9 ways the internet can be good for your children

parent INFO
FROM CEOP AND PARENT ZONE

We hear a lot about the negative effects on children of using the internet but it can also be a positive thing. Here's our guide for parents on helping your child thrive online.

A lot of what we hear about technology's effects on children is negative – speculation that it's decreasing attention spans, for instance, or fuelling eating disorders. So it may come as a relief to hear that there are lots of positives to using technology as well. Here are nine of our favourites.

1. Staying in touch
For families who can't always be together – separated parents or far-away grandparents, for instance – the internet lets you stay closer than ever before. Checking in with regular video chats or sharing photos with each other online is a great way to stay connected when you can't be together in person.

2. Making friends
Young people who have trouble dealing with social situations may find that online interaction makes them feel less isolated. YouTube star Zoella, for instance, has frequently spoken about her struggles with anxiety. She now has over 12 million subscribers to her channel and is an ambassador for the mental health charity Mind. Interacting successfully online could even give some children more confidence to take into their offline relationships.

3. Being creative
Young people who are interested in music, writing or art can find loads of useful resources and ways to practise online. From starting a blog to following your favourite artists on Instagram, the internet can be a great way for young aspiring creatives to get started.

4. Finding help
Some experts are wondering if the internet is contributing to an increase in mental health problems. There isn't enough evidence yet to say whether this is the case, but we do know that it can also have a positive effect. Young people who are dealing with an issue often find essential support online. Forums like The Mix (a 'guide to the real world' and online community for teens and young adults), can help them access information and speak to a supportive community from the privacy of their own homes, often anonymously, which makes them feel more able to share.

5. Getting ahead
Going forward, many – if not most – jobs will require some degree of technical skill.
'Getting comfortable with technology and the online world will be an advantage when it comes to learning about computing.' Schools now teach computing as a discipline, just like maths or English. Some of it can be studied offline, of course, but getting comfortable with technology and the online world will be an advantage when it comes to learning about computing.

6. Learning
When it comes to using devices in the classroom, results have been mixed, but there are lots of other tech improvements that are helping young people learn. Your child can use programmes like Mathletics to practise their maths, for example.

7. Staying organised
Lots of schools now post homework assignments online, giving you and your child another way to keep on top of their schedule. And there are lots of apps designed to help kids and families get organised – have a look together and see if any might work for you.

8. Special needs and disability
There's lots of useful tech being developed to support people with disabilities and special educational needs. And even tech that wasn't developed specifically for young people with disabilities can have real benefits. Some parents of children with autism, for example, say playing Minecraft with other young people has improved their communication and teamwork abilities.

9. Fun!
People of all ages love the internet for lots of reasons, and we shouldn't ignore the fact that it's just plain fun. When used responsibly and in moderation, the online world can be a great source of engaging, creative entertainment for kids.

Further Reading:
https://www.wired.co.uk/article/safer-internet-day-2017-positive
http://www.bbc.co.uk/guides/z3tsyrd
https://parentinfo.org/article/9-ways-the-internet-can-be-good-for-your-children