posts are made. The alerts this generates can be an unnecessary distraction and can disrupt sleep.

**!** WhatsApp's default privacy settings are that anybody can see your child's profile photo and when they were last online.

**!** WhatsApp 'dare games' have become popular with children. These involve the child making a quiz about themselves to share with others and this can lead to oversharing of personal information which can be publicly available.

**!** Children can add and then remove other children from groups as a form of exclusion and bullying.



## The Importance of Learning First Aid in Primary Schools

**St John  
Ambulance**



**As parents and guardians, we all want our children to be safe and well-prepared for any situation they might encounter. One crucial skill that can make a significant difference in their lives now and in the future, is first aid. In England, it is mandatory for every state-funded school to teach first aid, making it an essential part of the National Curriculum. Additionally, it is mandatory for all state schools to have at least one defibrillator on-site, a practice that many private schools had already adopted.**

We have long advocated for the inclusion of life-saving skills in the school curriculum, and we were part of the Government consultation to introduce these vital techniques to children's ongoing learning. By equipping children with first aid skills, we are not only preparing them to respond to emergencies but also fostering a generation of confident and capable individuals.

It's wonderful that schools are focusing on first aid but there is still more that we can do to boost uptake of first aid skills.

At St John Ambulance, we are committed to supporting schools in delivering high-quality first aid education. We offer a range of excellent, clinically-approved free resources on our website, including lesson plans and videos. These resources are available to all schools to help them meet the requirements of the National Curriculum and you can access them at [www.sja.org.uk/get-advice/first-aid-lesson-plans/](http://www.sja.org.uk/get-advice/first-aid-lesson-plans/).

By the time children leave primary school (Key Stage 2), they will have been taught vital first aid skills. These include how to make an emergency call, what information to provide to a 999 call handler, the primary survey, the recovery position, handling head injuries, and dealing with minor bleeding and bandages. These skills are not only practical but can also instil a sense of confidence and responsibility in young learners.

While the Government does not currently plan to enforce the teaching of CPR to primary-aged children, mainly due to the physical challenges involved, the foundation of first aid knowledge they receive is crucial.

The amount of time dedicated to teaching first aid and the specific year groups that receive this training can vary from school to school. However, many schools prefer to focus on Year 6 students after they have completed their SATs. This ensures that children are equipped with these life-saving skills before they transition to



secondary school where they will then learn about CPR and develop an awareness of what an Automated External Defibrillator (AED) is and how to use one. The knowledge they will gain is invaluable.

Liz Connors, a parent herself and a Trainer at St John Ambulance, emphasises the importance of parental involvement in developing their children's first aid skills. She says, "I would really like to see parents looking into how they can help their children develop their first aid skills. This could be by encouraging schools to use the first aid plans available on our website, talking about real life scenarios where first aid could make a difference in an accident or even consider enrolling their children in our Badgers programme. If they volunteer with us, there is a full pathway for them to follow from Badgers\*, through Cadets\*\*, to becoming an adult volunteer. Many young people also find volunteering for us an ideal way to move on to further and higher education in healthcare, nursing, and medicine."

By taking advantage of the resources and opportunities provided by St John



Ambulance, parents can play a crucial role in ensuring their children are well-prepared to handle emergencies and contribute positively to their communities.

