

Using AI Safely

A quick guide for parents of 4-7-year-olds

Why this matters

- Young children are drawn to fast, chaotic AI-generated videos, which are designed to keep them watching (giving them a fake 'dopamine hit' - not real or long lasting).
- These clips deliver constant novelty and noise, overwhelming developing attention systems.

What parents may notice

- Restlessness or big feelings after screens
- Difficulty focusing on calm play, reading, or simple instructions
- Asking for screens more often; tantrums when turning off

Impact on learning

- Shortened attention span and reduced patience
- Less imaginative play and deep learning
- Real-world activities feel 'boring' compared with hyper-stimulation

Do this instead

- Curate: choose slow-paced, story-based shows; avoid AI mashups
- Co-view and talk: 'What happened? How did they feel?'
- Use timers and no-autoplay; watch in shared spaces
- Follow with reset activities: outdoor play, drawing, blocks

Safer AI habits (from school guidance)

- Turn on parental controls and review app permissions
- Choose approved, age-appropriate tools
- Discuss what AI can/can't do; practise media check-ins
- Be privacy-aware: minimise data sharing

Healthy screen alternatives

- Story shows with gentle pacing (e.g., Bluey)
- Read-alouds, drawing tutorials, nature videos
- More play: pretend games, Lego/blocks, crafts

Practical Recommendations for ages 4-7

- **Co-use AI tools** with your child — they should not use AI independently at this age.
- **Limit personal data:** avoid entering your child's name, voice recordings, or photos into AI systems.
- **Discuss AI simply:** "This is a computer making guesses — it sometimes gets things wrong."
- **Encourage critical thinking:** ask "Does that look real? How can we check?"
- **Use parental controls** and restrict access to apps with generative features.

Recommended Conversations With 4-7 Year-Olds:

- "AI is a helper, not a person."
- "Sometimes computers get things wrong — let's check together."
- "If something feels strange or scary, you can always tell me."
- "We don't share our name or pictures with apps or robots."

You are the gatekeeper of your child's digital world. Choose calm, quality content and keep conversations going.

Useful websites for further info:

<https://saferinternet.org.uk>

www.internetmatters.org