DigiWise
BE SMART ONLINE

The Four Pillar Pledge

A quick guide for parents & caregivers raising kids and teens in the digital world.

1. Self-evaluate
2. Work in partnership
3. Set clear boundaries
4. Stay alert & involved



WELCOME

You've got this!

Phones, games, group chats and video apps are where our children learn, play and keep in touch with friends.

That brings real benefits, and some real risks too. You don't need to be a tech expert: what helps most is being interested, staying calm and keeping the conversation going. This booklet gives you a simple framework, the **Four Pillar Pledge**, with practical steps to use at home.

How to use this booklet

1. Read the pledge at a glance on page 3.
2. Dip into each pillar for tips and checklists.
3. Explore the Digital Wellness Toolkit for more.

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Practical advice, real conversations, no scaremongering.

PARENTING IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Four Pillar Pledge

Four simple commitments that make the biggest difference to your child's life online.

1 Self-Evaluate

- Reflect on your own screen & social media habits
- Model the behaviour you want to see in your child

2 Work in Partnership

- Talk openly about your child's favourite apps & online experiences
- Review privacy & safety settings together

3 Set Clear Boundaries

- Agree limits for screen time & app use
- Learn about & install parental controls
- Encourage a healthy mix of offline & online activities

4 Stay Alert & Involved

- Stay informed about trending apps & risks
- Look out for warning signs
- Keep the conversation going as they grow up

PILLAR 1

1 Self-evaluate

Children learn far more from what we do than from what we say. Before setting rules for them, take an honest look at your own habits.

Reflect on your own screen & social media habits

QUICK SELF-CHECK

- Do I check my phone first thing or last thing at night?
- Do I pick it up during meals or family time?
- How often do I scroll without meaning to?
- Do my children have to compete with my screen?
- Do I ask my children before I post about them?

No guilt needed, just notice. Small, steady changes are what count.

Model the behaviour you want to see in your child

- **Create phone-free zones:** mealtimes and bedrooms are a great start.
- **Charge devices outside bedrooms** overnight, yours included!
- **Say it out loud:** "I'm replying to Granny, then it's going away."
- **Ask before you post** a photo of your child.
- **Put your phone down** when they're talking to you.

2

PILLAR 2

Work in partnership

Online safety works best when it's something you do *with* your child, not *to* them. Curiosity beats control.

Talk openly about your child's favourite apps & online experiences

Be as interested in their online world as in school or sport. If they feel you're curious, not critical, they'll come to you when something goes wrong.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

"What's your favourite app right now? Can you show me?"

"Who do you chat to or play games with online?"

"Has anything online ever made you feel upset?"

"If a stranger messaged you, what would you do?"

Make it easy to talk

- **Pick relaxed moments:** car journeys, walks or cooking together.
- **Join in:** play their game or watch their favourite creator.
- **Stay calm.** If we overreact, children stop telling us things.

2 WORK IN PARTNERSHIP

Review privacy & safety settings together

Sit side by side and go through each app and device. Explaining *why* a setting matters helps your child choose well when you're not there.

OUR SETTINGS CHECKLIST

- [ ] **Account set to private**, so only friends see posts
- [ ] **Location sharing off**, including in-app maps
- [ ] **Messages & friend requests** from friends only
- [ ] **Profile kept general:** no school, address or birthday
- [ ] **Strong password** and two-step verification on
- [ ] **Block, mute & report:** they know how to use them
- [ ] **Sensitive content filters** switched on
- [ ] **Friends list reviewed:** do they know everyone?
- [ ] **In-app purchases** need your approval

Top tip: settings can change when apps update. Check them together every few months, and whenever a new app arrives.

PILLAR 3

3 Set clear boundaries

Children feel safer with clear, consistent boundaries, especially when they've helped to make them.

Agree limits for screen time & app use

Rather than chasing one magic number, think about **when, where and what**. An agreement you write together sticks far better than rules handed down.

When?

No screens at meals, homework or the hour before bed.

Where?

Devices in shared spaces. Chargers downstairs overnight.

