



What you need to know about...

TECH RELATED COMMUNICATION



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What is it?

'Tech related communication'

Language is constantly evolving. The words, phrases and even emojis used on social media have transformed how young people communicate. Many children now use memes and gifs to express how they feel and sometimes it can feel like young people are speaking a completely different language to adults. Not only are acronyms present, but words have literally changed meaning, and the use of emojis, memes and gifs have almost made technology related communication a viable alternative language.

Emojis, Memes & GIFs

Emojis

Emojis are graphic symbols that represent ideas or words. They range from smileys to quite random objects from everyday life. Whilst the meaning of most emojis are quite literal, some have been adopted to mean something else, including inappropriate themes.



Memes

A meme (pronounced "meem") is an image or an image with words used to communicate something on the internet. Due to their visual nature they stand out and are usually designed to be humorous, using well-known images that users are familiar with to help provide context around their meaning.



GIFs

Used in a similar way, GIFs are short video files that help communicate an opinion, emotion or highlight the funny side of something on the internet. These too often use well-known scenes, animations or people and can be understood without the need for sound.



Safety Tips

False sense of security

Text based communication can sometimes provide young people with a false sense of security and give them greater confidence to share something personal with someone. If sent to the wrong person, this could be shared further or lead to embarrassment or humiliation.



Impact mood

Sending written messages accompanied by emojis, memes or GIFs isn't the same as speaking to someone face to face where you can hear tone of voice and read facial expressions. It can be easy to misinterpret messages which can lead to upset, hurt or feelings of anger.



Hidden messages

Sometimes the use of emojis and GIFs can be used to hide a more serious meaning behind messages. This could be to mask an inappropriate conversation, discuss things in secret or even develop from what might be perceived as banter into a form of bullying.



REACTING TO POSTS WITH EMOJIS

REACTING TO POSTS WITH GIFS

Know the Risks

Open dialogue

Always aim to have open and honest conversations with children about the appropriateness of what they are sending through text-based communication. Messages can be screenshotted, shared or misconstrued which could lead to hurt or embarrassment, so it's important to increase their awareness and understanding.

Look up text speak

If you think your child is speaking in code, using language you're unfamiliar with or might be messaging inappropriately, speak to them about it and encourage them to be open with you. If you want to check yourself, Google the terms. You should be able to find lists of emojis to do this with too.



Try to understand

Communicating via text can sometimes be a lonelier and more isolated way to communicate rather than speaking face to face. Keep an eye on your child's mood and happiness levels and if they become visibly upset or angry after a text communication, try to understand what's happened.

Our Expert Jodie Cook



Jodie Cook is one of the UK's leading authorities on social media. She is the founder of JC Social Media, an award-winning team of social media managers and trainers, and was included in Forbes' 30 under 30 social entrepreneurs in Europe 2017. Jodie has appeared on ITV News and CNBC and has worked as a social media expert for The Telegraph, New York Post and Forbes Online.

