

It's important to note that new challenges are arising on the internet all the time. We have created to this guide to raise awareness of the issue and offer advice on helping parents to talk to their children about making safer decisions online. See also our '7 conversation starters' guide for more tips on better communication with your child.



Momo is a sinister 'challenge' that has been around for some time. It has recently resurfaced and once again has come to the attention of schools and children across the country. Dubbed the 'suicide killer game', Momo has been heavily linked with apps such as Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, and most recently (and most worryingly)... YouTube Kids. The scary doll-like figure reportedly sends graphic violent images, and asks users to partake in dangerous challenges like waking up at random hours and has even been associated with self-harm. It has been reported that the 'Momo' figure was originally created as a sculpture and featured in an art gallery in Tokyo and unrelated to the 'Momo' challenge we are hearing about in the media.

What parents need to know about

MOMO

CHILDREN'S VIDEOS BEING 'HIJACKED'

There have been recent reports that some seemingly innocent videos on YouTube and YouTube Kids (such as 'surprise eggs', unboxing videos and Minecraft videos) have been edited by unknown sources to include violence provoking and/or other inappropriate content. Even though YouTube monitor and remove videos that include inappropriate content, clips can be uploaded and viewed thousands of times before they get reported and removed. As a parent, it's difficult to spot these videos as the harmful content doesn't appear until partway through the video.

DISTRESSING FOR CHILDREN

Popular YouTubers and other accounts have been uploading reaction videos, showing their experience of the MOMO challenge. Some of the videos include a disclosure message warning that the content may be "inappropriate or offensive to some audiences" and that "viewer discretion is advised" but these videos are still easily accessed by clicking 'I understand and wish to proceed'. The image of the 'Momo' character can be deeply distressing to children and young people and it's important to note that it may slip through parental settings and filters.

SUGGESTED VIDEOS ON YOUTUBE

Video apps such as YouTube include an 'up next' feature which automatically starts playing another video based on the video just watched. Due to YouTube's algorithm, users are shown 'suggested videos' that they may be interested in. The thumbnails used on suggested videos are purposefully created in a way to encourage viewers to click them. During our research, we found that when watching one Momo related video, we were shown countless other Momo themed videos and other scary content which would be age-inappropriate for children under 18.



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TELL THEM IT'S NOT REAL

Just like any urban legend or horror story, the concept can be quite frightening and distressing for young people. Whilst this may seem obvious, it's important for you to reiterate to your child that Momo is not a real person and cannot directly harm them! Also, tell your child to not go openly searching for this content online as it may only cause more distress.

BE PRESENT

It's important for you, as a parent or carer, to be present while your children are online. This will give you a greater understanding of what they are doing on their devices, as well as providing you with the opportunity to discuss, support and stop certain activities that your child may be involved in. As the nature of each task become progressively worse it's also important to recognise any changes in your child's behaviour.

TALK REGULARLY WITH YOUR CHILD

As well as monitoring your child's activity, it's important for you discuss it with them too. Not only will this give you an understanding of their online actions, but those honest and frequent conversations will encourage your child to feel confident to discuss issues and concerns they may have related to the online world.

DEVICE SETTINGS & PARENTAL CONTROLS

Ensure that you set up parental controls for your devices at home. This will help to restrict the types of content that your child can view, as well as help you to monitor their activity. In addition to this, it's vital that you are aware of your device and account settings to ensure your child's utmost safety. For example, on YouTube you can turn off 'suggested auto-play' on videos to stop your child from viewing content that they have not directly selected.

PEER PRESSURE

Trends and viral challenges can be tempting for children to take part in; no matter how dangerous or scary they seem. Make sure you talk to your child about how they shouldn't succumb to peer pressure and do anything they are not comfortable with, online or offline. If they are unsure, encourage them to talk to you or another trusted adult.

REAL OR HOAX?

As a parent it is natural to feel worried about certain things you see online that may be harmful to your child. However, not everything you see online is true. Check the validity of the source and be mindful of what you share as it may only cause more worry.

REPORT & BLOCK

You can't always rely on parental controls to block distressing or harmful material. People find ways around a platform's algorithm in order to share and promote this type of material. Due to this, we advise that you flag and report any material you deem to be inappropriate or harmful as soon as you come across it. You should also block the account/content to prevent your child from viewing it. Also encourage your child to record/screenshot any content they feel could be malicious to provide evidence in order to escalate the issue to the appropriate channels.

FURTHER SUPPORT

Speak to the safeguarding lead within your child's school should you have any concerns regarding your child's online activity or malicious content that could affect them.

