SAILING MASTERS' GUIDE

TO NAVIGATING THE DIGITAL WORLD

WITH YOUR CHILD

SAILS PARENT RESOURCE

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BEFORE YOU START READING

Think of the last 24 hours, and list

- The digital devices you have used
- The digital platforms you have visited
- The digitally supported services you have used

If possible, ask your partner, a friend or fellow parent to do the same, and compare your lists.

Once you have the list, cross out all of those list items that a child would surely not use. Your child might be too young for some, try to think about children of all ages in general.

The remaining list is quite long, isn't it? You are very comfortable using some of them while uncertain with others.

When reading this resource, remember that

- your child(ren) will watch you and see your example, you will be their role model when sailing digital waters,
- you don't have to know everything, and it is OK to ask for help.

WHO IS THIS GUIDE FOR?

As a result of recent school closures, nearly all school children had used digital technology, e.g. for learning, for keeping contact with their friends, for playing and other free time activities. School as a social learning place and meeting friends cannot and must not be replaced by digital technology, but one of the outcomes of the closure periods is that there are lasting changes that need to be considered and tackled strategically.

With far more families using digital tools, many of them forced by the school closures, it is clear that the resources available for parents often do not help answer their concerns and questions. (When parents are mentioned in this Guide, we mean parents, guardians and other responsible adults having a stake in the parenting of children.) Recently published research (Livingstone, S. 2020) shows parents use different strategies and have different approaches to digital childhood. Our approach will mirror that and will support all appropriate parenting practices, by not trying to suggest a single right approach, but help families find their own ways.

COVID-19 school closures also made it necessary for schools and families to work together, parents and teachers often learning to navigate digital realities together. While experiences made more teachers and parents appreciate the potential and benefits of using digital technologies for learning, there are several areas in which parents need support and in which parents often need to negotiate with teachers. Overconfidence is just as problematic as overprotective approaches, and this resource is aiming at addressing both. Research conducted since March 2020 by IPA clearly shows that parents wish digital technology to become an integral part of schooling and education in a broader sense, but there is also a demand for finding a healthy balance between online and offline activities, finding the role of digital technology in traditional educational activities, negotiating passive and active screen time, and understanding and observing privacy and data protection.

In many countries, there have already been digital technologies in use for home-school communication, for supporting learning, for playing and for building social networks. In the first years of using them, both school professionals and parents were so-called digital immigrants, people who lived most of their life without these tools. This meant that both groups

were undergoing a learning process, unfortunately most often not together. However, digital natives, children who were already born into the digital age are becoming parents nowadays. With an ageing teacher force that is the reality of Europe, it is time for teachers and parents to collaborate in this field with parents, the digital natives supporting the learning of teachers and school leaders. However, research by the leader of this task in the SAILS project, Parents International, shows that there is a need for cataloguing the various ways digital technology is present in the lives of children, families and home-school relations in order to have a conscious approach to dealing with them.

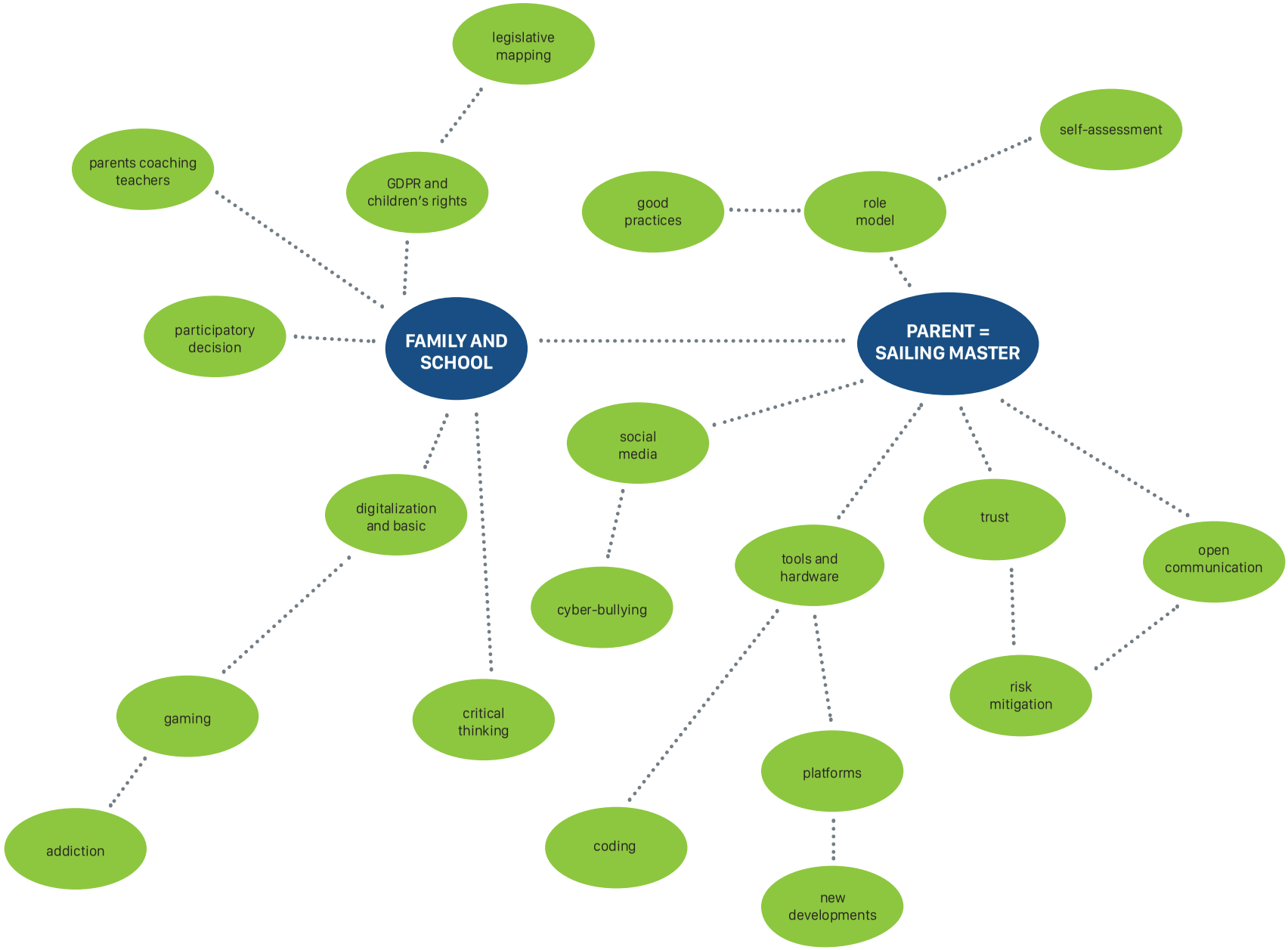
This Guide is targeting parents who believe that digital technology can be a good element of their children's lives with proper guidance, and not those who would do anything to prevent their children from using digital devices (in their presence or with their consent). We want our children to learn how to navigate digital waters, even if they are unpredictable and sometimes harsh, not to be stuck in the harbour.

This guide was specifically designed to support parents with school-aged children. While some of the topics are not relevant for all age groups within this range, the Guide aims to support parents of children aged 6 to 18. Some of the chapters are more relevant if you have older children, but since these young ones will become teenagers and will reach an age when they are close to adulthood very fast, you may also read about topics that parents of older children face more often. In the Guide we are using a colour code showing which age groups certain chapters are more relevant for as follows:

- Parents of children aged 6-10
- Parents of children aged 10-13
- Parents of children aged 14-18

When relating the proposed methods to legislation, we have primarily relied on international treaties and policy recommendations, but there is guidance for parents living in the project countries (Greece, Hungary, the Netherlands and Spain) also by looking into national legislative frameworks.

YOUR CHILD IN THE DIGITAL WORLD



ABOUT THE SAILS PROJECT

One of the greatest crises experienced by the world in this century so far, the restrictions introduced over 2020 and 2021 has radically changed the way we relate to each other. Face-to-face interaction has been forcefully reduced to a minimum and it became increasingly common to communicate through a screen. The same has happened to millions of students, teachers and families, who have seen that from one day to the next they were forced to go from face-to-face education to online classes.

This change, unexpected and hardly planned, has caused numerous problems in education:

1) students lost their learning group and their mentors due to connection problems, lack of appropriate and sufficient devices or technological inability to keep up with the pace of online classes,

2) teachers had to abandon their face-to-face dynamics and adapt in a few days to huge video conference rooms full of people who do not know the codes of conduct and communication of remote classes,

3) families were overwhelmed by a situation that disrupted their work and home plans, and experienced many difficulties in supporting and facilitating the online learning of their children, basically replacing teachers,

4) school leaders were under pressure to make centre-level decisions to address the pandemic and are often unaware of best educational practices in these cases and are going in blind.

While we believe online communication should not replace face-to-face education, and all efforts must be made to make in-person schooling possible while digital provisions should remain available as a complementary means used in some cases, in this rough sea we aim to provide clear guidelines for sailors to deploy or retract their sails when necessary. The aim of this project is to provide students, teachers, schools leaders and families with tools to make appropriate decisions facing the conflicts that COVID-19 has brought to the surface in the

processes of learning, communication and socialisation of the school community as part of a digital childhood.

The methodology proposed in this project aims to be radically different from previous attempts to raise awareness among students about good behaviour on the net, the management of their autonomy and appropriate and safe social relations. With this objective, we will develop a fictitious social network in which we will reliably represent the potentially dangerous scenarios that can occur in this context (IO1). This network will be used as a social sandbox where different automated profiles (social bots) will behave inappropriately and interact with the fictitious profiles created by the students. From the interaction with these social bots, students will be able to understand which behaviours are not appropriate or safe in a practical way.

Although the fictional social network can also be used by teachers and families for their digital literacy, we believe that it is necessary to develop specific work materials for these groups. In the case of teachers, a guide to all the new methodological possibilities that online platforms offer can be very useful (IO3). In addition, we believe that it is necessary that they have sufficient keys to analyse and solve common problems that occur in online learning contexts (cyber-bullying, difficulties in maintaining respect in video conferences, abuse of anonymity on the network, plagiarism and problem-solving apps, etc.).

Families also need clear guidance in this new scenario. The potential lack of digital literacy, digital competence or even other soft skills has turned some family members otherwise able to support schooling – together with the majority of teachers – into people unable to help the students they live with or to communicate properly around schooling. For these reasons, this project aims to provide families with practical guidance (IO2) that explain in accessible language how to do most things that are needed in a virtual context that may also include virtual learning and what the use of each tool, social network or platform implies.

Finally, schools as a whole need to adopt strategies to coordinate all this effort and lead education in the post-Covid era to a safe port. With this purpose in mind, SAILS will provide an adaptable and flexible resource for schools where the integration of safe and proper use of digital resources will be defined as a strategy engaging all actors (IO4).

In short, the SAILS project intends to serve as a navigation chart in this immense ocean of possibilities that the Internet offers us in the educational context to avoid, above all, the storms that had already existed and the new ones that COVID-19 has brought.

The transnational consortium that has been created to carry out this project is the key to ensuring its success. The experience in the coordination of projects and the research that the team of UDEUSTO has been carrying out in the development of games and in the development of key competences is going to suppose a key piece to guarantee the success of SAILS. In addition, the experience of entities like EA and ESHA in their work with leaders in schools is going to allow that the changes and innovations are established at school level and that they transfer the barriers to society. Besides, the experience of IPA and PPAA and their connection with several networks of families and other agents is going to allow them to obtain an impact, not only in school environments, but at a higher impact level.

PARENTS AS SAILING MASTERS – THE RISK MITIGATION APPROACH

The SAILS consortium has decided to implement a risk mitigation approach to online safety. This chapter explains what is meant by this and why it is important. On the one hand it is a major child rights issue, on the other hand they will meet risk and harm, but if you have a risk prevention approach you may not know about it. Parents as the main guardians of their children's rights need to consider this as part of their parental duties.

Let's start with the child rights challenge. There is no question about a certain hierarchy of child rights: **we need to do everything we can to prevent any risk to life**. Still, accidents and incidents happen, and children – sadly – die. However, you teach children certain skills, for example to prevent them from being hit by a car and allow them to leave the house every day. The media is full of stories about children being harmed, mostly mentally by online activities. The answer for many is to prevent children from going online (in their presence) or using certain online tools, such as social media. But is it the right approach? Our answer is a definite no. Similarly to navigating the roads, **we need to teach our children how to recognise and deal with online risk and harm** – and thus starting to provide for another basic right, the right to education. We also need to ensure a family and school environment where children feel safe to seek adult (primarily parental) advice if they feel uncomfortable, sad or at risk – thus providing for the basic right to be brought up in a loving and caring environment.

Research has confirmed that for the children of today online and offline presence means a continuum, not two separate fields of life. Online tools, and especially social media provide the platform for getting together, for organising social life, for expressing views and debating them, for widening their horizon and learning about the world around them. Therefore, child rights organisations have highlighted the importance of online access – thus providing for a number of basic child rights, such as the right to the freedom of speech, the right to peaceful assembly, and again the right to education. When legislation, family, or school attempts to prevent access, they violate all these rights while their actions are definitely not justifiable by the prevention from harm as a proportionate element. It is important to mention that adult access to mailboxes, social media handles and other personal online spaces as well as **most so-called parental control tools are also violating the basic right to privacy**.