*\*St John volunteers aged between 5 and 10*

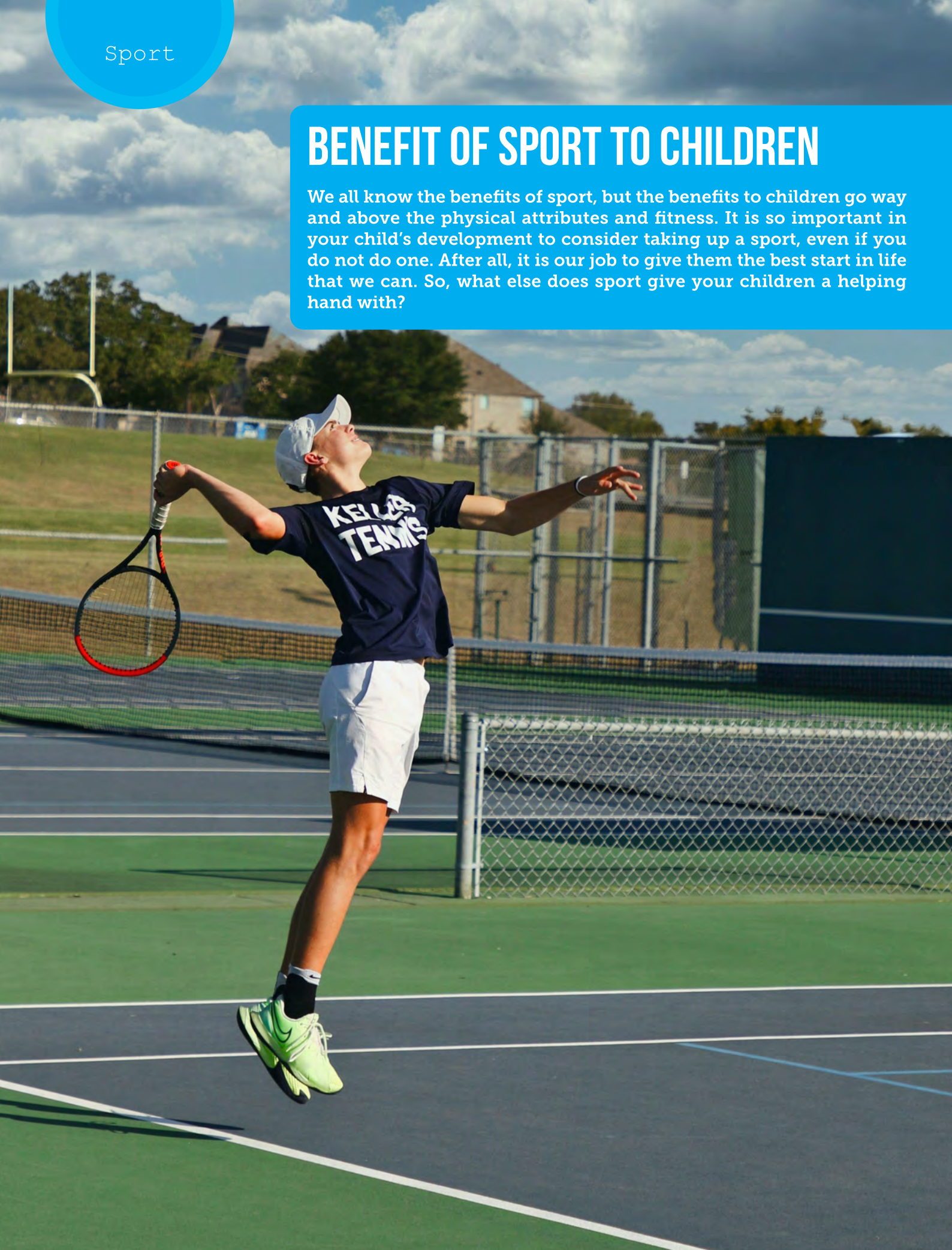
*\*\*St John volunteers aged between 10 and 17*

To find out more about our Badgers programme, please visit [www.sja.org.uk/get-involved/young-people/badgers/](http://www.sja.org.uk/get-involved/young-people/badgers/).



## BENEFIT OF SPORT TO CHILDREN

We all know the benefits of sport, but the benefits to children go way and above the physical attributes and fitness. It is so important in your child's development to consider taking up a sport, even if you do not do one. After all, it is our job to give them the best start in life that we can. So, what else does sport give your children a helping hand with?





### Physical Health

Participation is one way for youth to get the physical activity they need to be fit and healthy.

