

My rights online



Chapter 8



At what age can I legally access services online, like join a social media platform or use connected toys?

For most services, such as Google, there is no law on what age you can access them.

Social media platforms have to be careful about how they handle your data because you are a child.

Many services have a user age of 16 but it is up to your parent or guardian to make sure you are not underage.

In special circumstances a service may need to obtain your parents or guardian's consent before you sign up. By social media platforms, we mean apps like Snapchat, YouTube, Instagram and TikTok. By connected toys, we mean toys that you can interact with directly or through an app.

What is my personal data?

Your personal data is information that relates to you and makes you identifiable. Personal data includes your name, address, date of birth, your medical information, your personal email address, your location data, your mobile or device's IP address (this is a unique and identifiable code for your device that allows it to operate on the internet).

Why do companies want my personal information?

When you sign up to an online service such as a messaging or gaming app or connect a toy to an app, you must first provide the service with personal information and agree to the terms of service of the app. Apps, particularly those that are free to use, often make money by using your personal information to target you with advertising or sell your information to other companies to do the same.



How can I protect my privacy and personal data online?

There are a number of steps you can take to protect your privacy online including:

- if you are a child you have special protections online to benefit these give your true age when asked by an app
- checking the privacy steps on the apps you are using to make sure that your profile is not publicly visible
- using complex passwords on your online accounts
- look up the privacy information on an app and if you do not undertake it tell the company who run the app by sending an email
- switching off the location sharing settings on your device and apps.

For more information, visit [SpunOut.ie](https://www.spunout.ie).

How can I keep myself safe online?

Protecting your privacy online is an important part of keeping yourself safe. Remember that not everyone is who they say they are online and you can't be sure of their identity. You don't have to do anything you don't feel comfortable with. You can mute, block and report people who are being abusive.

You can find more information on [Webwise](https://www.webwise.ie), the Irish Internet Safety Awareness Centre. It has tools and tips to help parents, teachers and young people with internet safety. It also provides information about different apps, games and social networks. [Cybersafe Ireland](https://www.cybersafeireland.ie) has useful resources on their website on safe internet use.

The [Irish Internet Hotline](https://www.irishinternethotline.ie) allows anyone to confidentially report distressing or troubling content that they come across online. It also has advice and information for parents, guardians and young people about internet use.

Is it legal for me to share intimate photos of myself online or through a messaging app?

If you are under 18 and you send a sexual image of yourself, it is considered child exploitation material under the law. This means that you and the person you send it to could be in very serious trouble. This is because possessing or distributing explicit images of a young person under 18 is illegal and can lead to criminal prosecution.

Penalties can include jail time, a fine and being placed on the sex offenders' register. If you find yourself in this situation you can seek help from a social worker or Gardaí who might be able to help contain the image or video.

Is it legal for me to share intimate photos online of someone else who is under the age of 18?

No. It is not legal to share intimate photos of someone else who is under the age of 18. The law views posting or spreading pictures like these as distributing child sexual abuse material often referred to as child pornography.

Possession of these types of photos is also illegal, even if you have not posted them anywhere else or shown them to anyone.

What should I do if someone under 18 shares an intimate photo of themselves with me?

Creating, distributing or even possessing any explicit image of someone under 18 is a potentially criminal act and should be reported to An Garda Síochána.



What should I do if I see something that troubles me online?

Most websites have a system where you can report a post or picture that you find distressing or troubling. If you come across something more serious that you suspect to be illegal like child sexual abuse material, you can report it anonymously in a secure and confidential way on www.hotline.ie.

You should also talk to a trusted adult about what you have seen and discuss how it made you feel.

If I am being bullied online what should I do and who can I complain to?

Bullying happens online as well as offline. For more information on bullying generally, see chapter 2 'My right to education'. Online bullying or cyberbullying is like offline bullying but happens through technology. It can take the form of unwanted messages, videos, audio or pictures that are harmful or abusive.

If you feel that you are being bullied, there are a number of things you can do.

Tell an adult

If you are being bullied, it is important to tell an adult you feel you can trust like a parent, teacher or guidance counsellor.

If there is nobody around, you can call Childline on 1800 66 66 66 to talk to someone supportive or Teenline on 1800 833 634.

If the bullying is focusing on you being gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender, you can contact a support organisation like **BeLonG To**.

Don't reply

Don't reply to bullying texts, emails or abusive postings on social media websites. Replying can often make the situation worse.

Keep a record

If possible, keep a record of the upsetting or hurtful messages (you don't have to read them). If they are text messages, save them. If there are online postings or messages, take a screen shot or email them on to an adult you trust.

Tell your mobile operator

If the bullying is taking place over a mobile phone, tell your mobile operator, change your phone number by getting a new sim card and keep your details private.

Check your privacy settings

If someone bullies you online, you can use the privacy settings to make sure the bully cannot see your information or write comments to you.

Remove hurtful comments

If someone leaves a hurtful comment, you can either remove it yourself or contact the site administrators and ask them to take it down immediately.

Tell Gardaí

If the bullying is persistent or someone makes racist or inappropriate sexual comments to you online, you can report this to the Gardaí or to www.hotline.ie.

What to do if someone confides in you

If someone you know tells you that they are being bullied online, it is important to tell an adult or someone you trust so that the bullying can be dealt with. You should also encourage them to talk to a trusted adult.

What to do if an image or video of my child is shared online?

If images or videos of your child have been used for a purpose for which you did not consent, you can contact the person who used them and ask them to take them down.

You can also contact the person who holds the copyright for the image (for example if you consented to the school taking the photo for a particular purpose) and let them know it is being used for something for which you did not give permission. The copyright holder can then ask an online platform to take the image down.

You can also contact the [Data Protection Commissioner](#) to make a complaint.

What should I do if an intimate image or video of my child is shared online?

If your child is under the age of 18, any intimate photos involving them could be considered child sexual abuse material. It is illegal for anyone to share these images or possess them.

You should report this to the Gardaí and keep any evidence of where the material has been shared and who shared it. If you know who has shared or posted the images it may be a good idea to check to see if they have shared the images with anyone else.