If your child sees something distressing, it is important that they know where to go to seek help and who their trusted adults are. They could also contact Childline where a trained counsellor will listen to anything that's worrying them.

The Childline phone number is
0800 1111.

SOURCES:

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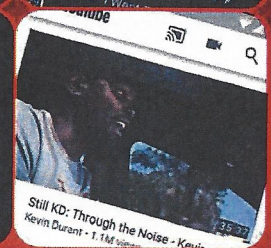
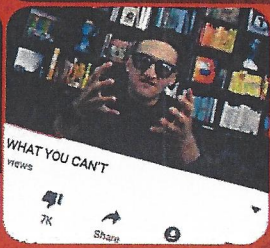




YouTube is a video sharing site/application that enables you to upload, view, rate, share and comment on a wide variety of videos. Consisting of a huge resource of information, advice and entertainment, YouTube now has 1.9 billion logged-in monthly users who watch a billion hours of video daily. Most of the content on Google-owned YouTube is uploaded by individuals, but organisations and media companies also offer some of their content via this platform.



AGE RESTRICTION
13+



What parents need to know about YouTube

SPENDING A PREMIUM
YouTube Premium (formerly YouTube Red) is a new paid streaming subscription service in the UK, offering a three-month free trial to tempt viewers into a £12-per-month plan. This includes the ability to download videos, stream videos with the app in the background, gives exclusive access to original content and a separate music streaming service and gaming app.

DANGEROUS 'CHALLENGE' & VIRAL VIDEOS
On YouTube, 'challenge videos' are shared quickly and can be very dangerous. One person may post a video of themselves doing something unusual like eating a hot chilli or jumping in a river and before you know it, the video goes viral and everyone wants to join in and share their videos. The speed in which challenge videos spread across the Internet makes it difficult to keep up with the latest ones.

SHARING VIDEOS
As well as watching videos, many children are keen to share their own videos online, emulating their YouTube heroes, such as Stampy or DanTDM. However, if they post something on YouTube, they may later regret it or feel embarrassed about what they have shared. There is also a risk that they will receive hurtful or negative comments regarding not only their content, but also their appearance. YouTube's comment section is infamous for being one of the most opinionated on the Internet.

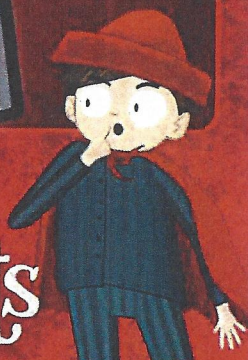
IN-APP MESSAGING
When your child is logged into their Google account and browsing the YouTube website, they can share and talk about videos with their friends using the chat bubble. This can be found at the top right of the desktop site or through in-app messaging on their mobile or tablet. When they tap on the 'Friends' icon, they have a list of suggested people from their contacts - which can be any contact they've had on Google or somebody who has sent them an invite link.

AGE-INAPPROPRIATE VIDEOS
As YouTube is the biggest video sharing website in the world, there is content available for all ages, meaning that some content will not be appropriate for your child. If you think that content is unsuitable, there is a flagging feature to submit it for review by YouTube staff, but you will need to be aware that just because video is not appropriate for a younger audience, it may not violate YouTube's policies. YouTube has mechanisms in place to automatically remove explicit and harmful content, yet offensive content may still slip through.



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TURN ON 'RESTRICTED' MODE
'Restricted Mode' is an optional setting you can use to help screen out potentially mature content you may prefer your child not to see. Restricted Mode works on the browser or device level, so must be turned on for each browser or device your child uses. To do this, follow these steps:

- Desktop:**
 - Go to the bottom of any YouTube page and switch 'Restricted Mode' to 'ON'.
 - To make it more difficult for this to be turned off, you will be given the option to lock restricted mode onto your browser.
- Mobile:**
 - Tap the three vertical dots at the top-right on the screen and press, 'Settings'.
 - Click on 'Restricted mode filtering'.
 - Press 'Restrict'.

Please note that you can't 'lock' restricted mode on a phone in the same way that you can on a desktop. You will need to turn this on each time your child uses it.

CREATE A FAMILY GOOGLE ACCOUNT
By having a shared family Google account, checking the history will enable you to see exactly what your child is watching and sharing on YouTube. To see the history on a computer, on the right hand menu under the library section, click 'History'. On mobiles, the viewing history can be found by clicking on the 'Library' tab.

BLOCKING ACCOUNTS
When using YouTube, there may be instances where your child receives negative comments. If somebody's giving your child a difficult time, here's how to block them and prevent future comments and replies:

- Go to their channel/account by clicking on their name.
- Click on 'About'.
- Tap the dropdown box with an image of a flag on it.
- Press 'Block user'.
- Tap 'Submit'.

