

# What Parents & Educators Need to Know about

# NETFLIX

Netflix is a subscription-based streaming service that lets users watch TV shows and movies on any internet-enabled device that supports the software. The pandemic saw a surge in children consuming on-demand content as many families relaxed their screen-time rules. Netflix's diverse catalogue caters to all age groups – so it's important to recognise the potential risks of children using the service.

## WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

### INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

Netflix produces and curates an extensive range of content that can provide hours of entertainment. If children share their account with an adult, this can potentially lead to them accidentally viewing inappropriate content, including nudity, profanity, and extreme violence. This can happen easily on shared accounts, as Netflix cannot establish who's watching.

### BINGE-WATCHING

Netflix allows users to view shows and movies quickly and easily, making excessive screen time a concern. Binge-watching has become more common in the wake of the pandemic, due to Netflix's regularly updated content, along with algorithms that recommend material similar to what's previously been enjoyed on your account. Marathon viewing sessions can lead to children staying up too late, thereby affecting their mood and concentration the next day.

### SCREEN ADDICTION

From TVs and phones to consoles and tablets, Netflix is available on almost any device with an internet connection – making it even more difficult to manage children's screen time. The service is now adding games to its mobile app, tempting users to spend even more time on the platform. Screen addiction can distract children from important activities like schoolwork and socialising and can impact their health by reducing time spent exercising and sleeping.

### HACKING ATTEMPTS

With millions of users worldwide, Netflix is often targeted by hackers who try to steal usernames and passwords to gain access to people's accounts. If successful, they can then steal payment details or try to sell personal data to other cybercriminals. Netflix also doesn't provide two-factor authentication, making the hackers' task that little bit easier.

### CONTACT FROM STRANGERS

Netflix's Teleparty feature became popular during the lockdown, as it allows users from different households to watch the same show or movie simultaneously. It requires an access link to be sent to the people you wish to invite; the link, however, can also be distributed to people you don't know. A text chat feature enables interaction with the other users in real-time: this presents the potential risk of strangers gaining access.

## Advice for Parents & Educators

### KEEP ACCOUNTS SECURE

Netflix doesn't use two-factor authentication, so a strong password is vital. A child's Netflix password should be different from any others they use, made up of a minimum of eight characters with a mix of letters, numbers, and symbols. Ensure children know not to share their login details with anyone and remind them to always log out after using the app – so their account remains inaccessible, even if their device is lost or stolen.

### SET UP PROFILE PINS

Netflix account holders can lock profiles behind a four-digit PIN. Doing this can prevent children from accessing the wrong account and viewing content that isn't suitable for their age. Try setting a PIN for each account on your Netflix app – ideally avoiding numbers that would be easily guessed, such as dates of birth. Remember not to share these PINs with anyone.

### CREATE A KIDS' PROFILE

Setting up a Netflix Kids profile means a child can only access content deemed suitable for children aged up to 12 years (i.e. rated U or PG). All other content is automatically blocked. This rating can be further restricted to only show U-rated content via the child's profile settings. This can help to prevent children from viewing age-inappropriate content.

### CHECK MATURITY RATING

Netflix warns about content that includes violence, sex, profanity, and nudity. These warnings form part of the show or movie's 'maturity rating': U, PG, 12, 15 and 18. Users can restrict the content an account can see to a maximum age rating to avoid children viewing inappropriate content. On their profile, open the Parental Control settings and choose the maturity level for the shows and movies you want to allow.



### SWITCH OFF AUTO-PLAY

When a show or movie concludes, Netflix's algorithms selects content with similar themes that it thinks the viewer would also enjoy and asks if you'd like to watch any of them next. This new content starts automatically after a 10-second countdown. Disabling this auto-play feature reduces the possibility of children being shown something inappropriate and provides a natural break to help prevent them sitting in front of Netflix for hours on end.

### CHECK VIEWING HABITS

Netflix has tools which enable parents and carers to monitor what their child has been watching. Selecting 'Viewing Activity' in each profile's account settings displays a list of what content has been viewed and when. This can be used to make sure a child is watching age-appropriate content and can open avenues for discussing their favourite shows and movies.

### Meet Our Expert

Dr Claire Sutherland is an online safety consultant, educator and researcher who has developed and implemented anti-bullying and cyber safety policies for schools. She has written various academic papers and carried out research for the Australian government comparing internet use and sexting behaviour of young people in the UK, USA and Australia.



The National College