

Current Trends With Technology Use Amongst Children

Over one in three 3–4 year-olds use the internet. Ofcom Media research findings indicate that 37% use the internet via a PC, laptop or netbook, 6% via a tablet computer, and 3% via a mobile phone. Only 2% use a games console or games player to go online, and 2% use a portable media player; only 5% of this group have ever played games online. In terms of other devices, 44% use a games console or player and 9% use a tablet computer [including the 6% who use this to go online].

Ofcom also found that children express high levels of confidence online: 83% of those aged 8–11 and 93% of those aged 12–15 say that they are confident that they know how to stay safe online, and this has remained stable over time. However, confidence and due caution do not necessarily go hand in hand - for example, using social networking sites to communicate with people not directly known to the child is more likely now than in 2011, both for those aged 8–11 [25% in 2012 compared to 12% in 2011] and those aged 12–15 [34% in 2012 compared to 24% in 2011].

Research by EU Kids Online¹ finds that 'Internet use is increasingly individualised, privatised and mobile' and this is particularly true for the UK. This makes education and awareness interventions and materials critical, as children need to be empowered to make good decisions whenever and wherever they are using the internet. Compared to their European counterparts, UK children are more likely to access the internet from laptops, televisions, mobile phones, handheld devices and games consoles, and on average use 3.5 different devices to go online across four locations.

However, supervising 'digital natives' can be difficult. Forty–six per cent of parents agree with the statement: 'my child knows more about the internet than I do'. Agreement increases with each age group: 22% of parents of those aged 5–7; 35% of parents of those aged 8–11; and 67% of parents of those aged 12–15. In addition, 54% of those aged 12–15 say that they know how to delete their online history and 26% say they have done this in the last year. Twenty-two per cent say they know how to disable any online filters or controls, while 8% say they have done this in the last year.

¹ *EU Kids Online II: Enhancing knowledge regarding European children's use, risk and safety online*, LSE, 2011;
<http://www2.lse.ac.uk/media@lse/research/EUKidsOnline/EU%20Kids%20Online%20reports.aspx>.