The basic principle of child rights is that it is closely linked to the evolving capacities of the child. The last 20-30 years has been a period when children in Europe – largely as a result of American influence – have been considered less and less capable of exercising their rights. Let's go back to the road crossing example. At the end of the 19th century, cars had been considered so dangerous that in cities the driver was obliged to hire a runner to run in front of the car with a flag indicating danger (and by that also to drive ridiculously slowly). Cars have become much faster and much more numerous, and still people have decided not to lock their children in the house but to teach them how to cross the road safely. First you cross together, holding hands and being a role model for your child. Then you ask the child to tell you when you can cross the street after they look around or check the traffic lights. And at the age of 6 or 7 (yes, that is the right age, not later, children are capable), you let them go on their own knowing that you have taught them all. Similarly, the first online experiences should be joint ones and important adults (both parents and teachers) need to be role models for their children. At the same time, it is important to **create an environment and practices that enables the child to share anything, even being naughty, cheeky or outright bad, without having to be afraid of punishment**. Free discussions around the table at dinner has proven to be the best. That way, you will know if something bad is happening to them online or offline, and build trust rather than violate their rights.

Most people are afraid of their children being bullied online, but they don't consider two things. Online bullying is (nearly) always an extension of offline bullying behaviour, and often a sign of the bully being bullied. And sadly, we also need to understand that child-to-child bullying is not the most prevalent. Children are most often bullied by teachers and trusted adults from the family and the circle of friends are the second in line. Another major concern is about pornographic content, but that has been on the table for decades, probably centuries. **Children always found ways to access such content, without adult presence, if forbidden**. A third area of concern is being exposed to violence. In this field research is not conclusive, but the balance is dipped towards research results showing that **violent content is rarely a trigger for violent behaviour**. At the same time, violent games often play the role of a punchbag.

To be a great SAILing master, build a **trust**ful relationship with your child(ren) so that they always turn to you with their problems, encourage **open discussions** about any topic they are interested in and be a **role model** worth following.

TOOLS AND HARDWARE

The digital world is central to our everyday lives; from watching movies through learning to arranging official business, being able to navigate it is a widely required skill. Technological progress has made it possible to enter this world through a range of tools. While new tools and hardware are continuously being developed, the most important ones are personal computers, laptops, tablets, and smartphones. For children growing up in the digital era, these tools become a core part of educational and social day-to-day activities.

For most services you need to be connected to the internet via a **cable connection** (that is becoming less and less frequent), **wifi** or **data** connection. Starting from the last, one important

thing to consider is that data connections are usually limited and you have to pay according to the amount of data that your device is downloading or uploading. It usually operates via a SIM card that you put in your phone or tablet. You have to decide if you want to pay for data for your child. It is safe, but sometimes expensive. The alternative is wifi connections that might be secure or open. What you need to teach your children is that open wifi and public networks that have a password shared with a larger number of people (like school networks) are usually free, but some other people you did not want to share your work with may see what you do online.

For educational purposes, schools can require children to bring their own device(s) (usually referred to as ***bring your own device*** systems, "BYOD") to class. In such cases, **parents need not only ensure that children have a tool with which they can work, but that said tool is fit for purpose**. Generally, the more powerful and sophisticated a device is, the more expensive it will be. While high-end tools are unlikely to be necessary in a general educational setting, providing children with a tool well-equipped to allow focusing on learning without interruption is vital. A number of online guides can provide help in choosing an apt device. It should not be underestimated how important a good tool is to enable a child to achieve the best they can in digital learning.

While it is natural that children bring their own pens and exercise books, there is a lot of debate around the BYOD policy, especially inclusion concerns as compared to the personal nature of digital devices. We wouldn't use shared smartphones as adults, and most people have similar feelings about tablet or laptop computers. **BYOD policies have a lot of merit**, a clear positive effect on learning, and these outweigh the concern arising (e.g. playing games or going on social media instead of working), especially if it is accompanied by interesting tasks. It also makes it possible for students to continue whatever they have been working on outside of the classroom. For an **inclusive BYOD policy, schools must understand who needs support by providing a device**, and if digital devices are used, there must be a lending library or similar solutions for those unable to buy a device. Parents can play a pivotal role in establishing such a library, e.g. by providing used devices from their workplace. For the school, it is equally important to understand who may not have access to the internet outside of school, and design their digital policies accordingly. Parents must voice concerns about internet access if the school fails to take it into consideration.

There are 4 main **elements to consider when buying** your child a device. It's near-impossible to tick all four boxes, so pick which are most important for your child depending on their age, the work they'll be doing, and how clumsy they are.

DURABILITY

Generally, the younger the child, the more you need to think about how resilient their device is. Even if your child is an angel, young classmates are more likely to get rough. Knocks are inevitable. A sturdy device is made of quality materials, has a bit of weight to it, and for bonus points will be splash resistant. For a laptop, check that the hinge looks like it'll survive repeated opening and closing.

PORTABILITY

If your kid needs to carry their device a lot, whether it's to or from school or between classrooms, something small and light is a plus. A 2kg laptop is a real burden to add to a backpack. Of course, a small device means a small display. For example, a tablet with an 8-inch diagonal screen risks being too tiny for some educational apps.

AFFORDABILITY

Not to be underestimated, the biggest worry on a parent's mind is usually cost. The older a child, the more you should consider spending. For primary school, your upper limit should be around €600, while a 16-year-old would make better use of a €1500 laptop, for example.

PERFORMANCE

At a minimum, any device needs to be able to browse the internet and use basic apps. Older teens might have more resource-intensive computing needs. They can start to struggle if their devices are old, cheap and lightweight. Unless you spend big bucks, increased processing power tends to come with shorter battery life, so make sure you buy one that can last a six-hour day (it can be a hassle to have to plug your laptop in at school).

Providing children with their own device bears the risk of them spending more time on such devices than what would be a healthy amount. **Unlimited screen time can have a significant impact on children's immediate and future health**. Especially for children under 5, screen time should be consciously regulated to prevent undue harm.[1]

Parents should thus consider what is and is not necessary screen time: is the child spending 4 hours a day on the screen only to prepare their homework, or is 3 hours of this recreational free use? If the latter, is this a reasonable length of time? For example, does the child still have sufficient time and energy for sports, sleeping, and eating? **Honest, open, and two-sided communication between parents and their children is key** to ensuring this balance is struck (just as it is crucial in any other area of family life).

It is important to understand the **difference between sedentary screen time, when the child sits in front of a screen and watches passively, and active screen time, when the screen is used for communication, searching for information, interacting, etc**. The WHO recommendations do take this difference into consideration with advising a strict limit on sedentary screen time and offering a much wider advised screen time when it is active use. It is also crucial that parents are together with their children when the children are using a screen. Even watching a cartoon can become active screen time by discussion, by acting out what happens on screen, singing along, and so forth.

In addition, the manner of use should be considered in all cases of screentime: the screen should not be too bright, the child should not stare at the screen for extended periods of time without pause, and the physical position in front of the screen should be ideal (proper lumbar support, sufficient distance, etc). Adopting healthy habits related to the child's "work" environment can help prevent health and mobility issues later on. For school children it is crucial to have a suitable learning environment at school as well as at home. Parents should consider that digital technology has changed the requirements for this, and demand schools to also transform accordingly.

1 https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/325147/WHO-NMH-PND-2019.4-eng.pdf

PLATFORMS FOR LEARNING

There are a large number of digital tools used in education. In some cases the same, complex platform is used for different purposes (e.g. internal communication within the class, sharing tasks and their solutions, evaluation). Using a very complex platform has the benefit of a single access point, but also the potential danger of too much information collected by one data handler. At the same time, using a number of tools simultaneously means that there are multiple access points (with potentially different login credentials) and a potential lack of data portability may lead to a larger workload or missed information.

There are two main types of platforms, both widely used:

- **Tools that have specifically been developed for education**
- **General tools that are suitable for education purposes, but not specifically designed for that.**

Sometimes general providers have specialised platforms for education, but data handling is often still linked to the main platforms (eg. Google Classroom).

The vast majority of tools operate on some kind of an online platform, meaning that **data is uploaded on a third party server and handled by that party**, namely the company operating the service. For parents, it is **crucial to understand what happens to data shared** by their children, be it sensitive, personal data such as names, photos or e-mail addresses, or data generally not considered "sensitive", for example written school tasks. However, it is often very **difficult to obtain this information**. When it comes to platforms that the school wishes to use, parents can and should demand this information provided by the school. When it comes to platforms that children want to use for their own purposes or the ones parents want to use with their children, this information should be consciously seeked after.

It is difficult to be fully aware of all platforms available. In the school context there are some **important elements that need to be taken into consideration**. If the school fails to provide information on any of these, parents should actively ask the relevant questions. Some considerations:

- Is the chosen platform fully functional without having to pay **a fee**? If there is an option for free use, are there advertisements or other commercial elements to know about? If not free, who is paying taking inclusiveness into account?
- Is the platform approved for **school-wide use**? If not, is it really necessary to use it?
- If there is a **switch from one platform to another**, is there enough information that proves the necessity of this change? How will data collected prior to the change (e.g. children's previous work) transferred to the new platform?
- What are the **potential benefits and dangers of using a certain platform**?

Experts of digitalisation in education have collected a relatively comprehensive list of various platforms available for the COVIDEA[2] initiative and Digital with Purpose[3]. The list can be found at the end of this document as an annex. It was compiled in 2021, so recently opened platforms may not be included.

2 https://www.foggs.org/covidea/
3 https://digitalwithpurpose.org/

SOCIAL MEDIA

In the digital world, there is little room to manoeuvre around social media platforms. They are **an integral part of personal communication, marketing, and most other things** one could think of.

Social media platforms are online platforms that provide a space to **share and view content**. The form, manner, and the publicity of shared content is widely different between platforms. However, their core unifying feature is that all users are able to share the same type of content with each other that other users can see.

The age at which children start engaging with such platforms is rapidly decreasing. While some years ago (pre)teens were the youngest audience of social media, and little content was aimed towards them, today entire platforms rely on children as young as primary school age to make their business successful. Because of this, parents need to be aware of what social media is, and of the benefits and risks it holds.

The first decision, made jointly by the child and the parent in an ideal case, is about the real **age at which the child registers on social media**. Many platforms implement the regulations of a US law called COPPA (that is not valid in Europe), and subsequently do not allow children under 13 to register. In this regard, parents need to make an important decision. When their child wishes to register, they may agree to alter the date of birth of the child, or refuse registration before they become 13. It is important to know that a parent not agreeing to **early registration** will most probably just not know that their child is registered, thus it is advisable to agree with (but not proactively offer) early registration. This makes it possible for **the parent to engage in the child's exploration of social media**. At the same time, this raises some **concerns for later use**. As most platforms do not allow a change of date of birth, children will have access to adult content, such as paid services or unlimited invitations to events, earlier than their real 18th birthday.

Parents also need to learn respectful use of social media with their children. One aspect of this is **login details that no parent has the right to demand from their child** as it is part of

the child's **right to privacy.** If they are shared voluntarily, it has to be used moderately and avoid any kind of 'policing'. Another aspect is the **parent-child interaction in social media**. In general, it is usually OK to 'like' your child's post or one that they are tagged in, but you should avoid 'motherly' or 'fatherly' comments. You should be aware that it is not private conversation, and it is best if you agree on any online interaction offline before posting it.

Some platforms, like Facebook and Twitter, allow sharing many different **types of content**. From text posts through images to videos, users can create and share any content they want to, as long as the terms and conditions of the platform at hand allow. Other platforms, such as YouTube and TikTok, are specialised instead on video content: users can share and view videos, and communicate with others under these videos in the comment section.

There are **two major aspects** of social media the parent has to be conscious of: **what the child could see, and what the child could share**. As for the first aspect, unfortunately, potentially harmful or disturbing content is not unheard of on social media. For instance, graphic violence and sexual imagery is often posted on these platforms. At different ages, it may be more or less appropriate for a child to be faced with the choice of engaging with such content. A 13-year-old may well know not to click on a video which is clearly violent, but a small child could inadvertently come across content that may upset them.

The second aspect is what the child shares. As a general rule, anything that has been shared online is "out there" forever. Sharing a video of doing cartwheels may be perfectly harmless. Sharing the same video with personal information, such as address or credit card information in the background, is a lot more dangerous.

As such, parents need to **make sure that children understand the potential ramifications of what they share**. Sharing personal information could be just as damaging as sharing a video intended to ridicule someone, and the child must learn at home why each is to be avoided. On the flipside, the parent must be conscious of the risk social media can pose even if their child is not allowed to use it: content of the child may still be shared without their consent. In addition, peer pressure can easily turn into bullying should a child be the only one in their group not allowed on social media.

An additional important point to note with regard to what the child shares is **who it is shared with**. On virtually all social media platforms, users can change their privacy settings. This affects who can see and/or interact with the content. Parents should ensure that children

understand with whom they share content, and what effects this could have. A video shared on social media today may well resurface in a decade, and it may not be as cute or funny anymore.

