

# Understanding the Teenage Brain

## The Digital World



watch the video here

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F4SV5XvUN-g>

**This film is about teenagers and the digital world.**

Here are the main topics covered:

### The background to the digital world

- Adult attitudes to social media
- Adult use of technology and digital devices
- The impact of Covid
- The notion of screen time

### Threats and opportunities

- Worrying aspects of the on-line world
- The opportunities are important too
- All ages are using the on-line world
- Emphasis on creativity, access to information, social life and so on.

### Digital literacy

- What is meant by digital literacy?
- Different ages need different skills
- The need to think ahead
- Emotion regulation
- Resilience
- Knowing where to go for help

### The role of adults

- What can adults do?
- Adults do have a role!
- Everything cannot be left to the school
- Adults need to respect the young person's privacy
- However, adults should not opt out.

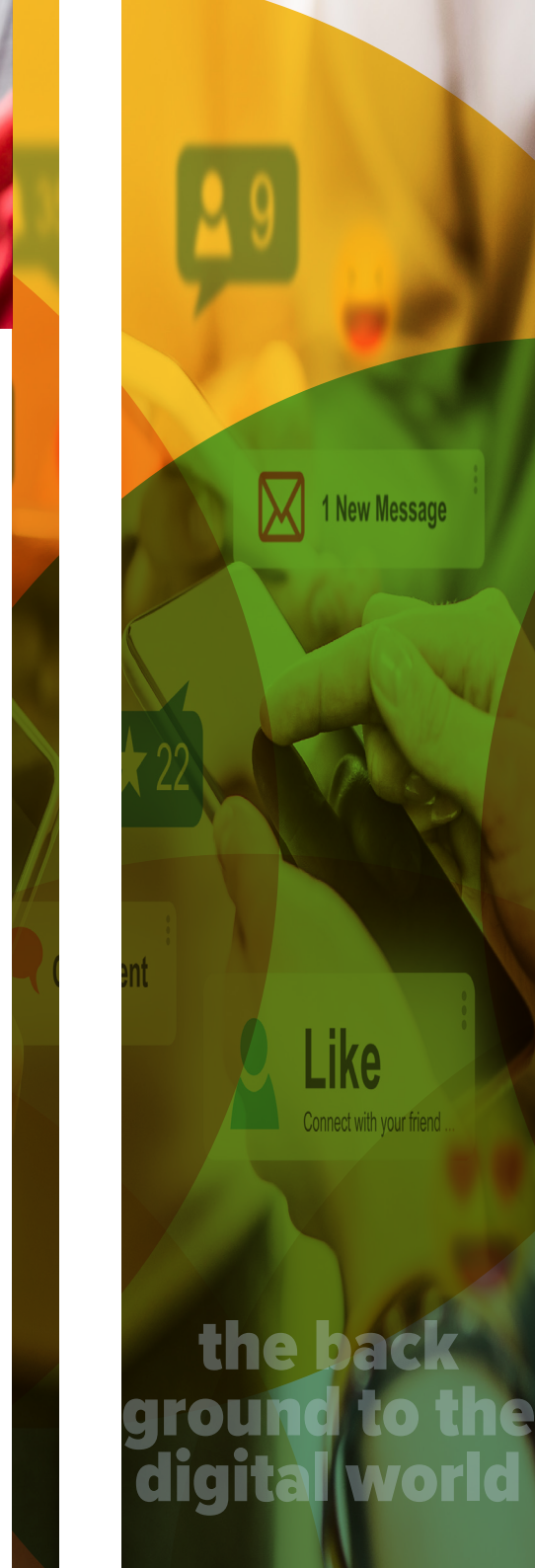


## The background to the digital world



The first thing to note is that attitudes of adults to the digital world are not the same as those of young people. By and large adults fear what teenagers are doing on-line, whilst teenagers see the on-line world as one of opportunity rather than of threat. This is partly to do with adults' lack of understanding, and partly a general assumption about young people. Adults either worry that they are not responsible, or worry that they do not understand the risks. In fact, adults are heavy users of digital devices, and therefore have to be careful not to fall into the trap of being hypocritical.

One of the common fears of adults has to do with screen time. How much is sensible? The experience of Covid and of lockdown has put this worry into perspective, since so much of life moved on-line during this period. However, this should not prevent caring adults from keeping an eye on what their young people are doing when they are using their phones or other digital devices.



the back  
ground to the  
digital world



## Threats and opportunities



There is no shortage of things to worry about when parents and carers consider teenagers and the on-line world. These risks might include bullying, exposure to pornography, addiction, gaming and so on. However, there are so many positives as well, and by and large young people look at those rather than worrying all the time about the threats. Teenagers also believe that in most cases they have the capacity to manage any threats that arise. The positive aspects of the digital world, such as the ability to socialize, the opportunities to be creative, the access to information, the ability to explore new worlds, all these things reflect the fact that the internet has become an accepted part of life for this generation.



