

# A parent & carer's guide to using safety features on smart TVs and on-demand streaming services



## A parent and carer's guide to safety features for smart TVs and on-demand streaming services

The combination of on-demand streaming services and connected devices such as smart TVs has made a wide range of video and music content more readily available. It has also created a new set of risks for children that parents and carers need to be aware of.

### What are online streaming services and smart TVs?

Online streaming services encompass any video or music content that can be accessed via an internet-enabled device. Popular video streaming services include Netflix, Amazon Prime and BBC iPlayer.

Smart TVs operate much like traditional televisions but also have added features. These enable viewers to connect to the internet and access streaming services either via a pre-loaded operating system or separate set-top box.

This article outlines safety considerations for smart TVs and on-demand streaming services. Other connected devices, not covered here – such as smartphones, tablets and laptops – may have similar safety considerations.



## How can parents and carers make a smart TV or on-demand service safer?

The volume and variety of content available through streaming services, and the possibility for the viewer to watch it at any time, creates a unique set of risks for children.

However, there are several ways to use the available technology to keep children safe from inappropriate content when accessing online streaming services through smart TVs or internet-enabled devices.

### Smart TVs

- Use the preferences offered by your broadband provider to set restrictions on accessing certain content.
- Use the preference settings on your smart TV to limit access to platforms, apps or internet browsing.
- Use the features within a streaming service itself, such as Netflix, to limit access to certain content.

### Internet-enabled devices

- The restrictions you set can include [parental controls](#) to restrict the type of content your child can access.
- The [Parent Zone website](#) provides a review of Netflix which includes an independent synopsis of the pros and cons of the streaming service.
- Common Sense Media also reviews on-demand services and has produced a [list of streaming video apps for children and young people](#) to help parents and carers make an informed choice.

### Are there any other risks?

Because smart TVs use an internet connection, they can also be used by third parties to carry out unauthorised activity such as:

- eavesdropping (when a third party uses your smart TV to listen to or watch activity within your home)
- data collection (when you or your family's viewing habits are recorded or monitored)
- targeted advertising (which includes sending specific adverts based on your or your family's viewing habits).

To prevent this type of activity and help safeguard your family's data, you can [turn off data collection features](#) on a smart TV.



## What to consider when buying a smart TV

Internet Matters provides advice for parents/carers based [on five key considerations](#) when buying a smart TV. These are:

- parental controls
- content
- applications
- browsing
- internet connectivity.

You can also read [Internet Matters' reviews of the functionality and safety features](#) of a range of smart TVs including Apple TV, Amazon Fire TV, Samsung, Philips, Sony, Panasonic and LG.

### Where can a parent or carer find more information about safety features?

Depending on your brand of smart TV or demand streaming service, you may be able to find the information you require through an online search using the terms 'safety features', 'restrictions' and/or 'parental controls'.

If you require more information, go to the device or service's Safety Centre.

### Summary

All of the child protection organisations consulted for this article appear to agree on one thing: on-demand streaming to smart TVs and other devices may be entertaining for your family, but parents and carers must put the proper safety features and controls in place to protect children and young people from inappropriate content.