Furthermore, the phenomenon of **grooming** must be noted: children could be approached online by adults who attempt to establish emotional relations with them, often with the purpose of sexual abuse or other criminal activity. For this reason, it is important, firstly, that **open communication** exists **between the parent and their child** concerning the child's friend circle, so that suspicious new friends can be discussed. Secondly, it is important that this open communication is free of judgement, so that the child can raise any concerns or doubts they have about their online interactions – thereby potentially preventing grooming.

For extreme cases, such as preventing engagement with strictly adult content, many platforms allow parental controls to be installed, but some of these parental controls are not in line with the child rights regulations, so you have to be careful when using them[4]. Some platforms also have built-in systems for the protection of minors: Snapchat, for example, allows only adult's profiles to be publicly visible to everyone. The setting is not available to children. The platform also introduced an enhanced parental control centre, where parents can review who children communicate with, but not about what.[5] Regardless, the best and safest way to mitigate risks that children could face online is to keep communication open and honest.

When discussing adult content, we need to mention **pornographic content** – although it is not only present on social media. For many parents one of the main concerns about their children being online is that they may come across porn. While research is not definitive about harm that might be caused by such content, children are very likely to come across it anyway – with or without the parent being aware of it. If you speak to them about the sensitive topics about sex and also discuss the issues with porn, you are more likely to prevent damage than by banning them.

4 These platforms are mainly USA-based where child rights are not protected by UN Convention, while they are protected in every other country.
5 https://snap.com/en-US/safety-and-impact/post/family-center

DIGITALISATION AND BASIC SKILLS

Reading, writing and arithmetics are considered the very basic for most other skills, be them academic or everyday ones. Thus, it is an important concern for all educators, including parents, that digitalisation is not hindering skills development. There are a lot of concerns, often fuelled by mass media articles around this. It is understandable, especially in a reality when there are more and more children who actually attend school and finish their basic schooling, leaving without an appropriate level of these basic skills.[6]

However, it is rarely mentioned that digital technology, if used well, can support the acquisition of these skills. There are adaptive programmes that make it possible for the child to practise areas they have made mistakes in. Also, many programmes offer skills development and practice in a playful way that is more attractive for children. Gamified solutions (that can have game-like features, but it is not necessarily the case) have proven to be effective as they are more engaging and interesting for many, and the majority of gamified learning solutions are digital ones.

READING DIGITAL

There is a lot of controversy around reading on digital devices, and the **impact of using screens and the internet on reading**. The two main, seemingly opposing messages are not contradicting each other. On the one hand, it seems to be clear that children read fewer books since they started using digital tools. On the other hand they read far more text, mostly shorter ones, if they spend time on the internet. There is **more "utilitarian" reading, and less reading for artistic appreciation**. Children are becoming less interested in reading long texts, often in a language that is not very easy for them to comprehend. At the same time, doing everyday reading tasks online often includes additional information, alternative presentations such as reading out aloud or simplified text. **Parents should pay attention to introducing literary texts to their children, too**. The best form is to start reading to them aloud every day, and to keep this habit well after they learn to read. It can very easily become a **daily ritual for the family**.

6 This is the outcome of research published by the World Bank under the theme "the Global Learning Crisis"

Reading on a digital device has a lot of advantages, especially if you are aware of and use certain built-in support tools. First of all, you can adjust the font type and size. This does not only help those who have problems with their eyes, but it can also be helpful for those with dyslexia. It has been proven that so-called sans-serif fonts (e.g. Arial, Calibri or Open Sans), where the letters do not have a "foot" are easier to read for them. Many devices have a read-aloud function, helping the reader to hear the correct pronunciation of a more complex word. Similarly, there are built-in thesaurus or dictionary functions supporting the reading of complex texts or texts in foreign languages.

At the same time, there seems to be enough evidence showing that reading a book on a screen leads to less deeper understanding and immersion into the text. However, it is not clear if this is also true for reading on an e-reader, whether the results are linked to reading by the computer with the keyboard in front of the reader, often many tabs, including social media and/or e-mails open, not settled in a reading nook position, or if it really is linked to not reading a paper-based book. **It is best if children are offered both opportunities: reading on paper and on a device.**

WRITING

Another area of confusion is in the area of writing. **Do we still need to teach handwriting? Is it necessary to teach children the correct way of using a keyboard like a typist?** The answer for the second question is a no, although many schools provide such training already for smaller children. Most children learn to type very fast by themselves, and **a self-invented system is not worse than the 'typist' version.**

The answer for the first question is twofold. There are approaches to the teaching of reading and writing that only teach children to write block capital letters at first. **You need skills to jot down your thoughts or information**, there are several occasions when there is no touchscreen or keyboard available, so this is absolutely necessary. At the same time, there is **no consensus on whether it is necessary to also teach handwriting to everybody**. It is an important element of fine motoric skills development, but that can be supported by drawing or painting, even embroidery. At the same time, there seems to be a link between writing things down by hand and better, more lasting learning, and handwriting is generally faster than writing block capitals. Less and less people share their handwriting, so we are yet to see if it is enough if we can read our own "handwriting". This gradual shift away from handwriting is not new, and

was not born in the digital age. The **importance of handwriting has been decreasing since the printing press** was invented, and it was accelerated by the introduction of typewriters.

Writing digitally can support **correct spelling** if a good spell-checker is included. At the same time, predictive input methods and autocorrect have made it less important to learn correct spelling. However, most probably everybody has some hilarious experiences with autocorrect, so it is still useful to learn correct spelling – be it in a typed or a hand-written text.

ARITHMETIC

Although the digital age has brought tools that often do calculations for you, **it is still necessary to learn basic arithmetic skills and practise their use**. We have all met the cashier who relies on the machine when returning 50 cents on your 5 Euro note when you pay for a 4,50 piece. But we have also experienced too much reliance, combined with a mistake in input (indicating a 50 Euro note instead of a 5 Euro one) leading to loss for either the customer or the cashier. We also see more and more often that somebody does not have enough cash on them to pay for all their groceries. To avoid this, it is important to teach estimation. With more and more financial products becoming available online, **understanding percentage, exchange rates and similar notions is of utmost importances**. The list can be much longer.

Digital tools, age-appropriate programmes can make the learning of arithmetic enjoyable, making it possible to break away from the wide-spread view of mathematics as a difficult school subject. There are several tools that **support learners in areas that they need support in**, creating playful or not so playful practice exercises for weaker areas while saving time on not practising that much whatever the learner is already good at. The use of digital technology also makes it possible to acquire skills in a very non-schoollike way, often not naming the area of skills development, but for example teaching fractions in a playful way.

CODING

Programmes on digital devices are based on code. The code running in the background is written by developers. The code, in essence, is read by the tool at hand which then acts according to the instructions that the code contains. From the start-up of a browser or a video game through interacting with it to how it is closed or terminated, the code defines what a programme does and how it does so.

Learning to code can be of great benefit. Not only it is a **sought-after skill in the labour market**, but it requires **practically applying logical thinking and it incentivizes adopting a problem-solving mindset**. As such, it can be a great skill to start learning at an early age. Ingenious solutions often flow from coding even at an early stage, such as the automation of minor menial tasks.

Parents, of course, should not be expected to learn to code just because their child is doing so. However, **understanding the basics of what it is that they are doing or asking the child to show them what they are working on can enhance trust and openness between parent and child**. In addition, parents may also find that the basics of coding help them approach problems from new perspectives and to hone their logic.

At the same time, **many coding programmes for children are not explicitly linked to computer programming** or programming languages, but it is a way of teaching logical thinking and design processes. It can come **handy in a lot of everyday situations**, for example planning a weekly menu may be done in the form of coding. A lot of young children are first introduced to coding in a playful way, often using digital devices that do not have a screen, the most popular ones currently being Bee-Bots and Lego Robotics. Many schools implement such programmes. The systematic thinking necessary for coding is especially beneficial for children with learning difficulties. However, learning with a Bee-Bot **does not necessarily lead to one becoming a computer programmer**.

GAMING AND LEARNING

In addition to educational and social uses, interactive entertainment is yet another (though not necessarily separate) possible use of the digital world. Countless games are available for tablets, laptops, and smartphones. Some of these games are online, and some are offline.

Online games are played together with other players in most cases: for example, two football teams play against each other, each controlled by a real person, at home, behind a screen. Often, players are able to communicate with each other via text messages and "voice chat" (essentially, phone calls integrated into the game) even if they do not know each other. This can be a great enabler of language learning as well as social skills, as children get the chance to cooperate with others who may think differently, or speak an entirely different language.

In **offline (and some solitary online) games**, the only real person active in the game is the user, though there may well be pre-programmed characters that can be interacted with. In an increasing number of games, artificial intelligence ("AI") allows the pre-programmed characters to react to how the user behaves and thus dynamically shape the world.

Both online and offline games have **vast potential for learning**. From **problem-solving through creative thinking to working in a team or learning a foreign language**, different games can help **make learning fun**, and even allow honing skills which schools are generally ill-equipped to provide.

Perhaps the most well-known example currently is **Minecraft** in this regard, a game which allows both offline and online play. The user can collect resources, build houses, and explore a vast world with its own story. Working together, users can build anything from a lake house to a floating castle. To achieve this, however, they must plan their course of action, distribute tasks, and cooperate to progress and prevent any problems. These are all invaluable skills – and they are for life. They are also skills which are much easier to learn in a voluntary, entertaining way than behind a school desk.

While **games pose some of the same risks as social media** discussed above (sharing information and interacting with strangers), they can be **invaluable to children's**

development. **Healthy gaming habits** can be beneficial to the child's education and may also spark interest in areas they have not heard of before (such as, for example, archaeology).

In addition, akin to social media, gaming may cause **addiction** in individuals prone to such tendencies. Parents must be conscious of their children's gaming habits to ensure that no negative habits are established. While often **easy to prevent** – especially by ensuring that your child has a variety of different activities in their life, gaming (as well as any other, such as social media) addiction is difficult to overcome. Gaming should be recognized for its potential benefits, but it should be treated in its proper place: a form of entertainment that must not come before, or be detrimental to, one's health and real-life obligations. However, it is also important to mention that playing computer games for a whole day occasionally (e.g. on an especially stormy day) does not lead to addiction.

Naturally, **some games are not appropriate for all age groups**. Graphic games may be upsetting to children, and some puzzle-based games may simply be too complex. Through microtransactions (which are purchases for small amounts of money for in-game rewards), children can inadvertently cause financial issues for their family, so parents must be vigilant concerning their child's access to online stores. In addition, some games contain loot boxes, which contain random virtual items. Some countries consider this akin to gambling and have accordingly regulated it.

At the same time, some games contain elements that help **financial literacy development**, and this is an important competence often not developed at school. Many games make it possible to learn dealing with budgets, understanding earning and spending, e.g. you can improve your outfit or tools if you earn enough virtual money by doing jobs.

The emerging trend of **virtual reality**-based entertainment should also be borne in mind. Through virtual reality ("VR") glasses (accessories to computers or gaming consoles, usually) an increasing number of interactive and non-interactive entertainment content is available. Children may be tempted to enter these virtual worlds, and accordingly demand that parents provide them with the necessary hardware. VR generally has a high cost of entry (both the devices and digital content are expensive), and is often more difficult to navigate than "traditional" accessories such as printers, which may make parental control more difficult.

They also provide a different level of immersion to any other digital device, as the actual space around the user appears to be the virtual world while wearing the glasses. Children should be

reminded that no matter the immersivity, VR is separate from *reality*. In addition, as users do not see their surroundings during use, the use of VR glasses is prone to accidents.

Considering the foregoing, **parents should become familiar on a basic level with what their children are playing** to ensure that the game at hand is safe. In addition, **learning the basics of a child's interests can help parents engage more with their children**, which in turn can have a positive impact on their relationship. Should a parent wish to go a step further and **play together** with their child, this can be a form of bonding that even distance does not prevent.

CRITICAL THINKING AND MASS MEDIA

Information is published and shared in the digital world at a previously inconceivable pace. If something notable happens essentially anywhere in the world, mass media covering this may be available within minutes on the other half of the globe. Through TV, radio, and especially the internet (and notably through social media), **news can spread extremely fast**. In addition, the uncontrolled and decentralised nature of the **internet allows virtually anyone to share their thoughts and views – incorrect, or even dangerous**, as these may be.

Because of the huge amount of information available online, **critical thinking, the ability to evaluate the reliability and truthfulness of any source of information is vital**. This is a skill that not only children, but also adults must learn and use regularly. The absence of critical thinking can lead, for instance, to radical views being adopted or to dangerous trends being joined.

The veracity of news and other sources of information can be hard to discern. Facebook, for example, is notorious for its lack of steps taken against fake news.[7] Parents must be particularly vigilant concerning trends aimed at young audiences. TikTok, for example, has faced criticism of not sufficiently policing trending videos which promoted life-threatening content to children.[8] **Critical thinking must be incentivized and practised from an early age to raise conscious – and safe – citizens**.

Only by **ensuring that the child voices doubts, concerns, or a lack of understanding** of certain information will they be able to develop said skill. The family environment is vital to incentivizing critical thinking, including questioning decisions of parents, should the child disagree. While parents naturally need **not always agree with children**'s contentions, **listening to them is of utmost importance** in fostering an open and honest environment conducive to developing critical thinking skills.