threats and  
opportunities

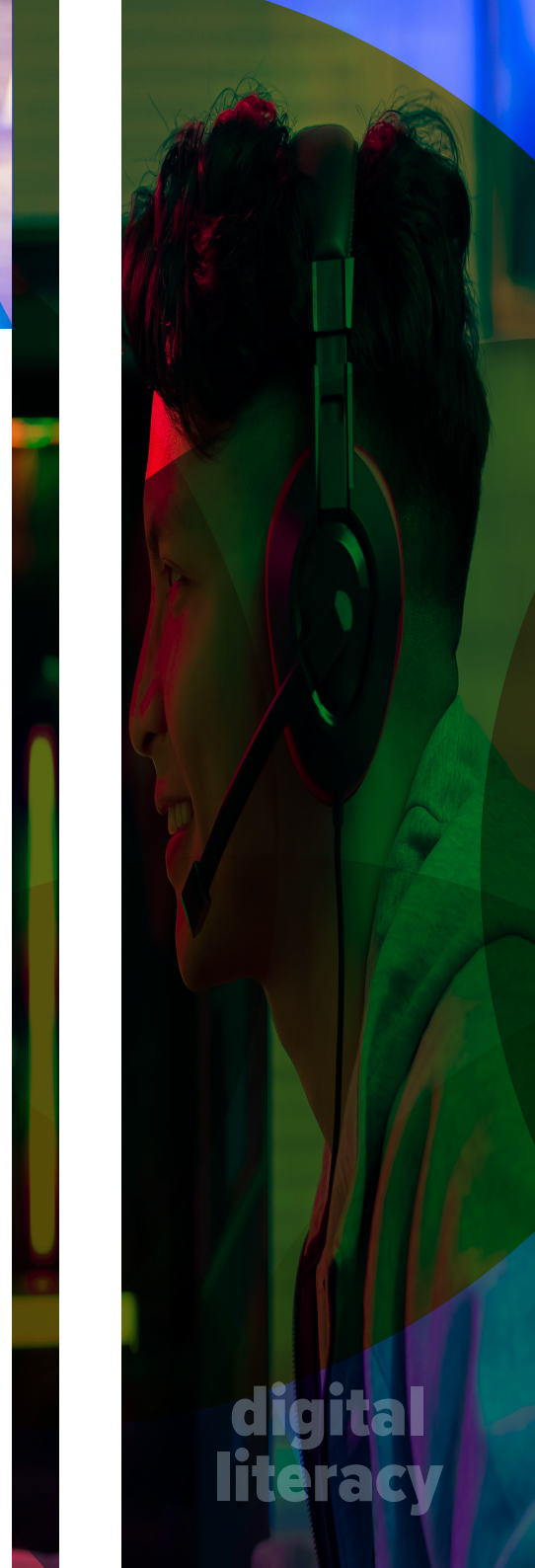


## Digital literacy



In order for young people to be safe on-line it is essential that we consider how to develop digital literacy. This refers to the skills that young people need, so that they are aware of the threats, and have the knowledge and skill to manage these in an appropriate manner. At different ages teenagers will need different skills, so that any approach to digital literacy should take into account the age and maturity of the individual.

Key elements of digital literacy include the ability to think ahead and to be aware of the consequences of posting or uploading material on-line. Another aspect requires an understanding of risk, and the ability to learn from experience. It is also important for teenagers to learn how to manage their emotions, and not to be too influenced by on-line rewards or positive inducements. Finally, it is essential for young people to know where to get support, and how to access help if things do go wrong.





## The role of adults



Most parents and carers find it difficult to know what they can do, or how make sure their teenagers are staying safe when they are on-line. The essential fact here is that adults do have a role. It is not enough to leave this to the school. Yes, digital literacy should be an integral part of the school curriculum. However, there are so many aspects of this that cannot be covered in the classroom. The role of adults in the home includes keeping an eye on what the teenager is actually doing on-line. Keeping a conversation going about on-line use should be part of any family.

Adults should be able to share how they themselves are using the internet, and this should open up a level of communication about on-line use. Adults should be available to help young people when they do get into trouble, as for example when they experience threat as a result of bullying or grooming. Parents and carers need to respect the teenager's need for privacy. At the same time adults should never opt out. Adults do have a role in keeping the young person safe on-line.



the role of  
adults

## TOP TIPS

**Before you do anything, look at your own on-line use**

**Don't be put off by the teenager pushing you away**

**Don't be put off by thinking they know more than you!**

**Remember, you have a role to keep them safe**

**Communication is key here – keep talking about the digital world**

**Develop a family digital strategy**





## Where to find further information

### Websites

**Parent Zone** ([www.parentzone.org.uk](http://www.parentzone.org.uk)) A charity dedicated to providing information for parents about on-line safety.

**Internet Matters** ([www.internetmatters.org.uk](http://www.internetmatters.org.uk)). Another organization with lots of materials for parents and professionals.

**NSPCC** ([www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)). The most well-known charity with a commitment to keeping children safe. They have very useful information on their website about on-line safety.

### Further reading

*“Parents and digital technology”* by Suzie Hayman and John Coleman. Routledge.

*“Why won’t my teenager talk to me?”* by John Coleman. Routledge.

*“What’s my teenager thinking?”* Tanith Carey. Penguin Random House.

*“Teenagers and technology”* by Chris Davies and Rebecca Eynon. Routledge.