What?

Apps and games agreed together, respecting age ratings.

What if?

Telling you about a problem never gets them in trouble.

Making it stick

- **Rules apply to grown-ups too!** Agreements everyone keeps work best.
- **Explain the why:** sleep, sport, friends and feeling good.
- **Review it as they grow:** revisit it each school year.

3 SET CLEAR BOUNDARIES

Learn about & install parental controls

Controls are a safety net, not a substitute for talking. Start with the devices your child uses most, and tell them what you've set up.

The device
Screen Time (Apple) and Family Link (Android) set time limits, approve downloads and filter content.

Your home broadband
Most providers offer free filters on your router, covering every device at home.

Games consoles
PlayStation, Xbox and Nintendo have family settings for playtime, spending and chat.

The apps themselves
Many apps have family features that link your account to your child's.

Encourage a healthy mix of offline & online activities

Look at the balance, not just the minutes. Is screen time crowding out sleep, exercise or family time?

Getting outdoors | Sport & clubs | Reading | Board games | Cooking together | Music & art | Friends face to face

4

PILLAR 4

Stay alert & involved

The online world changes fast. You don't need to know everything, just enough to ask good questions.

Stay informed about trending apps & risks

- Try the apps your child uses
- Ask them to teach you
- Check webwise.ie
- Chat to other parents and school

Risks worth knowing about

Contact from strangers

Cyberbullying

Harmful content

Oversharing

Scams & spending

Sleep & wellbeing

Look out for warning signs

- Secretive about their phone, or switching screens when you walk in
- Upset, anxious or withdrawn after being online
- Changes in sleep, appetite or mood
- Losing interest in friends, hobbies or school
- New contacts, gifts or money you can't explain
- Not wanting to go to school, or online at all

One sign alone isn't a reason to panic, but a pattern is a reason to check in gently: "You seem a bit down lately. Is anything bothering you?"

4 STAY ALERT & INVOLVED

Keep the conversation going as they grow up

Primary

Stay close

Shared spaces, apps approved together, and the habit of telling you.

Early teens

Share the steering

Hand over responsibility bit by bit. Talk about group chats and pressure.

Older teens

Coach, don't police

Shift to trust. Talk about reputation, relationships and fake news.

If something goes wrong

1. **Stay calm** and thank them for telling you.
2. **Listen first.** Don't rush to take the device away; fear of losing it stops children speaking up.
3. **Save evidence:** screenshots, usernames and dates.
4. **Block and report** on the app or platform.
5. **Get support** from the school, and the Gardaí (ROI) or PSNI (NI) if safety is at risk.

Where to get help

IRELAND

Webwise	Childline	Hotline.ie
webwise.ie	1800 66 66 66	hotline.ie
Advice for parents	Free, 24/7	Report illegal content

NORTHERN IRELAND

Internet Matters	Childline	CEOP
internetmatters.org	0800 1111	ceop.police.uk
Advice for parents	Free, 24/7	Report online abuse

The Digital Wellness Toolkit

A carefully curated bank of resources to support parents and caregivers who are raising kids and teens in the digital age.

- Getting started quick guides
- Parental controls & instructional videos
- Websites
- Books / audio books
- Documentaries
- Podcasts



Visit DigiWise.ie/toolkit to get started

Explore the Toolkit →

How hooked are you, really?

Take our free 2-minute Digital Dependency Test

Answer a few honest questions and get an instant score showing where your phone habits sit today. It's the perfect starting point for your Pledge.

0–15%	16–35%	36–50%	51–100%
Healthy habits — well done!	Some mild signs — worth a tweak.	Quite dependent — time to cut back.	High dependence — time to act.

Tap the button, scan the code
or go to DigiWise.ie/dependencytest

Take the test →

No sign-up. Free. Private. Anonymous.

Teens can take it too — why not compare results as a family?

DigiWise

BE SMART ONLINE

DigiWise delivers fun, interactive internet safety and digital wellbeing workshops for primary and post-primary schools as well as practical talks for parents.

DigiWise.ie