PACT Prince Albert
COMMUNITY TRUST

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Using Search Engines Effectively - Developing 'Critical Searchers'

Did you know, there are approximately 40,000 Google searches every second? That equates to about 1.2 trillion per year!

Using a search engine is commonly inputting a few words into Google and looking at the results, normally the first page or the first few search results.

But there is much more to searching; using search effectively can be enormously beneficial for all of us, especially our children, for example if they are doing research, their homework, looking up information about their hobbies and also to reduce the amount of inappropriate results they may be seeing.

Currently, there are well over 1 billion websites, over 2 million blogs and nearly 7 billion videos on YouTube alone; that's just scratching the surface and these figures are continually increasing every second. For companies and organisations, being on page 1 of a search result is a continual strategy because they know that most people will only look at the top few results.

These companies pay big money to specialist companies in order to ensure that their page is as close to the top of search results as possible (SEO - search engine optimisation), so always remember to look beyond the first page.

Unless you know a few very simple search strategies you may not be seeing the best results from your search.

Educationally, our children need to be 'critical searchers' and need to be able to evaluate what they are seeing, e.g.: Is this information correct, is it balanced, is it a scam? Should I check other sources, and if so what?

On the right are some simple tips and tricks in order that you can learn with your children to make searching much more effective.

Boolean Search

A boolean search is using search commands such as AND, OR, NOT in order to expand or limit searches.

For example: "hotel" AND "London"

would limit the search results to only those sites containing the two keywords.

Using quotation marks is also very effective, for example searching on - Birmingham City Centre would return results for all 3 words individually, but using "Birmingham City Centre" would only return results for those pages containing all 3 words.

Eliminate Results

Let's say you're searching on big cats, e.g. jaguars. As well as cats you'll also get lots of sites (and advertising) related to cars so use the minus sign, try:

jaguar -car

Comparing Results

You've got your results for the jaguar big cat, but you want to compare a jaguar to a cheetah, try:

jaguar vs cheetah

Site Specific

You may want to find information within one particular website, rather than across the whole web.

For this, use 'site:', for example to search for Term Dates within our website and only return the results from that one website:

site: www.pact.bham.sch.uk "term dates"

Talking about…YouTube Kids

If you have children, you'll no doubt be aware that YouTube plays a big part in their online lives for the vast majority. It's no surprise that YouTube is so popular, there are millions of videos catering for anything you can imagine, and some things you don't want to imagine!

Recently, Google has tried to curb the concern that many parents have in regards to inappropriate content by introducing a new app: YouTube for Kids.

Whilst this is a great step forward for younger children, the vast majority of videos are curated by algorithms; in this context, pieces of code that are making parental decisions, not human moderators. There have been numerous reports of inappropriate content but these do appear to be removed quickly by Google when they are reported (within the app).

Pokémon GO

Pokémon Go is a game where you collect and trade cute creatures called Pokémon (Pocket Monsters). It's one of the first popular games to use "augmented reality" - a kind of cross between real life and an online world. The game makes it look like Pokémon appear in real life places by using the GPS and camera on your phone.
It's already become a craze in Australia and America, and has made it's way into the news across the world. Here, we'll take you through what you need to know about the game and how you can help keep children using the app safe.

Pokémon

Pokémon (Pocket Monsters) are little creatures that can be captured by Pokémon Trainers using a small spherical device called a Poké Ball. There are different types of Pokémon, with different moves, abilities and stats. The aim of the game is to capture as many Pokémon and to win as many 'gyms' as you can to become the Pokémon Master.

Gyms

Pokémon Gyms are buildings located throughout the world where Pokémon Trainers can train and compete. Pokémon Gyms are usually located in public meeting spots, like parks or churches and memorials. This is done using a Google-style in-game map that shows you where the Pokémon and locations are in your real life location.

Poké Ball

The Poké Ball is a spherical device used to capture Pokémon.

The Poké Ball is thrown at Pokémon and when it hits them, the Pokémon are sucked inside.

Pokédex

Pokédex is an electronic device which stores the data of Pokémon once they're captured.

The Pokémon Trainer must attempt to fill the Pokédex by capturing the different types of Pokémon.

The Risks

There are loads of good things about the game, and there's a reason it's become so popular. But it's important to learn the risks involved:

Meeting people they don't know face-to-face: the game brings people together. Usually strangers. So you never know who they might meet.

There's a physical risk: it's easy to forget to look where you're going with this game, but they need to be careful of where they end up. There are already stories of people being lured to places that aren't safe for children.

It can cost a lot of money: there are in-app purchases and other incentives which can cost up to £79.99 (14,500 Pokécoins). Make sure the app's set up without payment options.

Access to personal data: Pokémon Go asks for personal information like your child's birth date and email address, which they're asked to enter. Parents have the right to contact the creators to stop them from using their personal info.

Top Tips for Staying Safe

Explore together: With younger children, you might want to play the game together, and explore how it works. Older children may want to play alone but it's important to let them know the risks.

Set some ground rules: talk to your children about the risks of meeting strangers and ending up in areas they don't know. Set some boundaries such as: take a battery pack, the game drains phone battery and this will avoid them getting lost without a phone, stay with friends, watch out for others - people can get competitive, establish where they'll be playing.

Turn off in-app purchasing: to avoid unexpected bills, check that your child's app permissions are set correctly.

Protect your child's personal data: in order to sign up, your child has to enter their date of birth and their email address. However, parents can request that these details are kept safe. Details on how to do this are on their privacy policy at www.nianticlabs.com/privacy/pokemongo/en.

NetAware

The NetAware app is a simple guide for parents to the most popular social networks, apps and games that children use, produced by the NSPCC.
You can easily find age ratings, parent and child reviews and how likely it is that a child could find inappropriate content. Download the app today for mobile devices, so you'll always have help keeping children safe online wherever you go.

Talking about…YouTube Kids   Continued…

Currently available for Apple iOS and Android devices (although by the time you read this there may be more such as Apple TV, Playstation 4, XBox One etc.) it is a way for Google to curate videos that are child-friendly.

Parental controls are straightforward; there is a timer which is good and videos are split into 3 age-groups. We would advise parents to take a look as you may find this app more appropriate for your children.

REPORTING ONLINE SAFETY CONCERNS

Visit your child's school website for advice and support including how to report online safety concerns:

www.heathfld.bham.sch.uk, www.princealbert.bham.sch.uk, www.hifield.bham.sch.uk

If you have a concern regarding your child's use of the internet at home or in school, please feel free to contact us. Our school websites have loads of advice and support to help you to keep your children safe online and include information on how to report online safety concerns. If you would like to talk to us about a concern, please come into school and ask to speak to one of our Online Safety Leads.