



Video Chat and Webcams



Webcams have become an increasingly popular and useful tool for young people and adults alike. Many young people enjoy chatting face to face with family and friends through services such as Skype and FaceTime. These also provide opportunities for use in the classroom; allowing one class to chat to another overseas or allowing pupils to hold their own webinar. Webcams also allow the scanning of barcodes and QR codes to link to information and some games consoles allow the use of a camera to video chat or capture footage of someone playing a game.

How can I support young people?



There are a huge number of positive uses and potential for using webcams as a tool for communication and searching for information and a number of sites and services may wish to access a webcam. The advice below can be used to support young people in minimising the risks associated with webcams and video chatting.

Top Tips

- **Think before you cam**
Encourage young people to always consider who they are chatting to and what they are sharing with others. Sharing photos or video taken via a webcam can give away personal information. Make young people aware that webcam footage can also be recorded by someone and then potentially shared and uploaded anywhere online.
- **Online friendship**
On some services young people may receive chat requests from people they don't know. Remind them it's far better to stick to chatting with people they know in the offline world too; their family and friends. If a site or service has privacy settings, encourage young people to be aware of the tools available and to always make use of them to control who can contact them.
- **Webcam content online**
Some webcam chat sites allow users to chat to and see strangers online and may put them at risk of seeing pornographic content or adult behaviour on webcam. This content should always be reported to the website/service.
- **Just say no**
Online users may use webcam chat to convince young people to appear naked on camera or perform sexually suggestive acts. This can then be recorded by the watcher and be potentially used to threaten or blackmail. Inform young people that if someone ever asks them to do or say anything on camera that makes them feel uncomfortable then they can just say no and tell an adult they trust. Remind them that **it is never too late to tell someone**. They can also block or report a user to the website/service if the harassment continues.
- **Tell someone**
If a young person has been the subject of inappropriate sexual contact or approach by another person via webcam or other forms of online communication then it is vital to tell a trusted adult and to report it to the police via the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (www.ceop.police.uk).

Technical Advice

- **Emails and links**
Webcams can be affected by viruses so encourage young people to be wary of emails and messages on social networks from strangers that invite them to click on a link or open an attachment. These may actually contain malicious files or 'trojans' which allow the stranger to control a webcam or device remotely.

Remind young people to ensure that antivirus and firewall protection is kept up to date on devices that use webcams.
- **Think where a webcam is in the home**
Advise young people that webcams connected to computers should not be located in bedrooms or more private areas of the house. Although it is rare, there have been cases of webcams being hacked by programs/users to take pictures or video without the owner's knowledge. Unplugging the webcam, covering the lens or pointing it at a blank wall when not in use are good steps to take to minimise this risk, as is closing the laptop lid when not in use.
- **Know which services/sites use webcams**
Sites, services and apps may ask for permission to use a webcam. Before accepting, young people should always think carefully about why the service may want to use their camera and who may be able to see the video feed.
- **End calls and log out**
Young people should always make sure they end a video chat when finished and log out of the site or service. This can help prevent anyone from accessing their account or webcam without their knowledge.

Useful Links

www.childnet.com/teachers-and-professionals/hot-topics
www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-and-resources
www.ceop.police.uk
<https://support.skype.com>