



Following digital footprints

The things you put online can be seen by lots of people and might stay online forever. They are like digital footprints – a trail that people can follow, picking up pieces of information about you.

We all leave digital footprints and with every new profile, photo or comment we add new ones. People that you know, and people you don't, can learn a lot from them. Do you know what yours say about you?

Your footprints can show you at your very best or very worst. Lots of people, like Kent teenager [Paris Brown](#), are finding out that our posts can have serious consequences long after we have forgotten them.

This is one reason why you need to be over 13 to use most sites upon which you can share information. If you are under 13 you should not be using them.

Remember, if you have posted something you regret - it is never too late to take control.

Safer sharing

Sharing things you've done with your friends is part of the fun of the internet, so make sure you do it safely.

Mind your privacy.

Most websites, apps and social networks you can share information on have 'privacy settings'. These help you control what you share and who you share it with. So, it is your choice to decide whether your friends, friends of friends or everyone can see what you post.

Choose your friends wisely.

It is always best to only share with friends you know in the real world. Remember too that what your friends share about you and their privacy settings online will also affect your digital footprint.

Remove and report.

Think you shouldn't have made that comment? Make sure you know how to remove anything you regret posting from any sites you use. If someone has posted something about you that you are worried about and refuses to take it down, make sure you know how to report it. Most websites will have a 'safety centre' explaining how to do it. Get links for popular websites safety centres.

Know yourself online.

It can be hard to keep up with the things we have done online, so regularly Google yourself. That way you will know what other people find about you, as well as things others might have posted about you.

Shut down or delete.

If you stop using a website that you have posted information on remember to deactivate your account.

Worried about something you have shared?

It is so easy to share online, that sometimes you might post something and wish you hadn't.

If you have posted something you regret you should delete it from your account as quickly as you can.

If someone else has posted something about you, most websites have a way for you to ask them to remove 'content' – like videos, pictures, comments or profiles – that upsets you. This is called making a 'report'.

It is important to know that making a report does not mean the content will definitely be removed. Just like in the College, most websites have a set of rules which they expect people using their site to obey. If you want to have something taken down from a site, you should check to see if it breaks one of their rules – these are usually called 'Terms of Use' or 'Community Guidelines'.

Find out [how to report to popular social media sites](#).

Talk to someone

ChildLine

[ChildLine](#) is a free helpline for children and young people. You can contact ChildLine about anything. No problem is too big or too small. Whatever your worry, it's better out than in.

ChildLine is a private and confidential service. Confidential means not telling anyone else what you've said. This means that whatever you say stays between you and ChildLine.

They would only need to tell someone else if:

- You ask them to
- They believe your life or someone else's life is in immediate danger
- You are being hurt by someone in a position of trust who has access to other children like a teacher or police officer
- You tell us that you are seriously harming another young person

Call them on 0800 1111. The number won't appear on your phone bill.

You can also visit www.childline.org.uk to speak to a counsellor online.

Share your experiences with other young people

Talk to other young people about your experiences and get support at the ChildLine messageboards. There are lots of young people talking about everything from sex and relationships to sport and fashion.

[Childline messageboards](#)

Report it

If someone is trying to use what you have posted online to harm you, or makes you feel uncomfortable, worried or even frightened online you should tell an adult you trust, or report to [CEOP](#). Whatever may have happened you won't be in trouble.

CEOP

[CEOP](#) helps young people who are being sexually abused or are worried that someone they have met is trying to abuse them.

If you have met someone online, or face to face, and they are putting you under pressure to have sex or making you feel uncomfortable you should report to CEOP.

This might be someone:

- Making you have sex when you don't want to
- Chatting about sex online
- Asking you to meet up face to face if you have only met them online
- Asking you to do sexual things on webcam
- Asking for sexual pictures of you
- Making you feel worried, anxious or unsafe

If this is happening to you, or you are worried that it might be, you can report this to CEOP.