

The Basics of Protecting your Child on YouTube



Watch with your child. Simply ask your child what they're watching and join them. In general, children are tuning into certain channels or following specific YouTube personalities because they're entertained by them. Many children naturally want to share the videos they like.

Watch by yourself. If your child doesn't want to share, get the name of the channel they're watching and watch it later. Watch a few videos by the same creator to get a feel for the content.

Investigate. If you're concerned about the content your child is watching on YouTube -- and you've tried talking to them -- there are ways of tracking their viewing habits. If they have a YouTube account (which only requires a Gmail address), their YouTube page will display their recently watched videos, recommended videos based on their watch history, and suggestions for channels similar to the ones they've watched. Even if your child deletes their "watch history," all the recommendations will be related to stuff they have watched.

Subscribe. Encourage your child to subscribe to their favorite channels rather than hunting around on YouTube for the latest ones from a specific creator. Subscribers are notified when a new video is uploaded, plus all their channels are displayed in My Subscriptions, making it easier, and faster, to go directly to the stuff they like. Consider choosing subscriptions together, and make an event out of watching the newest uploads with your child.

Looking Deeper

Investigate the creator. The name of each video's creator appears beneath the video window and usually has a bit of information about the person behind the video and/or the channel itself. Google the creator's name to find out whether they have a Wikipedia page or another Web presence.

Look at the suggestions. The suggested videos listed on the right-hand side of the page are related in some way to the main video. Evaluate them to see if they seem age-appropriate, and that will provide an indication of the appropriateness of the main video.

Consider the ads. If an ad plays before the video, that's actually a good sign. To qualify for advertising and earn money (the goal of most YouTube channels), a creator must apply to be a YouTube partner by sending in some sample videos. YouTube rejects videos that don't meet their terms of service and community guidelines -- vulgar or stolen content, in other words. That does mean your child sees more ads, but the trade-off seems worth it (and you can always mute the commercials).

Read the comments. YouTube comments are notorious for being negative, but it's worth reading them to get a sense of the channels' demographic and the tone of the discussion. Channel creators can moderate their comments to reduce the amount of negativity. Well-groomed comments are a good sign.

Watch the trailer. Many creators make highlight reels and trailers -- basically video ads for the channels themselves (which usually appear first on the channel page). Definitely watch them if they're available to get an overview of the host and the content.

Finding Good Content

Turn on safety mode. Be aware that YouTube is technically only for teens 13 and up, and what the site considers age-appropriate may not match your values. But YouTube offers a filter called Safety Mode that limits the inappropriate content. Simply scroll down to the bottom of any YouTube page. See where it says "Safety"? Click it on. (It will remain on for logged-in users on the same browser.)

YouTube for Kids.

YouTube Kids is an app specifically designed for children and makes it easier for children and parents to find content they are interested in. The child friendly video sharing app is free to download for android and iOS. The age rating is 7+.

More information can be found here: - <https://www.webwise.ie/parents/youtube-kids/>.

Watch later. YouTube gives you the ability to save videos to watch at a later time, which improves the odds that your kids will be exposed to stuff you've preapproved. You can create playlists, too, virtually designing a customized programming schedule of content for each of your kids or for different subjects they're interested in.

Additional information Online

NSPCC Net Aware - <https://www.net-aware.org.uk/networks/youtube/>

YouTube Kids Parental Guide -

<https://support.google.com/youtubekids/answer/6172308?hl=en-GB>