#### Participating in physical activity is associated with:

- Improved bone health
- Improved weight status
- Increased cardiorespiratory and muscular fitness
- Reduced risk of cancer and diabetes

#### Participating in sports is associated with:

- Increased physical activity levels
- Improved cardiovascular fitness
- Decreased body fat percentage for girls
- Increased overall quality of life

### Educational and Career Success

#### Participating in sports is associated with:

- Improved teamwork, social skills, and social responsibility
- Improved life skills (e.g., goal setting, time management, work ethic, empathy, negotiation)
- Increased empowerment, personal responsibility, and self-control
- Improved educational and occupational skills (e.g., determination, perseverance, grit, resilience, critical thinking)
- Higher levels of academic achievement
- Greater leadership qualities
- High school athletes are more likely to attend and graduate from a four-year college 10, 33, 38–41

### Lifelong Participation

Most adults who play sports participated when they were younger. This means they built the habit of physical activity early and are reaping the rewards in adulthood.

- Lifelong participation in sports can lead to improved mental health outcomes.
- Over 50% of adults who participate

in sports believe that participation reduces stress and improves mental health.

- Adolescents who play sports are 8 times more likely to be physically active at age 24 than those who do not play sports.
- Participating in sports leads to immediate psychological benefits, and these can continue even after retirement from sports.



### Mental, Emotional, and Social Health

#### Participating in sports is associated with:

- Lower rates of anxiety and depression
- Lower amounts of stress
- Higher self-esteem and confidence
- Increased cognitive performance
- Increased creativity
- Greater enjoyment of all forms of physical activity

#### Improved psychological and emotional well-being for individuals with disabilities physical well-being that show the positive impact of sports on youth development:

- Lower risk of future illness, including heart disease, cancer, stroke, and diabetes
- Lower recorded instances of drug abuse
- Greater development of hand-eye coordination, functional movement skills, endurance, and strength
- Better development of bones, muscles, ligaments, and tendons
- Improved sleep
- Greater ability to physically relax and therefore avoid the complications of chronic muscle pain

Additionally, studies have drawn a correlation between participation in youth sports and higher self-esteem and happiness and — for girls in particular — between participation in youth sports and a healthier body image.

### What role do parents play in children's sports?

To keep your child interested and enjoying sport, try to make it a positive experience for them. Focus on having fun, giving it a try and being active, rather than winning or losing.

You can play a positive role in your child's sport and encourage good sportsmanship, by:

- praising your child and their teammates' efforts, even if they don't win
- encourage your child to try and do their best

Make sure comments from the sidelines are positive. Don't criticise children who make mistakes. Never abuse a player, coach, umpire or the other team.

Talking to your child about their safety You can help to ensure that your child is playing sport in a safe environment. This will help to protect them from injury or harm. Teaching your child to be safe can help them throughout their life.

When playing sport, your child should feel safe, happy and included. It's a good idea to talk to your child about what to do if they feel unsafe. Feeling unsafe might also mean feeling:

- uncomfortable
- scared
- threatened

#### It's important that your child knows that they can set boundaries for the people around them. You can teach them:

- how to say "no" if something is not right
- that no one is allowed to touch them in a way they are not comfortable with
- that no one is allowed to touch their private parts

#### If your child is feeling unsafe, it's important that they know:

- they can speak to you or a trusted adult, like you, other friends or family members, their coach or other staff
- they will not be in trouble for saying that they feel unsafe

*Many thanks to University of San Diego and Health Direct*

[www.healthdirect.gov.au](http://www.healthdirect.gov.au)  
[www.pce.sandiego.edu](http://www.pce.sandiego.edu)

## Benefits of Returning to Education

Returning to education as an adult can be a daunting prospect, with many things to consider before you can make a decision.



**There are challenges to overcome, such as your existing responsibilities, financial considerations and time management. However, you won't be alone, research shows the number of adults who participated in adult education increased by 4% in recent years. Although the challenges can be nerve wracking, these can be outweighed by the numerous potential benefits.**

**Below, we explore seven of the top benefits of returning to education as an adult.**

**1. Gain relevant skills and qualifications** - Returning to education as an adult, when you may have more of an idea about your dream career, allows you to acquire new skills (including soft skills and hard skills), knowledge and qualifications that align with your career goals. In an ever-more competitive job market, this demonstrates your commitment to professional development and gives you an edge over other candidates.

