

Cotham School

Online Safety Newsletter

Academic Year:
2025/2026

Term: 1
Date: 13/10/2025



Newsletter Topic:

1. What is: Online Challenges
2. Social Media Focus: WhatsApp - Basic Privacy Settings.

According to Ofcom's latest **Children's Media Use and Attitudes** report, the most popular videos among children aged 3 to 17 are funny clips, pranks, and online challenges. In fact, **68% of kids who watch videos choose this type of content.**

 [\[Read the full report here\]](#)

Why You Should Talk to Your Child About Online Challenges?

If your child watches these kinds of videos, it's important to have regular conversations with them - especially about online challenges. Some challenges can be risky or even dangerous. Tragically, there have been cases where children were seriously harmed or even died after attempting them.

Many children haven't yet developed the judgment to know that copying something from the internet can be risky or even wrong.

What You Can Do?

- Encourage regular open conversations. Ask your kids about trends and risks without judgment. Let your child know they can always talk to you or another trusted adult if they're thinking about trying something they saw online. Encourage them to assess trend safety before joining.
- Avoid naming specific challenges. If your child hasn't heard of a particular challenge, don't bring it up—it might make them curious enough to look it up.
- Reassure them and explain that any challenge claiming something bad will happen if they don't complete it is not real.
- Know their platforms and follow them when appropriate and teach them to report dangerous challenges online.
- Stay informed about trends and challenges - explore news or social media stories in more detail before reacting. Don't panic until you have the full picture.

Social Media Challenge

A challenge is a specific task or dare that encourages people to actively participate and share their results. Challenges can be:

- Fun & silly (e.g. "[Ice Bucket Challenge](#)" for charity)
- Skill-based (e.g. "[Invisible Box Challenge](#)")
- Dangerous or risky (e.g. "[Salt and Ice](#)")

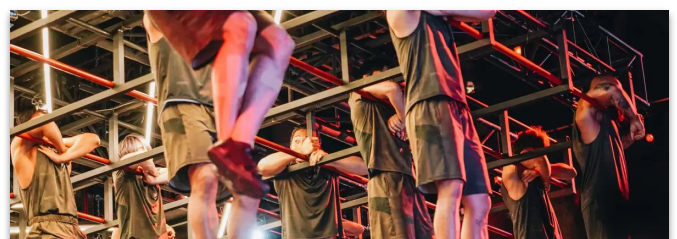
Some raise awareness or bring laughter, while others encourage risky behavior for attention. It's important to engage wisely.

Example Challenges - Low Risk

- "**Flip the Switch**" or "**Buss It**" Challenge - Outfit swaps during a dance.
- "**Noodle Challenge**" - Blindfolded instant noodle taste tests.
- "**Guess the Song**" **Speed Rounds** - Naming songs from clips.

Example Challenges - **Dangerous**

- "**Blackout**" or "**Choking**" Challenge - Kids hold their breath or choke themselves to the point of passing out (can be fatal). **Scarf Challenge** is a variation of this challenge.
- **Convenience Stores Challenges** - Participants attempt to eat or drink something in under 60 seconds, often for a £50 cash prize. The challenge is filmed and shared on social media, usually TikTok or Instagram.
- **Dusting Challenge** or "**Chroming**" - involves inhaling aerosol sprays like keyboard cleaner to get high.
- **Skull Breaker Challenge** - Two people trick a third into jumping, then kick their legs out mid-air, causing them to fall backward—often hitting their head.
- **Hanging Around TikTok Challenge** - Inspired by Netflix's *Physical: 100*, participants hang from bars for as long as possible to test endurance. This challenge is sometimes mixed up with the "Hanger Challenge", which involves placing a coat hanger on the head to trigger involuntary head movement.



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Social Media: WhatsApp

WhatsApp is a popular messaging application used worldwide. It enables users to send text messages, make voice and video calls, share multimedia content such as photos and videos, and use group chat features, all through an internet connection



Age Requirements:

13+ (reduced from 16+ in April 2024)

Key Features:

- Messaging and Group Chats
- Voice and Video Calls
- Media Sharing
- End-to-End Encryption

Safety and Privacy Features:

- Last Seen and Online Status
- Profile Photo and Info
- Block Unknown Calls
- Block/Report Contacts
- Group Invites
- Two-Step Verification
- Read Receipts

How to: [Change basic privacy settings](#)

You can customise your privacy settings to manage who sees your information and contacts you. By default, WhatsApp allows:

- Any user to view your profile photo, read receipts, and online status.
- Your contacts to see status updates, about info, shared links, and last seen time.
- Any user to add you to groups or mention you in a status.
- Unknown callers to reach you.
- Your inclusion status in Group Chats.
- You to block and report contacts to stop receiving their messages, calls, and status updates.

Privacy settings options

You can select one of the following privacy setting options for who can see your last seen and online, profile photo, about, status, links you share on your profile, or who can add you to groups:

- ★ **Everyone:** All users can see your profile photo, about, links, status, or add you to groups.
- ★ **My Contacts:** Only contacts from your address book can see your last seen and online, profile photo, about, links, status, or add you to groups.
- ★ **My Contacts Except...:** Contacts from your address book, except those you exclude, can see your last seen and online, profile photo, about, links, status, or add you to groups.
- ★ **Nobody:** No one can see your last seen and online, profile photo, about, links, or status.

Change privacy settings

To change who can see your last seen and online, profile photo, about information, status updates or add you to groups:

- ★ Click Settings > Privacy.
- ★ Click the privacy setting you'd like to change.
- ★ Click Everyone, My contacts, My contacts except..., or Nobody.

You can also adjust the privacy settings of:

- Read receipts
- Default disappearing messages
- Silencing unknown callers
- Live location sharing
- Link visibility on your profile
- Advanced options like IP protection, disabling link previews, and blocking unknown messages

Important Privacy Notes:

- If you don't share your last seen or online status, you can't see others'.
- Selecting Everyone for last seen or online allows only saved contacts or previous interactions to view it.
- Choosing Everyone for online will count you in a group chat online tally.
- Turning off read receipts means you won't see others' receipts; read receipts always apply in group chats.
- If a contact disables read receipts, you won't know if they've viewed your status.
- Your phone number is always visible on WhatsApp, even to users who haven't saved it.

WhatsApp Privacy Focus: The Last Seen & Online Status indicates when a user was last active on WhatsApp and if they're currently online. Being online means they have the app open and are connected, but it doesn't confirm they've read your message.