7 https://www.forbes.com/sites/traversmark/2020/03/21/facebook-spreads-fake-news-faster-than-any-other-social-website-according-to-new-research/
8 https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/06/technology/tiktok-blackout-challenge-deaths.html

Parents are often left to their own devices on critical thinking. Research results show that teachers are not very good at critical thinking, e.g. they are less able to separate fact from opinion, the base of critical thinking, than the general population. Parents can play games with their children to foster their critical thinking skills, but we have to remind ourselves that adults in general are not always really good at this. Playing together may lead to both parents and children developing their skills. There are numerous **online initiatives** in many languages that help you test your ability to judge the correctness of mass media content. At the same time, you can also introduce **offline activities** such as debates or planning activities/trips together letting children gather information for it.

BULLYING AND CYBERBULLYING

People have a tendency to judge each other and act unfriendly. Children are no exception. In its most common form, children bully each other: they harass, insult, threaten or coerce one another for some believed status or simply for enjoyment.

Digital worlds make this problem more complex and widespread. This is partly due to the interconnectedness of the internet allowing strangers to interact virtually. In large part, however, it is because of the potential for anonymity and pseudonymity in online discussions. Users often have the possibility – sometimes against the terms and conditions of the platform at hand – to disguise their real identity. From behind such a mask, cyberbullying can become much more ruthless and hurtful than if a perpetrator realistically had to fear potential backlash.

Cyberbullying can take a range of forms; the possibilities are virtually – and unfortunately – endless. Classmates or football teammates can spread nasty rumours, or humiliating pictures may be circulated. Threats may be made in private messages, or shared with a wider audience.

Naturally, the extent to which cyberbullying is done publicly will affect how easily a parent can learn of it. A child may keep what they consider embarrassing private messages to themselves, but if threats are made in a school group, teachers could notify the parent. **Parents should be prepared to hear and handle** such news as cyberbullying is widespread and nearly impossible to prevent.

Cyberbullying can occur in virtually any digital environment: from online classrooms through video games to, notably, social media. Parents must thus be conscious of the very real possibility that at one point, their child will be faced with cyberbullying during their time spent online. In such cases, children should be comfortable coming to the parent for comfort and/or help. For this, again, open and honest communication is key.

Parents may also be faced with the situation where they find out about **their own child cyberbullying someone**. In such cases, the harm that cyberbullying causes must be discussed with the child to avoid it happening again. The child's engagement in such behaviour may result from peer pressure, which does not excuse but often does explain bullying

behaviour. However, **bullying is a learned behaviour**, most often learned from an adult the children trust or a teacher. Cyberbullying is **usually preceded by offline bullying**, most often of the future bully and often by a teacher. In this regard, it is important for the parent to know who their children spend time with – and what they do together, in broad strokes. The parent should not, however, want to know every detail of every interaction that their child has as this is likely to lead to lying and dishonesty.

WHAT TO DO WHEN THERE ARE NEW DEVELOPMENTS

The current resource for parents was finalised in the Autumn of 2022. By the time you are reading this, there might have been new tools, new devices that "everybody" is using, new areas that have been digitised. **Some tips** on finding out more about these things:

- Check out **customer support pages** and especially any "for parents" section. Do not hesitate to contact customer care in writing if you feel unsure.
- **Consult the teacher** if it is introduced at the school, and make sure they have the answers to your questions – meaning they know what they want to use. If the teachers do not have answers, do not consent to using the new technology.
- Seek support in **parent groups**.
- **Explore together with your child** – they might be better at using it, and asking them to explain also makes them stop and think.
- If you **read** about something on mass media sites, ensure that the sources are reliable and the elements presented in an article are not taken out of context by the journalist. Be aware that article titles are more often misleading to be attractive than not.

DIGITAL RELATIONS BETWEEN SCHOOLS AND PARENTS

The availability of **digital tools made two-way communication easier** between schools and parents. Many schools have introduced communication policies that ensure a **balance between online and offline as well as real-time and asynchronous communication**. (The resource available for school leaders under the SAILS project helps schools in this. You can direct school leaders towards reading it.)

Digital technology can **solve challenges** such as the shortage of time or parents not speaking the language used by the teachers. However, a healthy balance is necessary as digital communication has **not** reached a level yet that makes it possible to **replace meeting in person**. Even the best teleconferencing tools fall short in providing for broadcasting body language for example.

Communication also became instant, leading to a lot of uncomfortable moments and situations. First and foremost, it is **difficult to wait and cool off**. When you have to physically go to the school, even a couple of minutes of walking may offer time for reflection, and you might be much calmer than calling the teacher on the spot. Of course, you may increase your stress level in the course of such a walk, too, but generally it is better to not act upon impulse.

Teachers and parents alike often find it **difficult to regulate themselves** and not expect the other to be available 24/7. Thus, it is advisable to **collaboratively create a code of conduct**, regulating when both parents and teachers should be available on the phone, how fast each party should react to a text message or e-mail, and what needs to be communicated immediately. Once such a code is available, both parties must stick to it and ensure that they keep to these mutual agreements.

Digital technologies make real participation and two-way communication possible. Often, schools believe that they communicate when they merely **send information** e.g. in the form of a newsletter. This **is not communication**, and parents should make it clear by asking questions, reacting to such news items and forcing the teachers to have a proper two-way exchange. It is an issue to be considered when to engage other parents or when to engage with a group of other parents only. In many countries, discussion groups of parents on WhatsApp or

Facebook, **omitting the teacher is becoming a serious challenge for schools** as they often not only discuss the teacher behind their back, but also base discussion on partial information or lack information totally.

Another **important element of parent-school communication is the child**. As this resource promotes a child rights approach, we strongly recommend to implement a **"nothing about them without them"** policy, thus always having the child present in our in-person or virtual communication. As much as teachers feel uncomfortable about parents discussing them beyond their back, it is also not a good feeling and also not beneficial for the child to be left out. At the same time, the presence of a child in all parent-teacher interactions also often serves as a lightning rod as the adults formulate their messages more carefully.

SCHOOL–FAMILY RELATION PLATFORMS

Many schools have introduced communication platforms to **inform parents about grades, taking stock of absence, informing parents about topics covered at school, and sending each other messages**. In some cases, there are national initiatives to use a certain platform. There are legal and educational considerations when using such a tool.

First of all, when a **school** wants to introduce such a platform, they **need to obtain parental consent and the consent of the child** for providing any personal data for the platform provider. For this, they need to offer a **clear picture about the handling of data**: who operates the platform, what server is used to store data, who might have access to the data of parents and the child. It has happened that parents could prevent the introduction of such a platform that caused data protection concerns (namely that the government may have access to sensitive data) by explicitly denying consent to data handling. Such conflicts can be prevented if **parents are engaged in the choice of the platform, and detailed information is available** about the above-mentioned topics.

What is important to know, is that it is **not allowed for the school to store any data about the child or the parents that is not absolutely necessary**. It is a main principle of European data protection regulations enshrined in the GDPR. Handling data and information "just in case it may come handy" is strictly forbidden. And this principle must be considered whenever you upload any information, file or data on such a platform.

The **educational considerations are more complex**. Old-style report cards or school to home booklets offered a very important room for negotiating parent-child communication. The child brought things back from school, they had to take the **courage** to share it with parents if it was bad news, but just as importantly, they had a major moment of celebration when it was good. If platforms allow the parent to learn such news before they meet their child, these moments are lost. Also, **out of context**, without giving the opportunity to discuss and explain, such news may lead to sudden and unnecessary action on the parent's side, e.g. calling the teacher. Many schools do not make such information available to the parent within 24 hours of sharing it with the child, so that the child has the opportunity to share in person. If this is not the case, it is

advisable to **agree with your child** that you always only ever **access the platform together** (or you can even give up your access code to your child as one of the authors of this resource did), and you can make a ritual of it.

If the platform is used for asking parents for sending things in the school, for assigning tasks, for requesting payments, it must be part of the previously mentioned code of conduct how much time should be available for the family and for the school. At the same time, such platforms are sometimes used for **emergency messages** (e.g. no school due to a major water leak). As families cannot be obliged to access the platform every morning, other means of communication should be used for that, and delivery of the message needs to be somehow proven. For example, if a WhatsApp group is used for such emergencies, and the sender can see that a number of families have not been reached, the school still needs to provide shelter for children who turn up regardless.

GDPR AND OTHER CHILD RIGHTS CONCERNS

As a rule of thumb, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child provides **children of all ages the right to express their opinion and obliges adults to ensure that their opinion is heard**. Thus, it is not only important to consistently apply the "nothing about them without them" principle, but also to **formulate any information concerning a child in an age-appropriate way** that is understandable and accessible for the child.

As you will see in the legislative analysis of this resource later on, the legislators of the GDPR, the **General Data Protection Regulation** of the European Union, did not consider child rights in detail. However, it **provides the right to consent to children**, depending on their maturity. As a blanket regulation, children can give consent to data handling **without their parents from a certain age between 13 and 16**, depending on the Member State, but the regulation implies – especially since all EU Member States have also ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child – that **joint consent is necessary before that age**.

Many schools around Europe ask for a blanket consent for **using photos and videos** of your child for a school year. However, it is not acceptable practice, and there have already been some court cases proving this to be wrong. You need **to obtain the consent of the child, and parental consent only makes it valid below the GDPR-regulated age of consent**. Given the maturity of children, it is advisable to ask for separate consent for the use of each photo for each individual use if using photos or videos is absolutely necessary. Over 16 parental consent is not necessary at all. However, a child has the so-called **right to be forgotten**, so they can require the school as data handler to remove a certain photo even years later. As it is difficult to ensure that a photo or video is fully removed from the internet, it is better to only use photos or videos with no recogniseable child in them, showing products, backs, legs, hands only.

Another major child rights concern is about **intellectual property rights**. Although, in case of minors, parents act as guardians, children are still the rights holders. Thus, a drawing, painting, poem, text, etc. created by a child cannot be freely used, **the consent of the child (that may be withdrawn) and the consent of the parent must be obtained** for example for sharing it in a public picture gallery on the school's website.

PARTICIPATORY DECISION MAKING

Parents have long demanded to be part of school decision making schemes. Digital technology makes it seemingly easier as it is very simple to create polls, surveys and similar tools. There are three main considerations for parents in this field.

1. Real participation in decision making requires **adequate information**. For this reason, it is important that the facts are available for all parents in an **accessible language**. For parents who don't speak the language of instruction well enough, digital technology offers easy solutions in artificial translation. At the same time, it is more an issue of linguistic register than language, thus teachers, school leaders and parents' leaders must ensure that **jargon is not used or is well-explained**.

2. Participatory decision making requires **discussion and debate**, voting should come after that. Real discussion requires in-person meetings, as communication is mostly non-verbal. Thus, while it is tempting to **replace meetings with online surveys, it takes the participatory element out**.

3. The **participation of children in decision making** should be facilitated in a similar manner. Parents demanding the right to participate for themselves should do so for their children, too.

E-PORTFOLIOS

E-portfolios are used more and more widely to **show parents what is happening at school**. If implemented well, they are a very important means of **formative assessment,** showing your child how they have been developing their skills over the course of the school year. As a starting point, the contents of the e-portfolio are **for the eyes of the child and the teacher only**. Sharing them with the parent does not raise any concerns, but sharing them with anybody else, e.g. classmates, other teachers or even the public is a totally different consideration. This means that parents, as the guardians of the rights of the child, must **keep a very close tab on who can access e-portfolios**. If they are shared online, the data protection scrutiny mentioned above is applicable.

E-portfolios usually contain products the child created as practice or during the school year. It means that most of them show stages of skills development. Even if the child creates something "perfect" by the end of the school year or learning unit, the road to that product, all parts of the portfolio are surely not for the eyes of others. In an ideal case, a child should be able to only share such products in a temporary manner with teachers and parents. However, having them available for a full teaching cycle can also show the child how much they have developed. So, sharing the contents of an e-portfolio is delicate. It is best to tackle it as if it was a physical one.

PARENTS COACHING TEACHERS

The reality of formal education in Europe is that there is an ageing teaching force in most countries. At the same time, children of people who were born into the digital age are reaching school age and starting to attend school. These **parents who are so-called digital natives are nearly always more proficient in using digital technologies than teachers who are in most cases digital immigrants**. Many parents work in jobs where they become even more proficient. It is the mutual interest of teachers and parents, for the best interest of children, to work together for the best possible use of technology.

If there is a high level of communication between the home and the school, and parents are considered as equal partners (as it is desirable) by teachers, this kind of learning should become natural. When school leaders design the professional development programmes they offer teachers, parents as trainers or coaches should be considered. As **a parent, you can be proactive, reaching out to the school leader or teachers and offering your expertise**. However, to become a trainer or coach of your child's teacher you may require training. Such trainings are available via parent organisations, for example by partners of Parents International, the author of this resource.

At the same time, you also should think about receiving training or coaching from your own child and offering teachers to do so.

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM EDUCATION PROFESSIONALS

In a school that works on the basis of partnership with parents (and children), you can and should expect a **respectful approach**. In a school with such a mindset, school doors – both physical and virtual – should be literally open. In an ideal case it means that **you are welcome there at all times**, but also means that in the digital reality you **keep to mutually agreed boundaries**, especially of time. Some countries implement restrictive measures, so it may mean that the door is physically open for children and teachers to do things outside of school, but not inside. However, there are no such legal restrictions in digital access.