**2. Improve your earning potential** - By returning to education to gain new or additional qualifications, you may be able to command a higher salary, improving your earnings potential and financial stability. Achieving higher qualifications can also provide you with stronger leverage during salary negotiations or job offers.

**3. You're more experienced** - The skills you've acquired in your adult life, both work and personal, will stand you in good stead when returning to education. Compared to

when you were at school or college, you'll be more disciplined, have better teamwork skills, and have more experience in setting and working towards goals.

**4. Flexibility** - A major factor in your decision to return to education may be around balancing the course against your other commitments such as work and family life. However, education providers understand that adult learners have extra responsibilities and will therefore look to accommodate your needs whenever possible.

**5. Improved mental stimulation** - This mental stimulation can help prevent cognitive decline and maintain mental agility throughout life. Also, the intellectual stimulation of learning can provide a sense of purpose and fulfillment, improving overall well-being and mental health.

**6. Improved confidence** - Returning to education empowers individuals, providing them with a sense of accomplishment and personal growth. Successfully navigating academic challenges builds resilience and problem-solving skills, leading to a significant boost in self-esteem.

**7. Improved quality of life** - Higher education can significantly improve an individual's quality of life. Increased earning potential, enhanced job security, and greater career satisfaction all contribute to a more comfortable and fulfilling lifestyle.

**8. Expanded career options** - New qualifications significantly expand career options and increase employability. Whether it's advancing within a current role or pursuing a completely different career path, education provides the necessary skills and credentials you need to enhance your CV.

It's never too late to push further in your career, and in today's dynamic job market, continuous learning is crucial for adaptability and career success. Education equips individuals with the tools and knowledge to navigate career changes and thrive in a competitive job market.

**9. Improved quality of life** - Higher education can significantly improve an individual's quality of life. Increased earning potential, enhanced job security, and greater career satisfaction all contribute to a more comfortable and fulfilling lifestyle.

Also, as mentioned earlier, education can positively impact overall health and well-being. Engaging in learning can reduce stress levels, increase social interaction, and promote a more active and fulfilling lifestyle.

[www.totalpeople.co.uk](http://www.totalpeople.co.uk)





## EASTER BANANA BREAD

This recipe has been donated by Aoife Kelly, a Student Nutritionist at ATU.

**1¼ cup (150 g)  
wholegrain flour**  
**¾ cup (90 g)  
self-rising flour**  
**1 tsp cinnamon**  
**1 tsp bicarbonate powder**  
**4 bananas**  
**3 medium eggs**  
**1 Tbsp honey**  
**½ Tbsp vanilla extract**  
**½ Tbsp brown sugar**  
**12 (40 g) mini-Cadbury eggs**  
**8 small squares (40 g)  
dark chocolate**

### METHOD

1. Wash hands.
2. Preheat the oven to 180°C / 160°C Fan / 350°F / Gas Mark 4.
3. In a mixing bowl, combine all the dry ingredients: wholegrain flour, self-rising flour, bicarbonate of soda, brown sugar, and cinnamon. Stir together.
4. In a separate bowl, mash the bananas. Add the vanilla extract, honey, and whisked eggs. Stir well to combine.
5. Add the banana mixture to the dry ingredients and mix until fully combined.
6. Pour the mixture into a non-stick bread tin.
7. Place the tin on a tray in the middle of the oven and bake for 40 minutes.
8. Once baked, allow the bread to cool before removing it from the tin.
9. Melt the dark chocolate in a microwave or in a glass bowl over boiling water until melted.
10. Pour the melted chocolate over the banana bread.
11. Crush the mini eggs by placing them in a clean tea towel and gently crushing them with a rolling pin.
12. Sprinkle the crushed eggs over the melted chocolate and allow it to fully set before serving.

