

# ONLINE Searches

## Session 4

### Learning context



Google is for most people, and for an increasingly younger audience, a tool for everyday life. Search engines allow us to find information about anything, although we know that the pathway to good, honest content can be hijacked by webpages that can cause distress and upset. With predictive searches, as soon as we enter the name of our favourite pop star, there can be a possibility that there could be unsuitable content prompted. It would be very easy for a curious mind to investigate such pages and find something unsuitable. Children would not have the necessary life experience to manage a situation where they access inappropriate content. They are unable to put this information into the wider context and to understand that it may be wrong or harmful. If we take pornography as an example, would we really want our children to learn about physical relationships by seeing such indecent images? The wider implications could be significant as we could end up with generations of girls and boys who believe that this is how adult life functions or that women are submissive to the needs of men.

This session is intended to warn children of these possibilities and to help them to understand that these images or webpages do not represent the adult world. Whilst we can look at the example of pornography, we know that violence, radicalisation, drugs, child-abuse amongst other dangerous content could be a click away.

### Key points and content



As we have learned previously the internet is not regulated. This means that anyone can create a webpage containing anything and it would be very difficult to do anything about it. As soon as we start using Google or any other search engine, it can be entirely possible to access web page or images that are not only inappropriate, but very upsetting. So how can we manage this situation? This lesson can allow our children to know that they can take responsibility and that they can self-regulate their online habits. Once again, it's about making informed choices and so by 'informing' our children, we can empower them to navigate more carefully. We can also be aware of outside influences, safe searching as well as good communication with their families.

We also need to make sure that we don't over-expose inappropriate content and teach content that may be confusing or lead to inappropriate questions. Broad terms like 'violence', 'sexualised content', 'drugs', 'radicalisation' for example would allow the children to understand the content without being exposed to anything controversial. We know that children should know right from wrong at this age and so we can use less specific terms in context. If we focus on the principle of safe searching and justify why this is important, then we have met our objective. Identifying trusted websites is critical. You may want to start with a definition of the term 'search'

### This is important because



It's important to think carefully about using search engines online. We don't want children's first experiences of sensitive subjects to be influenced by inappropriate web content. This prospect could be very damaging and could cause upset or longer term psychological harm, and because the internet is designed to be user friendly-this could be very easy to do. We all need to be allowed to understand any controversial content at an age when we are able to understand the content in context. In fact, most adults will happily live their lives unaware of such content. We can use the law of averages to make our point and to reassure-in society, for any sizable group of people, the large majority will be good and honest, however, we could expect that a very small minority may not.

Let's teach our children to know how to use the internet and to be aware of how to avoid upset, harm or misconceptions.

## Investigate



Let's play a numbers game so we can understand the wider context. This investigation will allow us some understanding of the scale of global internet use.

The children should be in groups of 5 with a scribe and a piece of paper. They will need a calculator to generate statistics which they will present to the class.

Each group will have one initial fact. From this fact they must generate further facts and statistics. So for example, if we look at fact 1, how many websites are created in an hour, day or even month!

**Fact 1:** 571 websites (not pages!) are created globally every minute.

**Fact 2:** 300 hours of YouTube footage is uploaded every minute.

**Fact 3:** 1.8 billion digital images are uploaded every day.

**Fact 4:** 40, 000 searches are generated every second just on Google.

**Fact 5:** 121, 168 YouTube videos are viewed every second.

We can see the size of the potential problem now. With so much activity, how can the internet be effectively regulated. There are organisations that will intervene and remove content when notified, and the police can prosecute people who upload illegal content or people who view or download this content. The computers and technology that we use also keeps a track of use and activity. This means that there is a law in place, but safety is something that we have to take responsibility for. Let's remember that the vast majority of users are good people and so the formula is thankfully well diluted. But this means that the inappropriate content is still sizable.

The other thing to note is that whatever the scale of activity, it could easily be accessed via a search engine. Visit <http://www.internetlivestats.com/one-second/> to view every second of live internet use.

## The risks



How do you know that the results of your search are fair, honest, accurate or even legal? Research shows that trusting websites is a problem and that the results that you find are to do with the search engine's logarithms. This means that even the first page that appears can be untrustworthy.

To see this situation clearer, let's consider the rise in self-diagnosis when people feel unwell. This means using the internet, rather than a medic to find out health problems. For example, Microsoft researched what happened when using the term 'headache' in a search engine. It was discovered that there was a 25% chance of finding content related to 'brain tumours'.

People who believe that they're diagnosed with a specific medical or mental health condition may attempt to cure that problem by changing their diet, taking over-the-counter medications or otherwise attacking the issue at its source. Unfortunately, if people are working from a flawed assumption about what they have, they might be taking steps they simply don't need to take.

Meanwhile, if people are addressing one problem while ignoring the real source of the issue, they may find that their original complaint grows much more serious. For example, people who assume they have a brain tumour might begin to dabble in drug abuse in order to make the pain fade, and they may believe that they're facing a terminal illness and therefore don't have long to live, so there's no reason to be sober. If their pain comes about due to allergies, however, and they don't get that addressed, those allergic symptoms could grow much more severe and might even transition into asthma. At some point, the person could have an addiction and asthma, and the headache might still be a problem. The wrong diagnosis, as this example makes clear, could lead to long-lasting problems.

## Activity



Let's create a safe search guide for our parents. This booklet will have bullet points that tell parents or carers how to help you to be safe online. It will begin with a rationale that states why you want to be safe online and why it is important. Let's use the term 'inappropriate', 'upsetting', 'disturbing' and 'harmful' rather than being specific about the content.

The bullet points must include good practice, advice and recommendations to be shared at home.

It will cover how to stay safe - safe searching, filtering, location and use of technology and mobile technology, peer pressure, and most importantly, communication between you and them. This latter point is critical as it establishes trust as well as a strategy.

If a child ever sees anything that they are uncomfortable with, then it must be shared with a trusted adult. This allows the opportunity to ensure that the child can 'understand' the situation, preventing upset.

## Summary



There is no doubt that the internet is a powerful tool. But consideration and care must be given when searching. Filters and search settings are a great way to prevent any problems, although they are not entirely reliable. The best thing to do is to use trusted webpages, and not to stray from these. Do not visit sites that sound unsafe or unhelpful, in the same way that you would not trust a back-street Doctor. Do not assume that the first page that you find is friendly, as we have learned that search engines prioritise pages using mathematical equations and not reliability. Assess your search results carefully and remember that you have to be as responsible as you can with your choices. We begin by trying to rule out any worries or concerns.

## The benefits



This is an amazing story of how a boy managed to find his long lost Mother. Saroo was sleeping in a train station in India whilst his brother worked as a sweeper. After falling asleep, the young boy woke up startled with a train in front of him. He boarded the train thinking his brother was on it. Saroo was only five years old.

14 hours later he arrived in Calcutta, India's third biggest city and famous for its slums. He learned to fend for himself over time, sleeping rough before eventually ending up in an orphanage. Eventually Saroo was adopted, and left to live in Tasmania. As he got older he began to use the internet to research his family history. This led to him using Google Earth. He calculated how long he had been on the train and the speed that it had travelled. This enabled him to come up with a rough estimate of how far he had travelled that day and where he had come from. He then circled the area and continued to search. To his amazement, the search showed him the places he remembered as a child. Sure that he knew where he was going, he set off to Khandwa to see if he could find his Mother.

Not long after arriving, he found his own home, locked and deserted. He asked a passerby about the previous residents. This person took him to his Mother, and after 25 years, they were reunited.