

# O<sub>2</sub> Child Protection

## What your child's mobile can do



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## What your child's mobile can do

Sometimes as a parent it's difficult to keep up with your children – particularly when it comes to new technology. Nowadays, mobile phones come in different shapes and sizes and offer all sorts of services. They can be used to be social, to be entertained, to call for help when in trouble, or to find out things you need to know.

The new technology in mobile phones is helping make life easier, safer and more fun. But, as with any new technology, it can be exploited by some people in a harmful way. As a parent, therefore, it makes sense to understand what's going on.

This leaflet aims to give a clearer idea of what children, AND OTHERS, can do with their mobile phones, and therefore some of the potential risks they face. O<sub>2</sub> provides a series of leaflets which contain advice on protecting children.

Probably the most important thing to know is that most phones being used in the UK are unregistered pay-as-you-go mobile phones. This means that we do not know, and cannot trace, who exactly is using them.

### Connecting with family and friends

The majority of mobile phone contact happens with people you already know – either friends or family. It happens in the following ways:

#### Voice

The traditional use of a mobile phone is a one-to-one 'voice' conversation with a friend or contact you know. It's also possible to talk to several people at the same time in a group conversation again, mostly with familiar people. Mobile phones do keep a record of what calls have been made and received, although this can be deleted. When making a call, the phone number of the caller can often be seen on the handset of the person receiving the call, unless the number has been withheld. Anyone can do this if they do not want the person to know who is calling.

#### Voicemail

When a mobile phone is switched off, or engaged, calls can be diverted to Voicemail. This is an electronic answerphone, where callers can leave a message. Mobile phone users often personalise their Voicemail greeting.

#### Text Messaging

If for some reason it is not convenient to talk, a mobile can be used to communicate by text. This is sometimes called SMS (or short message service, because messages are limited to 160 letters or numbers) or TXT. Children simply type a message using the keypad and send it off to their friend's number. They can read it and then text a message back. People often use text messaging to communicate quickly and quietly. Recent text messages are stored on the phone until deleted by the user. It is not possible to withhold your mobile number when sending text messages from a mobile phone.

Text messages can also be sent by email from a PC. In this case, they would show the email address of the sender.

#### Media Messaging

Media Messaging is similar to a text message though it may also contain media, including graphics, photos, pictures, images, sounds and/or text. Media Messaging is also known as picture messaging, Multimedia Messaging or MMS. With a Media Messaging capable handset you can send and receive Media Messages to other Media Messaging capable handsets, the Internet and to Internet email addresses. Recent messages can be stored on the phone or they can be sent to an Internet album where they can be stored, enhanced and forwarded.

#### Text Chat

Rather than texting a message directly to a friend and then waiting for a reply, people can have a conversation with several friends (or with strangers) who share the same interest at once, by posting text messages in a chat room and watching replies. This is like a public noticeboard. Texting in a chat room is done anonymously using nicknames. This means that people often do not know who they are communicating with. People can and do pretend to be what they are not. O<sub>2</sub> moderates its text chat services for inappropriate postings, and automatically stops phone numbers, personal details such as addresses, and swear words from being posted. Some providers operate text chat without moderation.

### WAP Chat

WAP stands for Wireless Application Protocol and is the mobile version of the Internet. WAP chat rooms are like text chat rooms, but very much faster. This means that it is harder to moderate them as effectively. At any one time there may be hundreds of total strangers chatting with each other. There are many chat rooms, some for example deal with homework or football, while others have adult conversations. The O<sub>2</sub> chat rooms are monitored by us so if there is any inappropriate language or behaviour, whoever is responsible is immediately banned from taking any further part. Again, it is possible to access WAP chat rooms that are not moderated.

### Private Chat

When someone in a chat room wants to carry on a line of conversation with one particular individual, they can have what is called a 'private', or '1 to 1 chat'. Again, this happens in text form, but outside the monitored security of the chat room. There is no monitoring by us of conversations which take place in a private chat. Although neither party has any means of knowing the identity or phone number of the other, there is nothing stopping them from asking for these details.

### Cameras

Many handsets now contain cameras which let people communicate not just with voice or text, but also with photos and sometimes video. The pictures can be of anything – themselves, their home, family or friends – and can be sent to other camera phones or to any email address. They can also receive pictures from anyone who happens to have their number. Photos can contain a lot more personal information than you may normally give out, such as which school a child goes to, or how old they are. It is not possible to withhold your mobile number when you send any of these from a mobile phone.

### Multimedia Chat

Like 'text chat', this is a 'real time' conversation with several people using sound and pictures as well as text, often using a camera phone. All text, pictures and audio are filtered and moderated before they are posted to an O<sub>2</sub> chatroom. Messages can easily be copied and forwarded to lots of other people.





## Access to information

### Premium Rate SMS

Often used to get information such as pop gossip or football scores. The user simply sends a text to an information provider, and receives a text message back. There is usually a charge in addition to the standard text rate. Some Premium Rate SMS content is considered suitable only for adults. On request, O<sub>2</sub> will stop any handset from being able to receive adult-only material.

### WAP Browsing

Each mobile telephone company has its own special information and entertainment pages – ours are called O<sub>2</sub> Active. As with the internet accessed from a computer, a mobile phone can get a wide range of material including pictures. O<sub>2</sub> Active covers areas such as sport, politics, travel and computer games. The content of other WAP sites is not controlled.

### Internet Web Browsing

Increasingly mobile phones can be used to get on to the worldwide web. This means a mobile phone can enable access to any of the millions of Internet websites from around the world. None of this information or activity is monitored, moderated or supervised by the mobile telephone companies. O<sub>2</sub> and some other mobile companies are members of the Internet Watch Foundation, which is trying to make the web a safer place for children. Just as on a PC, there is a history kept on the mobile device which allows you to see what websites have been looked at.

Children can send and receive emails on many mobile phones as easily as on a personal computer.

### MyWap

In the same way that some people have their own website on the Internet, anyone can also create and make their own 'site' via their mobile phone. This can include any information they want – as well as pictures and sound. Anyone with a mobile phone or Internet access can see this. O<sub>2</sub> insists that its customers 'rate' their sites for adult content and also have automatic filters for inappropriate words. Many MyWap sites simply point to normal Internet sites.

As we've said, new technology is making life easier, safer and more fun. And, of course, mobile phones are a great way for parents and children to stay in contact.

But it's also important for parents to keep up with their kids by staying informed. If you have some idea of what's going on, you can make sure your child is using his or her mobile phone sensibly, while still making the most of all the different benefits.

For more information and a demonstration of some of these services, visit our website [www.o2.co.uk](http://www.o2.co.uk) or contact O<sub>2</sub>'s customer care people on:

**0870 5214 000**