In more and more schools, you can assume that **teachers have received training to be more aware of diversity, the needs and role of parents,** and the role of family and community in education in general. They can also be assumed to be aware of specific needs of children and to consider individual needs rather than generalise. If this is not the case, **you may initiate such trainings** with the school leader.

You can expect the school and its teachers to **treat you as an equal partner,** to seek your knowledge and expertise in the school. Your personal experiences should be important for them, and they should **work together with you for the best learning and development of your child as well as the interest of society and local communities**.

Janet Goodall (2017) summarised the **main principles of parent-teacher relation**s as follows:

1. School staff and parents participate in supporting the learning of the child.
2. School staff and parents value the knowledge that each brings to the partnership.
3. School staff and parents engage in dialogue around and with the learning of the child.
4. School staff and parents act in partnership to support the learning of the child and each other.
5. School staff and parents respect the legitimate authority of each other's roles and contributions to supporting learning.

SAILS IN YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL – THE MOCK SOCIAL NETWORK

Online communities have played a key role in the development of the Internet from its very beginning. Nowadays, not only have they surpassed email as the dominant form of online communication, but also try to cover all kinds of communication needs, from micro-interactions (i.e., presence or ratings in the form of "Like", "+1", or votes) to real-time videoconferencing. However, many of the communication scenarios that arise around social media are so novel that sometimes the consequences of their use are neglected. There is much work to do in terms of privacy, security, and trust in this field. Developing digital literacy skills robust enough to deal with these new scenarios that arise from the use of social networking apps requires not only solid technical knowledge but also a lot of practical experience.

Designing insightful workshops on online privacy is not an easy task for several reasons. First, online privacy is often perceived as the opposite of being social and therefore undermines the user experience in social media. All measures aimed at preserving user privacy represent a usability loss in these social networks, and are usually experienced by users as boring or annoying. Second, privacy learning materials designed from a playful perspective are often intended to be used by children or teenagers. However, not only these age cohorts are lacking in knowledge on privacy, older users – for example teachers – face similar problems and they may feel uncomfortable learning with children-oriented materials.

For these reasons, schools participating at the SAILS programme are offered an interactive social game where players can develop their online social skills from a first-person perspective. InstaLab is an Instagram-like workshop on online privacy developed earlier on. Its main novelty is that it goes beyond the standard set of interactive lessons and multiple-choice questions about best practices in the use of social networks: InstaLab offers a social engineering wargame in a fake social network that works like a sandbox.

Social engineering – in the context of computer security – is a set of techniques designed to manipulate people into performing actions or disclosing confidential information. Hackers and

crackers take advantage of social engineering techniques to gain access to technologically well-protected systems (e.g, firewalls or other perimeter security solutions). At a less technical level, social engineering can be used by strangers or stalkers to gain access to private information of a victim. A wargame – in this context – is a security challenge in which players must use their skills to exploit vulnerabilities in a system to gain access to it. Wargames often provide fake servers to be attacked in a set of levels of increasing difficulty to facilitate the learning process about defence against hacking (e.g. Hackerslab).

Similarly, InstaLab provides social engineering wargame automated fake social profiles (also known as "social bots" in InstaLab) interact with players. All the information of the profiles related to these social bots is fictitious, so that no privacy of any real person is violated when playing InstaLab. Along the set of InstaLab challenges, players will have to refine their social engineering techniques to solve them. Thus, as it happens in training courses on ethical hacking, after playing with this privacy-related wargame, it may be easier for these players to identify situations where malicious others pretend to use the same techniques on them in real social networking apps.

If you are interested in it in more detail, you should ask your child's teacher to also give you access for you to have an insider view. It is also a safe way for you and your children to practise communication in the framework of a social network, but in a protected environment.

LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND

As with all human rights, children's rights are subject to an internal hierarchy. The protection of life, similarly to general human rights law, overrides all other rights. It appears, however, that national and regional regulators consider themselves to possess absolute freedom over ranking, and assigning importance to children's rights in digital environments. A purely risk-prevention focused approach loses sight of the importance of balancing, and indeed respecting, children's rights. A risk-mitigation approach can achieve a balance between competing children's rights while also minimising risk that children face in digital environments.

Below, a survey of European and international rules concerning children's rights on the internet is presented.

EUROPEAN UNION

General Data Protection Regulation ("GDPR")

The GDPR, adopted in 2016, is an instrument directly applicable and binding in each Member State of the European Union ("EU"). Most relevant for present purposes is Article 8, titled *Conditions applicable to child's consent in relation to information society services*.

The Article, in essence, fixes the default age of consent in online environments at 16, although granting the leeway to Member States to reduce this to as low as 13. As such, Member States of the EU are forbidden from introducing a lower age of consent. This rule effectively removes the ability of parents to decide on the maturity of their own children and the possibility for children to exercise their rights such as free expression.

The Regulation further posits that simplistic, child-friendly language should be used in any communication aimed at children in data processing contexts (Article 12 and Recital 58). All national supervisory authorities must also pay special attention to online activities aimed at children (Article 57). It is considered that children merit such extended protection due to their lack of understanding of the ramifications of sharing one's personal data (Recital 38).

This blanket ban on under-16 use of certain sites (as many sites cannot be used without data processing), is an extreme form of risk-prevention. It assumes that children are not competent to make their own decisions, and must be protected from any and all risks even at the expense of several rights that they are theoretically entitled to.

No discussion of potential harmful effects on other rights are apparent, nor does it appear that the EU legislator was cognizant of the need to respect and protect children's rights. In the name of risk-prevention, rights to free speech and association, among others, have been effectively discarded.

INTERNATIONAL LAW AND POLICY

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child ("UNCRC")

The UNCRC is the most important and the single broadest international legal instrument concerning children's rights. As such, it also has major relevance for the digital context. In no particular order of importance, the following rights are, or should be, most impactful in the online environment:

- The right to free expression (Article 13).
- The right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion (Article 14).
- The right to freedom of association and peaceful assembly (Article 15).
- The right to privacy (Article 16).
- The right to access to information (Article 17).
- The right to education (Article 28).
- The right to leisure, play, and culture (Article 31).
- The right to protection from economic, sexual, and other types of exploitation (Articles 32, 34, and 36, respectively).

General comment on the UNCRC

In 2021, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child adopted a General Comment concerning children's rights in digital environments. The Committee devised four principles through which the implementation and balancing of children's rights should be achieved at national level.

Firstly, States must guarantee non-discrimination. Children should have equal and effective access to digital environments. Hateful communication or unfair treatment using technology is also considered discriminatory treatment.

Secondly, the best interests of the child should inform national efforts concerning digital technologies. The regulation, design, use and management of such technologies should have as a principal consideration the best interest of the child. States should consult child right organisations. Importantly, it is highlighted that all children's rights should be given due weight, thus including the right to seek, receive and impart information, not only the right to be protected from harm.

Thirdly, States should protect children from risks to their life and development. Such threats encompass a wide range of activities, such as violent content and gambling.

Fourthly, States should ensure that children may voice their views through digital technologies and that these views be respected. In regulating this area, States should pay due attention to the concerns and opinions of children.

The General Comment highlights the need for specialised policies and rules at the national level which address children's rights in the digital environment.

As is clear from the brief summary above, the Committee considers it (rightly) critical that States recognize the relevance of all children's rights in the digital world. Comprehensive and broad risk-prevention approaches are strikingly contrary to this required respect for rights such as that to access information and voice one's opinion.

If, in the name of risk-prevention, a parent or authority may prevent a child from using digital platforms, this is tantamount to a frontal assault on these rights for no discernible reason. As explained by the Committee, proportional protection, non-discriminatory treatment, and the best interests of the child should inform decision-making surrounding children's presence online.

The internet can be an unparalleled tool in fulfilling children's rights. Through the web, the rights of free expression, freedom of thought, freedom of association, access to information, freedom of leisure, play, and culture, and the right to education can also be promoted in a manner not possible in the offline world.

Through public fora, children may voice their views in forms, and to audiences, which they would not be able to do offline. Through digital education, the diversity and quality of materials used in teaching, as well as that of methods of teaching, can be greatly enhanced. Games provide new forms of play as well as playful learning, while often also allowing novel ways of association with peers and accessing information.

Other rights may, contrarily, be threatened in digital environments. Particularly the right to privacy and protection from exploitation must be borne in mind. However, the main takeaway should *not* be that these rights must be protected at the expense of all others listed before. The risks thereto should be mitigated to the greatest extent possible, guaranteeing the respect for all other rights unless impossible in the circumstances. No right other than that to life and survival may trump others without careful balancing and, if possible, case-by-case assessment.

United Nations Children's Fund ("UNICEF") discussion paper

Recent research by the United Nations Children's Fund ("UNICEF") suggests the adoption of principles similar to those proposed by the UNCRC Committee in the context of age assurance tools. These are:

Proportionate and transparent usage: age assurance tools, which are in effect obstacles to free access, should only be used if necessary and proportionate, and should be employed in a manner transparent to affected children.

Access and inclusion: the exercise of children's rights in the online sphere should not be inhibited unless there is a risk based on evidence. Outright prohibition of access should not be employed if any less intrusive measure is available. All of the foregoing must apply in an inclusive, non-discriminatory manner.

Governance: age-gating (that is, making access conditional on being of a given age) must be justified by evidence of potential harm and reasoning concerning the chosen age ranges. Internationally, more consistency is necessary in the regulatory framework to protect and fulfil children's rights.

What is perhaps even more pronounced when considering this research than the General Comment is the untenability of comprehensive prohibitive measures in the name of risk-prevention. Child rights, simply put, do

not allow for blanket measures. This should come as no surprise: general human rights are subject to identical balancing efforts. It is high time that States recognize that children's rights are human rights, and deserve the same dedicated and careful balancing that "adult rights" receive.

Proportionate, transparent, accessible, and inclusive regulation and policy should be devised in areas surrounding children's online presence. Blanket age restrictions, for example, on using social media in any form whatsoever is clearly not such a balanced measure. Risk-mitigation, not risk-prevention, should prevail in decision-making so as to respect and uphold children's rights.

National legislative framework: Greece

Age of consent for information society services (GDPR, Art. 8)

Greece made the decision to lower the age of consent for children for online contexts below the default threshold prescribed by the GDPR. While the Regulation foresees that Member States may introduce an age of consent as low as 13, Greece implemented the Regulation nationally by setting the age of consent at 15.

Protection of children online and the rights of the parent: law and policy

No specific law has been introduced in Greece concerning child protection online, nor concerning parental rights and duties in the aforesaid context. The interest of the child as a concept is not defined in any binding instrument. The laws in effect are based on the UNCRC.

Parental responsibility, generally, is defined by the Civil Code and encompasses care, protection, and education. These concepts, in turn, may be applied to digital contexts. The parent (or guardian) must promote the moral and material interests of the child. The former, relevant to the present discussion, includes psychological and mental health, as well as the protection of fundamental rights, all of which are highly important in online environments.

Interestingly, despite the relatively high age of consent in digital environments, the Greek legal system applies a flexible approach to evaluating the child's maturity in legal proceedings. It is recognized that each child and thus each case is different, and high levels of flexibility consequently apply when assessing the maturity of the child. Such flexibility is clearly absent from the approach taken towards online presence for minors.

A number of separate policies and actors partake in online child protection efforts, for instance, the Greek School Network of public schools in the country and abroad. Safe access of students to the Internet and their protection against inappropriate content are their fundamental principles. Since 1999, it has operated a content control service on the internet applying a secure content policy, in line with international practices and legal requirements, but without parental engagement and with no visible activity supporting parents.

Overall, while some good practice-based efforts exist, there are fewer initiatives compared to other countries.

National legislative framework: Hungary

Age of consent for information society services (GDPR, Art. 8)

Hungary made the decision to increase the age of consent for children for online contexts significantly above the minimum threshold prescribed by the GDPR. While the Regulation foresees that Member States may introduce an age of consent as low as 13, Hungary implemented the Regulation nationally by not providing the age of consent. As such, the country introduced the default rule of 16 years of age contained in the GDPR.

Protection of children online and the rights of the parent: law and policy

No specific law has been introduced in Hungary concerning child protection online, nor concerning parental rights and duties in the aforesaid context. The laws in effect are based on the UNCRC.

In 2014 the National Media and Infocommunications Authority ("Nemzeti Média- és Hírközlési Hatóság" (NMHH)) formed an initiative dubbed Internet Roundtable on Child Protection ("Gyermekvédelmi Kerekasztal"). The role of this advisory board to the NMHH is to promote and support the protection of children on the internet, assisting the president of the NMHH. While it does not have the power to adopt legally binding instruments, it focuses on the production of recommendations and research promoting safe and child-friendly internet use best practices, focusing on filtering software and digital literacy of both parents and children. Additionally, concerned parties may contact the board if they consider a content provider to lack in its child protection efforts. For instance, if a video-sharing service provides unconstrained access to violent content for minors, this may be reported to the board who may then examine it.

The board consists of an array of experts, including educators, internet providers' association representatives, and child safety professionals. Internet market professionals and child protection experts may together recommend members for eight of the twenty-one seats on the board to the chairperson.