Enjoy this healthy banana bread with an Easter-inspired twist. This delicious combination of banana bread and melted chocolate is a healthier option compared to traditional Easter treats. The use of wholegrain flour adds fibre, while the bananas and honey provide a natural sweetness. Dark chocolate adds antioxidants, which protect cells from damage, making this a nutritious and indulgent treat!

**Serves: 12 | Dietary: Suitable for vegetarians**  
**Preparation time: 15 minutes (banana bread)  
and 5 minutes (decoration)**  
**Cooking time: 40 minutes**  
**Contains; Gluten, Wheat (wholegrain flour and  
self-rising flour), milk (Cadbury mini eggs), eggs.**

### NUTRITION INFORMATION

Per serving: average slice (75g) | Total calories: 165 kcal  
Fat: 3.8g of which saturates: 1.7g | Carbohydrate: 26.0g  
of which sugars: 12g | Fibre: 2.6g | Protein: 5.2g | Salt: 0.35g

### NUTRITION FACTS

- This Easter Banana Bread offers a good source of fibre, protein and B vitamins (Niacin, B6 and B12).
- B12 contributes to the reduction of tiredness and fatigue, and to the normal function of the immune system.
- Several bioactive substances, including phenolics, carotenoids, biogenic amines, and phytosterols, are found in bananas. Some research suggests that these substances are particularly desired for the diet since they have a variety of beneficial impacts on human health and well-being.

### VARIATIONS

- For a lower calorie option, this does not have to be easter inspired by dark chocolate and mini eggs.
- This bread can be served with light cream cheese.

# TikTok

## Parent / Carer Advice








### What is TikTok?

TikTok is a social media app where users share short video clips of 15 seconds duration. It started out as an app named 'Musically' and was used to share videos of dancing and lip-syncing to music. Much of the content on TikTok still reflects these origins, but popular videos now also include pets, makeup, magic tricks, fashion, art, people reacting to situations, etc. According to OSA research, TikTok is now as widely used by 11-14 year olds as SnapChat and Instagram.










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### Safety Tips

-  As with all Internet activity, talk to your child about how they use TikTok and any issues they have encountered.
-  Discuss whether it would be best to change your child's account to private to avoid interactions with non-friends. If you agree to keep the account public you should discuss strategies for coping with negative feedback and for blocking users.
-  Help your child to spring clean their account from time to time by removing videos you agree to be inappropriate.
-  Ensure your child knows not to post videos in their school uniform. Also discuss how recording videos at school might break school rules and what the consequences could be.
-  The TikTok settings allow you to set a time limit for how long each day you want your child to be able to use the app. This can be password protected to ensure they stick to the limit.



### Reasons for concern

-  TikTok has a minimum age rating of 13 and anybody under 18 should have parental permission to use the app. However, new users simply enter a date of birth to indicate their age and there are no verification steps. As such, children of any age can create an account by using a false date of birth.
-  New users will be shown a range of video clips the app feels may be of interest. Many of these will quickly expose users to offensive language which will be inappropriate for children.
-  The clothing worn and the type of dancing in some videos could be deemed sexualised and therefore something that might be inappropriate for younger users to be exposed to.
-  The default privacy settings in the app are concerning. Although only friends can send users direct messages, the videos posted by users can be seen by anybody and anybody can like / comment on the videos. New users are also available for anybody to perform a musical duet with. Such default settings can leave children vulnerable to unwanted communication from others.
-  Many children in the UK are posting videos to TikTok where they are wearing their school uniform, making it possible for strangers to identify their location.
-  The nature of videos children are posting to TikTok (singing, dancing, etc) can leave them vulnerable to receiving negative comments which can have an impact on mental health.
-  The company that owns TikTok is facing legal issues and stands accused of illegally collecting data on children (when it was Musically) and the app has been deemed a 'potential security risk by the FBI'.