MONITOR WHAT YOUR CHILD IS WATCHING/POSTING
The only way to truly know what your child may have been watching is to regularly monitor them. You can do this by checking their viewing history. YouTube videos can also be easily downloaded, so it is important that your child understands the associated dangers of content they are uploading and that it could harm their online reputation in the future. Show them how to set their videos to private or choose a small network of YouTubers to share with. To get started, your child can use YouTube Studio which offers learning modules on creating a YouTube channel, however, you should encourage them not to use their real name.

NEW FEATURES
DIGITAL WELLBEING
YouTube has launched a tool called 'Time Watched' that allows you to see how long has been spent on the platform. Once you have discovered how much time has been spent on the app, there is the option to set a time limit. Once the limit is reached, a reminder will pop up on the screen. You can also disable sounds and vibrations to help resist the urge to check for notifications.

OPT FOR A FAMILY PREMIUM PLAN
A YouTube family Premium plan may be a cost-effective option if you have more than one child. For £17.99 a month, it allows you to share a YouTube paid membership with up to five other family members - aged 13 and older - living in the same household. As the account holder, or family manager, you must create a Google family account.

MANAGING IN-APP MESSAGES
If your child is accessing YouTube via your account, bear in mind that they may be contacted by Google contacts who are complete strangers to them. You can remove someone from the suggested contacts list by pressing and holding the person's name and tapping on the red 'x'.

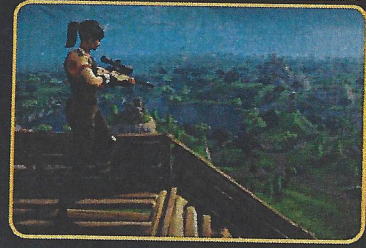
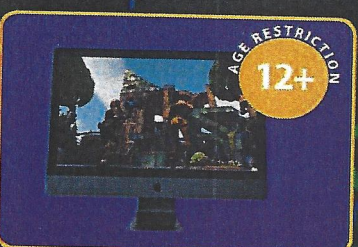
POPULAR YOUTUBE GAMERS
There are hundreds of YouTube accounts which show other people playing and commenting on games. These are called 'Let's Play' videos. While YouTube can be a great resource for hints, tips and news for games, it is a good idea for parents to keep a close eye on what YouTubers are posting. Often, the games they are playing will contain strong language and violence. A few examples of popular YouTube gamers for you to have a look at are:

- Stampy
- Yogscast Lewis & Simon
- PewDiePie
- EthanGamer
- Markiplier
- PopularMMOs
- CaptainSparklez
- Jacksepticeye
- LtCorbis
- Dan TDM

SOURCES: <https://www.thesun.co.uk/tech/6702517/youtube-porn-videos-roblox-sex-games-watch-online/>, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x-4rntP9eM>, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L2uy7f-hc>, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-5126833/Terrifying-truth-child-watches-YouTube.html>, <https://www.todayparent.com/family/a-z/youtube-in-all-ones-kids-are-doing>, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4yek0Jb0sBg>, <https://tocaboca.com/magazine/common-sense-media-youtube/>, <http://familytech.com/so-your-kid-wants-to-start-their-own-youtube-channel/>, <https://www.laptopmag.com/articles/block-someone-youtube>, <https://www.youtube.com/intl/en-GB/yt/about/brand-resources/#logos-icons-colors>, <https://www.common-sense-media.org/blog/popular-youtube-gamers-kids-cant-get-enough-of-stamp/>



'Fortnite - Battle Royale', is a free to play section of the game 'Fortnite'. The game sees 100 players dropped on to an island from a 'battle bus' where they have to compete until one survivor remains. The last remaining player on the island wins the game. Players have to find items hidden around the island, such as weapons, to help them survive longer in the game. To make the game harder, there is an added twist called 'the storm', which reduces the size of the island from the start of gameplay, making the players closer together in proximity. The game is available on PC, PlayStation 4, Xbox One, Mac and iOS.



What parents need to know about FORTNITE: BATTLE ROYALE

MICROTRANSACTIONS

New featured items are released daily and are only available to purchase within 24 hours of their release. These are cosmetic items, called 'skins', 'gliders' and 'emotes', which change the look of the characters but do not improve the game play. Once purchased, the player has full use of these in the future. The designs are made a desirable for players to purchase and even celebrities are endorsing them. Also available to purchase in the game is a 'Battle Pass'. When a new 'Battle Pass' is released, users can play a series of challenges to receive more rewards (cosmetics) by progressing through different tiers. Whatever rewards they achieve can then be used in the game.