The Hungarian online child protection efforts are influenced by the outcome of a national consultation held in 2015, the results of which showed that the majority of respondents want no threats towards children to be posed by the internet. As a result, the government initiated the Digital Welfare Programme ("Digitális Jólét Program"). Relevant for present purposes is a subcomponent of the Programme, namely the Digital Child Protection Strategy of Hungary ("Magyarország Digitális Gyermekvédelmi Stratégiája"). The Strategy emphatically refers to protecting children from any and all threat, and preventing risks that may exist online. Additionally, it aims to also equip children, parents and educators with the knowledge and skills necessary for value-creating and culture-fostering internet use. Three main pillars are taken as the basis of addressing child protection online. Firstly, raising awareness and providing knowledge of media realities. Secondly, protection and security through tools such as filtering software and content limitation. Thirdly, sanctions against threatening content through data collection and activity monitoring concerning threats to children online.

Overall, in Hungary, a number of separate policies, actors and rules govern child protection online. Large portions of child protection efforts remain at the level of non-binding policies or advice.

A number of education and awareness raising centres are also established in Hungary, aimed at promoting digital media literacy as well as conscious and safe media use.

National legislative framework: The Netherlands

Age of consent for information society services (GDPR, Art. 8)

The Netherlands made the decision to increase the age of consent for children for online contexts significantly above the minimum threshold prescribed by the GDPR. While the Regulation foresees that Member States may introduce an age of consent as low as 13, the Netherlands implemented the Regulation nationally by not providing the age of consent. As such, the country introduced the default rule of 16 years of age contained in the GDPR.

Protection of children online and the rights of the parent: law and policy

No specific law has been introduced in the Netherlands concerning child protection online, nor concerning parental rights and duties in the aforesaid context. The laws in effect are based on the UNCRC.

There is, however, an authoritative Code for Children's Rights developed by Leiden University and endorsed by the Dutch Consumers and Markets Authority. As a result, the Code is likely to have effect in the market, even in absence of legal codification. Its main focus is, among other digital products, on apps and games, recognizing the growing importance of these products to the everyday life of children.

The Code is based on a set of ten principles intended to guarantee the protection and fundamental rights of children online. The principles, aimed at developers and designers of digital products and based on the UNCRC and the GDPR, are the following:

- Put the child's interest first in digital design.
- Involve children in the design process.
- Limit the processing of personal data related to children.
- Ensure transparency in a manner understandable to children.
- Conduct impact assessments concerning the privacy of the child.
- Introduce child-friendly privacy design (i.e. generally recommending opt-in approaches).
- Avoid profiling children based on the data provided and their actions online.
- Avoid economic exploitation of children.
- Avoid design that can be harmful to children.
- Develop industry guidelines focused on child protection.

The Netherlands has also revised its Youth Act which deals primarily with services for children and families, from preventive to specialised care. Such services are now decentralised, mainly falling into the responsibility of municipalities.

A number of separate policies and actors partake in online child protection efforts. The Dutch Safer Internet Centre exists to promote safer and better internet use of children. They include youth in their policymaking through the Youth Panel ("Digiraad"). They also provide a hotline and a helpline to assist in safer internet efforts. Its central element is its Awareness Centre, responsible for national coordination between ministries, NGOs and private partners (such as ISPs).

The Netherlands has also seen several good practice initiatives aimed at helping parents, children and educators. For instance, the Safe Internet website (veilinginternetten.nl) provides resources and advice concerning safe internet use, funded jointly by the government and private actors, relying on the expertise of the national cybersecurity agency.

National legislative framework: Spain

Age of consent for information society services (GDPR, Art. 8)

Spain made the decision to lower the age of consent for children for online contexts below the default threshold prescribed by the GDPR. While the Regulation foresees that Member States may introduce an age of consent as low as 13, Spain implemented the Regulation nationally by setting the age of consent at 14.

Protection of children online and the rights of the parent: law and policy

Spain introduced a new child protection law in 2021. After receiving approval from the Lower House, it was confirmed by the Senate. Among others, it reinforces the right to be heard and allows the government to create courts specialised in violence against children. Parental rights and duties are defined in this law. It is focused on protecting children from any kind of violence (physical, mental, moral, and psychological) in whatever manner it may occur (thus both online and offline).

Spain also specifically defines the duties of minors, such as the duty to avoid bullying. In the context of internet safety, the latter duty is of critical importance, as cyberbullying presents a significant threat to children on the internet.

The laws in effect are based on the UNCRC.

Schools are allowed to introduce digital learning if the school board approves. It is completely at the school board's discretion whether they involve stakeholders (teachers, teacher representatives, students, parents, and non-teaching staff) in decision-making concerning digital education.

While in terms of curricula teachers have little autonomy, they possess significant leeway in choosing the method of education. Teachers' attitudes towards technology in education are mostly positive. The greater access to diverse sources is conceived as particularly beneficial. It is widely recognized that technology is a tool, thus its ultimate benefit or harm depends on conscious efforts to maximise beneficial uses and minimise undesirable applications thereof. The wide availability of sources of dubious reliability is considered a point of concern among teachers in Spain.

RECENT RESEARCH ON CHILDREN IN THE DIGITAL WORLD

In the few months preceding the compilation of this resource, several research papers were published that clearly verify the risk mitigation approach implemented in SAILS. They underline that the only way to learn sailing safely online is to actually do it, and the more children use digital tools and social media the more confident and resilient they become. It is also clear that while regular users know when and from whom to ask for help, the adults around them, especially teachers, are not always prepared for the job.

Probably the most important such **paper**[9] is by Sonia Livingstone, one of the most vocal advocates of a balanced approach to digital practices and of ensuring all child rights, not only the right to protection, and her colleagues. It is a systemic evidence review that is aiming at making the link between young people's well-being related to content or occurrences that are uncomfortable or bad, and their resilience and media literacy. The percentage of young people reporting that their well-being level is lowered due to such encounters is declining, and there seems to be a very strong link between their resilience to such events and well-being. However, you can only build resilience by actually having to cope with difficult situations and by increasing media literacy levels. Thus, it seems to be clear that given the right support by their family, friends and adults in their circle of trust, young people benefit from being exposed to risk and uncomfortable situations in the long run. The task we are trying to help parents and professional educators solve is to be able to offer the right support, to increase resilience in a complex way, and to support their media literacy.

Another **research**[10] authored by Kathy Hirsch-Pasek and her colleagues highlights the importance of targeting parents as a main recipient group in SAILS. Their research was focusing on younger children, their digital practices (especially watching videos) and the impact of parents discussing it with them on their other skills and competences. Their findings strongly underline again the importance of parental curiosity about children's digital activities and the importance of discussions.

Research conducted by **Ofcom**[11] in the UK shows that most children under 13 are already registered on at least one social media platform. One-third of parents of children aged 5 to 7 said their child had a profile, which rose to 60% among children aged 8 to 11. There is no data directly from children, so the percentages are likely to be higher, especially for the 8 to 13 age group. This is a reality we need to deal with, and it means that even the parents and teachers of younger children must have the right competences to guide children while allowing them to experiment.

9 https://doi.org/10.1027/1016-9040/a000478
10 https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0258572
11 https://www.ofcom.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0024/234609/childrens-media-use-and-attitudes-report-2022.pdf

Amy Orben[12] and her colleagues have analysed the impact of social media use on life satisfaction, and have found that there is a major difference between boys and girls of different ages. High levels of social media use accounted for lower life satisfaction for girls aged 11–13 and boys aged 14–15.

A recent **publication**[13] by Lie Detectors, a Belgian journalism NGO finds a clear mismatch between the social media use of children and young people, and the adults close to them. This is an important finding highlighting that indirect tools are important in education for living in the digital age as the educator may live in a different digital reality from the digital reality of the learner – regardless of who is educating whom. This paper also highlights another element in our approach: that children are often more skilled than adults. The findings show that children are far more capable of identifying falsified pictures than adults.

The **UNICEF Report**[14] The State of the World's Children 2021 shows that by being online and active on social media regularly, children become more confident and subsequently feel much safer online. It is a reassuring finding that the overwhelming majority of children know how to seek support if something feels uncomfortable online. The percentage grows with the regularity of logging in. 74% of first time users already know how to ask for help from family, other adults or friends. Occasional social media use increases this to 86%, while in the case of regular users 93% feel confident asking for help. However, a high percentage of children felt that school was not responsive to their online learning challenges at all.

12 https://www.nature.com/articles/s41467-022-29296-3
13 https://lie-detectors.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/JournalistsFindings_final.pdf
14 https://www.unicef.org/reports/state-worlds-children-2021?languages=en

EXTERNAL RESOURCES FOR PARENTS

Helping parents keep their children safe online
internetmatters.org/

The initiative aims to assist parents in keeping their children safe when navigating the online world. By providing advice, checklists, and toolkits, it aims to raise parents' awareness of issues potentially impacting their children such as inappropriate content and fake news.

While it is commendable to raise awareness of risks, the initiative appears to promote a risk-prevention approach through, for instance, setting up parental control on all devices and generally restricting access. It provides guides on restricting access to sites and/or functions on computers, phones, gaming consoles, social media, and so forth.

On a positive note, it also recommends that parents discuss internet safety and conscious web use with their children. This is a laudable aspect of the initiative as it gives children, at least to some extent, a say in their own online presence. Thus, this risk-mitigation focused aspect compensates somewhat for the strict risk-prevention and non-child-right-cognizant restriction recommendations of the initiative.

Positive Online Content Campaign
positiveonlinecontentforkids.eu/campaign

The initiative aims to improve parents' digital literacy which in turn should enable them to act as role models to their children concerning online activities. Additionally, it promotes raising awareness and disseminating knowledge about what positive and negative characteristics of online products to look out for.

By promoting the making of informed choices and the characterization of parents as role models, the initiative appears to fit well with risk-mitigation approaches. For example, instead of banning children from downloading apps, it wishes to teach parents how to recognize and discuss potentially harmful ones.

Internet Segura for Kids
infocop.es/pdf/guia.pdf

The Spanish Internet Safety Centre aims to raise the awareness of parents and children alike concerning the safe and responsible use of the internet and digital technologies in general. It offers a helpline for stakeholders in doubt, which should further the ability of parents and children to make wise choices when navigating the online world.

By recognizing that both parents and children are equal stakeholders in safe internet use and by promoting awareness and training instead of prohibitions and restricting access, the initiative appears cognizant of children's rights and in line with a risk-mitigation approach to online threats.

Apple Families
apple.com/families/

Apple's family features aim to enable parents to be aware of what children are doing online. It allows parents to decide on the manner and amount of device and/or app usage. It generally focuses more on limiting and consciously monitoring online activity than preemptively banning access. Through time limits and specific app restrictions, it provides a more tailor-made form of regulating online presence for children than blanket prohibitions on, for example, using the App Store.

While a positive approach in that it is more focused on mitigating risks than preventing them, it can easily move astray and incentivize inclined parents to unduly monitor and restrict their children's online activities. However, this is a fine line to tread, and the initiative is commendable for its focus on case-by-case limiting instead of blanket banning.

#SeizeTheControls
seizethecontrols.eu/

The initiative recognizes the popularity, potential and positive characteristics of video gaming. It aims to help parents in understanding video games, choosing age-appropriate games for their children, and setting up limits as to when and how long children can play. By promoting that parents, for example, familiarise themselves with in-game reporting tools and by promoting parent-child discussion surrounding video games, it fosters two-sided, honest discussion and subsequent conscious online play.

Instead of discouraging parents from allowing their children to play, the initiative hopes to enable parents to recognize the positive impact games can have while mitigating potential risks, such as non-age-appropriate games (for example, highly violent and obscene shooter games for preteens). To this end, it relies on and explains the Pan-European Game Information classification ("PEGI", https://pegi.info/). The classification allows conscious decision-making when buying and playing games. Sufficiently aware of the contents, parents and children can make informed choices together whether this game is appropriate.

Smart Parenting in the Digital Age
library.parenthelp.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/DigilitEY-Smart-parenting.pdf

This guide intends to assist parents in raising children in a digital world. It emphasises making decisions about boundaries as a team, together with children, while simultaneously building trust. This latter aspect is important as the guide recognizes that total monitoring and constant supervision are not feasible. The guide also promotes leading by example and helping children find games and tools suitable for their age and maturity.

The guide emphasises that children's consent should be discussed with them from an early age and, whenever possible, they should be allowed to have a say when their consent online is requested. Similarly, helping children understand what not to share online is promoted as a tool for raising risk-conscious children.

Overall, the guide promotes a healthy risk-mitigation approach through discussion and joint decision-making. It opposes blanket prohibitions and making decisions for children. As such, it is a step in the right direction – away from risk-prevention and towards risk-mitigation in online environments.

UNICEF: Digital Age Assurance Tools and Children's Rights Online across the Globe

Relevantly for present purposes, the discussion paper includes alternatives to age-gating tools. It promotes the use of parental content control on home Wi-Fi networks to prevent children from accessing inappropriate content. Importantly, however, it emphasises that this tool is only suitable for young children, as older children's rights to access information may be impeded by such measures. It also uniquely recognizes that children are often more tech-savvy than their parents and such measures are thus also likely to give only a false sense of successful risk-prevention to parents. Similar control measures are available on gaming consoles, and are similarly encouraged only for specific situations and very young children.

The 4Cs: Classifying Online Risk to Children (S. Livingstone, M. Stoilova)

The authors develop a four-way classification of online risks: the 4Cs. As stated in the report, the classification assists in recognizing that risks to children online can arise when a child

- *"engages with and/or is exposed to potentially harmful CONTENT;*
- *experiences and/or is targeted by potentially harmful CONTACT;*
- *witnesses, participates in and/or is a victim of potentially harmful CONDUCT;*
- *or is party to and/or exploited by a potentially harmful CONTRACT."*

Through the 4Cs classification system, the report hopes to, inter alia, enable parents to be conscious of what type of risks to look out for and what can be done to tackle them, should they arise.

FURTHER READING FOR PARENTS

The following list has been compiled over the course of recent years and provides interesting reading material for parents who are raising children today. They are mostly not specifically about digitalisation, but help you navigate today's and tomorrow's realities.

Bruce D. Perry
THE BOY WHO WAS RAISED AS A DOG: AND OTHER STORIES FROM A CHILD PSYCHIATRIST'S NOTEBOOK – WHAT TRAUMATIZED CHILDREN CAN TEACH US ABOUT LOSS, LOVE, AND HEALING

Dr Elizabeth Milovidov, JD, Council of Europe
PARENTING IN THE DIGITAL AGE – POSITIVE PARENTING STRATEGIES FOR DIFFERENT SCENARIOS

Alicia Blum-Ross, Sonia Livingstone
PARENTING FOR A DIGITAL FUTURE: HOW HOPES AND FEARS ABOUT TECHNOLOGY SHAPE CHILDREN'S LIVES

Tara Westover
EDUCATED

Deborah Feldman
UNORTHODOX: THE SCANDALOUS REJECTION OF MY HASIDIC ROOTS

Ken Robinson
YOU, YOUR CHILD, AND SCHOOL

David Epstein
RANGE: WHY GENERALISTS TRIUMPH IN A SPECIALIZED WORLD

Frank J. Sulloway
BORN TO REBEL: BIRTH ORDER, FAMILY DYNAMICS AND CREATIVE LIVES

Adam M. Grant
ORIGINALS: HOW NON-CONFORMISTS MOVE THE WORLD

Joshua D. Greene
MORAL TRIBES: EMOTION, REASON, AND THE GAP BETWEEN US AND THEM

Jesper Juul
LEITWÖLFE SEIN LIEBEVOLLE FÜHRUNG IN DER FAMILIE

Chris Clearfield, András Tilcsik
MELTDOWN: WHAT PLANE CRASHES, OIL SPILLS, AND DUMB BUSINESS DECISIONS CAN TEACH US ABOUT HOW TO SUCCEED AT WORK AND AT HOME

Rutger Bregman
HUMANKIND: A HOPEFUL HISTORY

Rutger Bregman
UTOPIA FOR REALISTS: AND HOW WE CAN GET THERE

Richard H. Thaler, Cass R. Sunstein
NUDGE: IMPROVING DECISIONS ABOUT HEALTH, WEALTH, AND HAPPINESS

Daniel Kahneman
THINKING FAST AND SLOW

Howard Gardner
FRAMES OF MIND: THE THEORY OF MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES

Elif Shafak
HOW TO STAY SANE IN AN AGE OF DIVISION

Margot Machol Bisnow
RAISING AN ENTREPRENEUR: 10 RULES FOR NURTURING RISK TAKERS, PROBLEM SOLVERS, AND CHANGE MAKERS

Erica Reischer
WHAT GREAT PARENTS DO: 75 PROVEN STRATEGIES FOR RAISING FANTASTIC KIDS

Alison Gopnik
THE GARDENER AND THE CARPENTER: WHAT THE NEW SCIENCE OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT TELLS US ABOUT THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARENTS AND CHILDREN

Pasi Sahlberg, William Doyle
LET THE CHILDREN PLAY: HOW MORE PLAY WILL SAVE OUR SCHOOLS AND HELP CHILDREN THRIVE

Jordan B. Peterson
12 RULES FOR LIFE: AN ANTIDOTE TO CHAOS

Wendy Mogel
THE BLESSING OF A SKINNED KNEE: USING JEWISH TEACHINGS TO RAISE SELF-RELIANT CHILDREN

Fredrik Backman
THINGS MY SON NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT THE WORLD

Marilyn Price-Mitchell
TOMORROW'S CHANGE MAKERS: RECLAIMING THE POWER OF CITIZENSHIP FOR A NEW GENERATION

ANNEX 1

SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL FOR PARENTS ABOUT THEIR PARENTING PRACTICES IN THE DIGITAL AGE

PART 1 | EXPLORING YOUR DIGITAL PARENTING – ASSESS YOUR PARENTING STYLE AND ATTITUDE

In this section, there are no right or wrong answers. After the last question, you will be able to identify the main parenting approach you are using. Good parenting in the digital age is on a very wide spectrum, and it is important for parents to consciously develop their day-to-day parenting practices according to the approach they feel comfortable with. The only boundary is that you cannot harm your child or their rights, and to explore that, you will go on to Part 2 that is about the existing boundaries you need to consider.

QUESTION 1

WHAT IS CHILD DISCIPLINE TO YOU?

A. Absolutely necessary and one of the most important aspects of good parenting and successful child rearing! Children need to learn who's in charge, otherwise all hell breaks loose. Strict and firm child discipline is therefore absolutely necessary in order to avoid spoiled, lazy and rebellious children who don't know the meaning of respect, hard work, and how to advance in life!

C. Necessary in the form of a gentle but firm hand! Love is extremely important, but no discipline at all is not doing my children any favours, on the contrary, it's actually more confusing than good. My children need to learn that the world doesn't dance to their pipe, that they cannot always get their way and that there are certain rules to be followed and rights and wrongs to live by.

B. Completely useless, old fashioned and damaging! I think the very concept of child discipline itself is limiting for my children's emotional development and restricts their sense of freedom, inborn curiosity and creative thinking!

D. A wrong focus! I don't actually use or think in terms of good or bad child discipline. To me parenting is more about working with my child, tuning in and sensing what my child needs right now while at the same time keeping my long-term goal glasses on. Sometimes rules and limits are needed, sometimes they are not! Sometimes I have to step in; sometimes I need to let go and back off. Different situations require different answers!

QUESTION 2

WHAT DO THE CONCEPTS OF RESPECT AND AUTHORITY MEAN TO YOU?

B. I don't believe in authority, hierarchy and subordination. Being an authority equals suppressing my children and limiting their free exploration of the world. I don't need respect from my children. All I need is for my children to be happy and live out their full potential without my limiting authority, preconditioned beliefs and constant supervision.

A. Oh, respect and authority are extremely important parenting issues! In order to raise well-behaved children that don't disrespect their parents, a parent needs to be an indisputable authority! To get respect out of my children, I may become angry when they disobey. I may punish them when they're bad. If I don't become angry or in other ways punish when my children are rude or bad, my children would never learn the real consequences of their actions.

C. I believe that a certain degree of respect and firm authority is needed not only to make my children feel secure but to make the whole family work together as a well-balanced unit. A child needs to know that I'm always there, always open for discussion – but disrespect, disobedience and rudeness will not be tolerated. Therefore, I consider myself a warm and sensitive parent but still an authority nonetheless who may punish when my children need to understand the consequences of their actions.

D. I don't want to be an authority as such. I'd much rather be an inspiring role model than an authority to my child. To me the difference between role model and authority is that to me authority is linked with acting and obeying out of fear while a role model has to do with inspiration and working towards something that feels good. I don't demand respect via rules and demands, I teach my children respect by being those qualities that I want them to feel, learn to be and ultimately possess. I live by the philosophy; show your child respect, and you will get respect right back.

QUESTION 3

HOW DO YOU HANDLE CONFLICTS?

A. I don't tolerate improper behaviour. I simply will not have it under my roof! Therefore, I strike down hard on rude disobedience and immature tantrums. Children need to learn their place and sometimes they need to learn it the hard way. So, to settle conflicts I may become angry and I may use punishments because sometimes that's the only language children really understand.

B. First of all, I don't believe conflict does anybody any good. And to be honest, conflicts actually scare me a bit. Besides, I believe conflicts are unnecessary and can be avoided. When conflicts with my children arise, I try to calm the waters and divert my children's attention to something else, something that will make them happy.

D. Conflicts, tantrums and arguments are just signs of frustration which again is very often a sign of an unfulfilled need. So, when my child is angry, I try not to meet my kid with the same kind of angry or aggressive energy that he or she is consumed with. Two people screaming do no good. So, I try to stay cool to find out what needs lie behind my child's behaviour. And if I can, I will meet this need. If not, I do my best to show openness, love and acceptance which always have a calming and healing effect.

C. Conflicts are unavoidable and children will always test their parents and try to push the limits. When they do this, they need to feel understood but also know that there are limits! To feel secure, they need to know who's in charge. Therefore, I will listen to my children, hear what they have to say, but my word will always be final. This means that yes, I do raise my voice when necessary and yes, I do punish when needed.

QUESTION 4

HOW DO YOU CONTROL YOUR CHILDREN?

D. I generally try not to control my children. I think controlling children both via anger, threats and punishments but also via bribes, praise and rewards are not only problematic because they focus on 'brutally forcing' or 'manipulatively tricking' children into doing what we parents want. I believe that all the control tools above take advantage of our children's dependence on our love, attention and recognition. Control tools make our children work for being accepted. And full love and acceptance shouldn't have to be earned, it should just be there.

B. I don't believe in, and therefore don't use, overt and direct control with my children. Control is a hindrance to free growth and development. Besides, I don't want to see my children sad or unhappy. So, to get my children to do what I want, I much prefer praise and rewards. I prefer a healthy and happy smile to a sad face.

C. Like discipline, you also need to control your children, at least to some extent. Control and discipline are necessary in order to teach my children to become socially responsible who also care about other people. If children think they can do whatever they want, how would they cope later with the demands from society? As a control tool, I prefer to use the tools of rationality and explain to my children the logic behind my rules and demands so they understand why they must comply.

A. By being an authority. By letting my children know that I'm the boss. I have very high expectations of my children and their behaviour and in order to get compliance and obedience they need to respect me. They need to fear me a little bit. So, some of the most effective parenting techniques for controlling my children are threats of consequences for disobedience and punishments for rudeness.

QUESTION 5

WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT RULES?

B. Rules are not only unnecessary but also make my children stupid and hinder their emotional, mental and psychological development. Rules are limiting to personal growth and suppressive to my children's free will.

D. I'm not a firm believer in rules as such but sometimes rules are necessary. For instance, my children need to learn the traffic rules – red means stop, no discussion there. Otherwise, I always put on the Big Perspective glasses to see what is needed in a specific situation. I use my gut to sense if rules are needed or not needed. Rather than saying, 'You can't do this!', 'You mustn't do that!', I try to show them the consequences of their actions or tell then the effects what they've done thereby appealing to their inner values rather than imprinting some rigid, black and white set of rules in their minds.

C. As a principle, there have to be rules. My children need to learn that there are limits to personal freedom and that they cannot do whatever they feel like all the time. Therefore, to instil a sense of cooperation, responsibility and duty in them, I believe in e. g. household chores.

A. Rules are absolutely necessary! Without many rules and strict rules everything would be chaos and my children would be completely uncontrollable and irresponsible. In a sense, rules are needed for me to get peace of mind and to keep my children's inner wild nature in check.

QUESTION 6

HOW DO YOU TEACH YOUR CHILDREN VALUES?

D. I try to teach my children values through my own behaviour rather than preaching how I want them to behave. In other words, I teach them respect, understanding and thoughtfulness by being it myself. I believe children learn best through unconditional love and via concrete examples. So, I try to show them good values via the way that I relate to them. If I want them to understand the joy of helpfulness, I help my child when help is needed. Teaching through my actions is much more powerful than preaching through my words.

C. I teach my children good values both through what I say but also through the demands I have and rules that I make. For instance, in order for my children to become responsible human beings, it is necessary that they learn good behaviour and that requires certain rules of proper conduct like answering nicely to questions, helping out around the house, cleaning up their own rooms, etc.

B. I let my children explore the world freely in order for them to find their own values. I want them to find their own truths and I don't want to brainwash them with my own ideas and beliefs.

A. First of all, I tell my children what are good, decent values to live by. But sometimes strict discipline is necessary for them to truly understand what I mean. Sometimes children need to learn things the hard way. When I punish my children it's for their own good. How else would my children learn what is right and what is wrong?

QUESTION 7

WHAT ARE YOUR FUTURE GOALS FOR YOUR CHILDREN?

C. I want my children to be happy. If they are happy, I am happy. I want them to find a fulfilling job and a good partner they will love and who will love them back. I want them to find out who they are inside while doing their best for the people around them.

A. I want my children to be strong, independent and successful. I want them to develop stamina, work hard to get a good education so they can get a good job and become good citizens. I want them to make me proud!

D. I want my children to know and live true happiness and unconditional love. I want them to really know and use the power of unconditional love, openness and full acceptance. Once they truly know this power, I can let go so they may live a deeply meaningful life.

B. I want my children to grow into free human beings. I want them to go on exploring their skills so that they may live out their full potential.

QUESTION 8

WHAT ARE YOU TO YOUR CHILD?

B. I view myself as an equal friend to my children. I believe in the power of flat hierarchy and want my children to feel that they can always come to me.

A. I view myself as a sort of moral guardian. It's my duty as a parent to make sure that my children learn the difference between good and bad, right and wrong.