HACKER ATTACKS

News site Forbes said it had seen "dozens" of reports online by people who said their accounts had been compromised by hackers. Hackers gained access to users accounts in the game and spent hundreds of pounds in fraudulent charges.

NO PROOF OF AGE REQUIRED

Signing up to the game is relatively simple. Users have the option to log in with their Facebook or Google accounts or their email address. When signing up with an email address, there is no proof of age required. If your child is under the age of 12, it is important to check if your child has the game downloaded.

IT CAN BE ADDICTIVE

Games can last around 20 minutes but this varies with each game. Children may feel angry if they lose the game and continue to play until they achieve the result they want. The competitive nature of the game may make it difficult for children to stop playing halfway through as it could affect their position in the game.

TALKING TO STRANGERS DURING SQUAD MODE

Interacting with other players in the game is part of the fun as players can communicate with their friends and other players in the game. Players will benefit from wearing headphones in the game to hear footsteps from other players trying to compromise their game. Wearing headphones makes it difficult for parents to hear what exactly is being said and children may be exposed to inappropriate language. Fortnite includes really good reporting features for players either cheating or misbehaving, and work towards having one of the best online gaming communities.

SOCIAL MEDIA SCAMS

There are many accounts on Facebook and Twitter which claim to give away free money (known as 'v bucks') for games which will be transferred to their Xbox Live or PSN cards. Any giveaway promotion from Fortnite will be in game. It is important to check the authenticity of these accounts before giving away personal information in order to claim 'v bucks'. The websites or accounts may ask you to share your account name and password in order to claim the money; if these offers seem too good to be true, they usually are.

IT CAN BE PLAYED ON THE GO

The game was released on mobile in April 2018 meaning it can be played without a games console at home. Some schools have reported that the game is distracting their students whilst in the classroom. As the game is available outside of the home, parents may not be aware of how long their child is on the game.

'FREE' TO PLAY

The game is free to play. However, if playing on Xbox, you will need an Xbox gold subscription to play the game which is chargeable.

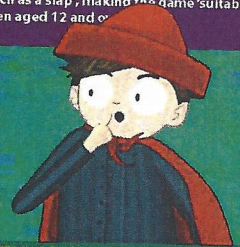
WEAPONS AND VIOLENCE

PEGI has given the game a rating of 12+. Even though the game includes violence and weapons such as crossbows, grenade launchers, rifles, pistols, shotguns and more, PEGI say "more graphic and realistic looking violence towards fantasy characters is allowed. Any violence towards human characters must look unrealistic unless it consists of only minor or trivial injury such as a slap", making the game suitable for children aged 12 and over.



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LIMIT GAME TIME

Parents can use parental controls on Xbox and PC to limit the time your child is playing games on the devices. Be aware that the game is available on iOS and will soon be available on all mobiles. With this in mind, it is worth having a conversation with your child to discuss and agree how long you would like them to spend on games. Even though the games last around 20 minutes, it may be hard to take them away from a game mid play. It may be worth using a limit of the amount of matches they play rather than a time limit.

RESTRICT PAYMENT METHODS

'Fortnite: Battle Royale' is a free to play game, but there are still options to make additional purchases. If you do not want your child to make payments, ensure your card is not associated with their account. If you are happy for your child to make payments in the game, but want to limit spending, we suggest using a paysafecard, or a games console gift card. These can be purchased in specific amounts, which will allow you to limit how much your child spends and removes the need for a credit/debit card to be used with their account.

PREVENT THEM TALKING TO STRANGERS

There is an option to turn off the voice chat feature, which means they wouldn't be able to talk to anybody, including their friends. Your child will still be able to use the in-app chat and hear other people's conversations. To turn off voice chat, open the Settings menu in the top right of the main Fortnite page, then click on the cog icon. Open the Audio tab at the top of the screen. From there, you can turn off voice chat.

SHOW THEM HOW TO MAKE A REPORT

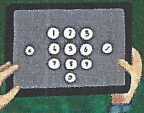
If your child believes a player is playing or talking inappropriately, you should advise them to report them. To report a player, you can use the in-game feedback tool located in the Main Menu of the game. Additionally, you can report a player in-game when spectating them.

LOOK OUT FOR VBUCK SCAMS

It is important that your children are aware of the scams that they may come across online in association with the game. Open up conversation with them about scams and how they should never share their username or password with people in order to gain anything for the game.

USE A STRONG PASSWORD

It may seem like a simple tip, but it is important that your child selects a strong password when creating an account, particularly if a credit/debit card is associated with the account. This will help reduce the risk of their account being hacked.



Sources
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