D. I view myself as a sort of guide in life and consciousness and a source of unconditional love. I try to always have an eye open for the long-term perspective and guide my children towards what I sense they need until they can take over and guide themselves.

C. I am warm, loving and friendly with my children but I'm not their friend. I'm their parent, an authority. I let my children know that I love them no matter what but I may also be hard if it is required.

QUESTION 9

WHAT ARE EMOTIONS?

C. Emotions are generally ok and I have a broad tolerance of acceptance. However, I will not accept a direct sign of disrespect such as my children yelling at me. Such a display of emotions is unacceptable and makes me angry.

B. I don't like negative emotions. In truth, powerful emotions can be a little bit scary. I try to do what I can to avoid meeting them with my children. This may mean letting my children have their way most of the time.

A. I think showing emotions is generally a sign of weakness. In order for my children to be strong people, they need to learn to control their emotions and not let them run the show. If they show their emotions too much, they will be vulnerable and other people may exploit them.

D. Emotions in my children are typically just a result of an unmet need (a need for attention, autonomy, bonding, even something as basic as sleep etc.). Emotions are typically my children's only way of expressing their unmet needs so I try not to become angry and so that I don't 'punish' them for feeling the way they do.

QUESTION 10

WHAT ARE YOUR MOST IMPORTANT PARENTING TOOLS?

A. My strong values, knowledge of 'what's right' and high sense of moral judgement. I have very high expectations for my children which are necessary for them to live up to if they are to do well as adults. In order for my children to learn and grow they need to know when they're failing and therefore need to put in more effort.

D. My unconditional love and support, strong gut feeling and instinct along with my constant view for the long-term perspective. I try not to judge my children and to not be ruled by rigid norms and popular mainstream ideas but to always be supportive and keep a constant open mind.

C. My rational mind, good human values along with my parental love. I love my children to death but that doesn't mean that they are free to do whatever they want. I'm open for discussions and use the tools of logic and common sense when I argue my standpoints.

B. My tolerant, flexible mind along with my warmness and love. I don't want my children to feel restrained or inhibited so I try to keep a rather long leash letting them do what they want … most of the time!

DONE?

Ok, Now It's Time to Count Your 'A's, 'B's, 'C's and 'D's to Find Out Your Parenting Style!

Before you go on reading the test results, please be aware that most of us don't just act and think according to only one particular parenting style all the time.

We're not static. We often change according to situations, according to our children's mood and according to our own mood.

This may be why you probably have answers that are not 100% consistent (meaning being only one type of letter).

Most likely though, you probably have one letter that appears fairly consistently while the other letters perhaps appear now and again.

At the same time, it is also important to understand that there are benefits and potential dangers related to all of these parenting styles, and you need to be conscious of them to act for the best interest of your child.

Let's go on reading about your result.

IF YOU HAVE MOST 'A'S ...

Your Parenting Style Probably Have Traits Characteristic of the Authoritarian Parenting Style

Read on and discover more about the authoritarian parenting style.

The following personality traits, values and strategies are characteristic of authoritarian parents:

- Very firm and set ideas of what's right and what's wrong, what's good and what's bad – both in politics, in people and as regards opinions on child rearing.
- Like to judge and measure people in terms of their qualities and skills. Tend to idealise some people while looking upon other people as failures.

- Structure, order and predictability is very important. Within the family there is an indisputable social hierarchy – those at the top, the parents, have full authority to be obeyed.
- Have lots of rules that are to be unquestionably followed. Children are not encouraged to question rules or have individual opinions. Things are therefore not up for discussion.
- Have very high expectations of children's behaviour, performance and accomplishments. A child acting out or throwing a tantrum will be stopped instantly and punished for bad behaviour.
- Don't like to show emotions of any kind. All emotions are potentially dangerous. May appear insensitive as showing tenderness and loving affection is believed to be unnecessary and a sign of weakness.
- Cannot always keep all those emotions in control so struggle with a short emotional fuse that easily burns down.
- Resort to various forms of punishments if the children don't live up to the high standards. Punishments may be threats, guilt induction (making the children feel bad about themselves) and physical spanking.
- Love their children but also tend to view them as enemies that have to be kept down otherwise they will invade and take over everything.

In most cases, it may still be a good idea to set rules while listening to your child. It will be your priority to keep to these rules, so it may be a good idea to set them together in the first place. You should remember that in case you restrict your child too much in their digital use, they are very likely to still be exposed to everything you want to prevent them from, but without your knowledge. You may try to train yourself to trust your children more.

IF YOU HAVE MOST 'B'S ...

Your Parenting Style Probably Have Traits Characteristic of the Permissive Parenting Style

Does this parenting style quiz point towards what may be called permissive parenting? Do read on to see if you recognize the characteristics!

The following personality traits, values and strategies are characteristic of permissive parents:

- Are warm, caring and loving parents and try to show it as much as possible.
- Are very focused on optimising the conditions for the children's emotional well-being and development.
- Have few house rules and low standards for behaviour. Strive toward being non-restrictive. Rules are generally perceived to be limiting for personal growth and free development.
- Find it very important to support individual autonomy and make space for creative expressions.
- Have a flat family hierarchy and refrain from overt control of children and believe in the power of self regulation.
- Prioritise family harmony and upholding peace even if it might include a self sacrifice (giving in or obeying children's wants).
- Try to get some indirect control over their children via various forms of manipulation such as bribes, rewards or praise.

If you are such a parent in most cases, you may want to ask your children if they feel safe and comfortable at all times. Children like structure and rules so that they know what to expect. Even though teenagers may find permissive parenting attractive on the surface, they still need a point of reference to rebel. For younger children, such reference points provide safe harbour while exploring the vast complexity of the online world.

IF YOU HAVE MOST 'C'S ...

Your Parenting Style Probably Have Traits Characteristic of the Authoritative Parenting Style

Do read on to understand more about your parenting style.

The following personality traits, values and strategies are characteristic of authoritative parents:

- Are warm, responsive and loving and strive to be there and meet the children's needs.
- Have relatively high expectations of proper behaviour. There are house rules to be followed but there is still space for the child to follow his or her own interests within the set framework.
- Children are allowed to have their opinions and are encouraged to express them but the parents always have the final word. The children know this and must accept it!
- Find it important to be reachable, but still firm and unwavering in conflicts. Listen to the child but as a principle, will not give in. It is not acceptable to 'lose' in an argument or back off in a fight.
- Encourages individuality but NOT at the expense of sociality. This means that the child is allowed to act according to his or her individual will as long as it does not jeopardise the social structure or go against conventional norms.
- Parental control is necessary and carried out via verbal reason, mental logic and physical force if necessary.
- Find it important to find the right balance in parenting where one is neither too strict, suppressing the children, but also not too indulgent, leading to spoilt children.
- Do use punishments when it is found necessary that the children need to understand that certain behaviour is unacceptable. May become angry, take away privileges or use time-out.

This parenting style has been found the most beneficial for most children. In the fast-changing reality of the digital age, it offers a safe and solid harbour. However, you may reconsider your opinion on punishment. Taking away digital access or demanding time-out of social media may do more harm than good to your child.

IF YOU HAVE MOST 'D'S ...

Your Parenting Style Probably Have Traits Characteristic of the Unconditional, Positive Parenting Style

If the results of this parenting style test point towards unconditional positive parenting, please dig in below to know more.

The following personality traits, values and strategies are characteristic of parents practising unconditional positive parenting:

- Believe in loving and supporting children unconditionally thus showing full acceptance of their person regardless of their behaviour.
- Try to see the Big Perspective and do thus not take any mainstream norms or habits for granted.
- Try to connect with their higher awareness (intuition and gut feeling) in all situations in order to sense what is needed – both for the child and themselves. This may mean tuning in to read the child and discover an unmet need or 'staying cool' through conflicts to sense what is needed on an overall level.
- Do not have rules just for the sake of having rules or conforming to social conventions. Rules are there if they serve some purpose that is in the child's interest (doesn't mean the child wants the rules, but the child may need them e.g. to feel secure, stay physically healthy, etc.)
- Strive to work with the child and empower, rather than work against the child and disempower.
- Teach through Being rather than preaching through words. Become those qualities that they want the child to feel, learn and understand. Believe that what you give, is what you get.
- Try to maintain a constant open and positive mind and do not believe in punishment of ANY kind. Is conscious of not using various tempting love withdrawal techniques such as e.g. time-out, anger or ignoring.

If your parenting style is closest to this, it is of utmost importance that you find a right balance between unconditional love (that is a starting point giving your child the best start in life) and structure that children really need. You need to prepare your child for the harsh realities of life, otherwise they may fall victim to predators or bullies – and subsequently may become bullies themselve.

PART 2 | RIGHTS AND DUTIES OF PARENTS IN THE DIGITAL WORLD – ASSESS YOUR KNOWLEDGE

You can answer with YES or NO to the following questions. This time, there are right and wrong answers. When you are checking the right answer, you will sometimes find some explanation for them.

1. All parents should be allowed to participate at the school's digital platform by the school providing tools for access (such as freely available workstations accessible for parents) if requested.

2. Your child has bullied a schoolmate for being Muslim and wearing a headscarf. It is within his/her freedom of speech, you don't have to do anything.

3. To decide to choose digital distance learning for their child is a basic right of parents.

4. Parents have the right to read their children's emails and social media messages.

5. Your child had her 18th birthday yesterday. From now on, it is your child who has to have the parent access to the school's digital platform.

6. Teachers have a duty to support parents in their role as educators and give guidance on digital technology used by the school.

7. School heads should decide on what technology is to be used by students at the school.

8. It is up to the parents to decide if they want to keep up digital communication with the school they chose for their children.

9. Your child is especially talented in mathematics. The only way to properly support their development is by using an online learning tool that requires subscription. The child can be denied the use of the platform if you cannot afford to pay for it.

10. Primary school students are not mature enough to be involved in school decision-making or have their own access to school platforms.

ANSWERS

1. All parents should be allowed to participate at the school's digital platform by the school providing tools for access (such as freely available workstations accessible for parents) if requested.
   True, if the school cannot provide it, they must opt for methods accessible for all parents.

2. Your child has bullied a schoolmate for being Muslim and wearing a headscarf. It is within his/her freedom of speech, you don't have to do anything.
   False – the boundary of every right is that it cannot violate the rights of others, you must act upon this.

3. To decide to choose digital distance learning for their child is a basic right of parents.
   True – it is a basic right of parents to decide what kind of support they require for educating their children. However, fully digital distance education should only be promoted in extreme cases, such as illness. Otherwise professional educators should try to convince the parent, or even report it to child protection authorities.

4. Parents have the right to read their children's emails and social media messages.
   False, the right to privacy is a basic child right. Similarly, you cannot freely open their bags without permission.

5. Your child had her 18th birthday yesterday. From now on, it is your child who has to have the parent access to the school's digital platform.
   True, parent rights and obligations end the moment your child becomes an adult. Although in most cases there is enough trust to ensure you can keep participating in your child's life also this way, legally you need permission to do so.

6. Teachers have a duty to support parents in their role as educators and give guidance on digital technology used by the school.
   True, parents should receive the support they need in educating their children, and it is a professional duty of teachers to provide this. However, this is often not recognised in teachers' working hours. It is something that parents and teachers should join forces for.

7. School heads should decide on what technology is to be used by students at the school.
   False, parents and the students themselves must be given a role in such decision making. It is also beneficial as parents might have more information about technology that can lead to better choices.

8. It is up to the parents to decide if they want to keep up digital communication with the school they chose for their children.
   False, parents are responsible for the education of their children, and thus need to be aware of what is happening at school and also have a say on that. This responsibility – although it is assumed by many parents – does not end with choosing a school, but it is also necessary to be present and updated during the time of schooling.

9. Your child is especially talented in mathematics. The only way to properly support their development is by using an online learning tool that requires subscription. The child can be denied the use of the platform if you cannot afford to pay for it.
   False, children have the right to the education that is best for them. If this is the case, the school, the municipality or the state must provide the necessary funding if you cannot afford it. Actually, if education is free in general, special needs – be it a disability, a special talent or anything else – should also be provided for free of charge.

10. Primary school students are not mature enough to be involved in school decision-making or have their own access to school platforms.
    False, children as young as 2 years of age are capable of participating at decision making in their playgroup or créche. However, methods used should be age-appropriate, younger children need different tools than older teenagers. Linguistic register, ensuring that children understand what they have to make a decision about is crucial – but it is just as crucial for parents.

ANNEX 2

CONVERSATION STARTERS

Sometimes it seems difficult to discuss topics around sailing safe digitally with your child. Below you will find some conversation starters that may help.

First of all, you should know that it is important for your child that you ask them about what they did at school. It has a positive effect on your child's well-being as they feel you are interested in their life. Research clearly shows one thing. Asking the question "Has anything interesting happened at school?" or something similar is likely to result in a single-word reply: Nothing, Some ideas to start a conversation about digital tools:

- Can you show me how it works?
- What do you especially like about it?
- What do you find challenging when using it?
- Where did you learn to use it?
- I have heard/read about it. This is what I read. Do you agree with it?
- I am stuck with this. Do you know how to do it? Can you teach me?
- Let's google it together!
- I see, you heard it from somebody. Shall we check together if others agree or not?
- This thing happened at work... Has anything similar ever happened to you at school?

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