MALICIOUS COMMUNICATION

What is it?

Malicious communication is sending messages, images, or videos intended to cause someone distress or anxiety. It can happen online or offline and generally falls into the following key types.

- **Threats:** Threats of harm.
- **Harassment:** Repeated insulting messages.
- **Offensive Messages:** Sexual, rude, or discriminatory content.
- **Inappropriate Images:** Sharing embarrassing images without consent.
- **False Information:** Spreading harmful lies.
- **Impersonation:** Pretending to be someone else.

The key factor is intent: it becomes malicious communication when messages are meant to cause distress. One message may not count, but repeated, threatening or bullying messages would.

Impact on Children

Malicious communication can leave children feeling worried or upset, and in serious cases it can contribute to self-harm. Children who send harmful messages may also face school consequences or even legal action.

What can I do to protect my child from malicious communication?

- **Don't respond — report and block.** Encourage children not to reply to hurtful messages. Use reporting tools, then block or mute the person.
- **Keep communication open.** Show interest in their online life so they feel safe telling you when something's wrong. Avoid taking devices away — work together to report and block, and praise them for speaking up.
- **Teach online safety.** Remind them not to share personal details, be careful who they add, and think before posting.
- **Know how to report.** Take screenshots as evidence. Most platforms have reporting options, and serious concerns can be reported to the police. More support: reportharmfulcontent.com.

How do I teach my child to be a good digital citizen?

Teaching good digital habits is similar to teaching real-life behaviour:
- **Be respectful, kind, and aware of others' boundaries.** If emotions run high, take a break and don't respond to unkind comments—get help from a trusted adult.
- **Keep communication open:**
- Talk regularly about what your child does online, who they speak to, and what upsets them. Help them manage big emotions and remind them to stop and think before reacting.
- **Set clear boundaries together about what's acceptable online.** If you need extra support, contact your child's school or use the recommended sites like internet matters

Check out our video about Malicious Communication

on YouTube by clicking here
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Akl9CgpP9t8

Malicious Communications Act
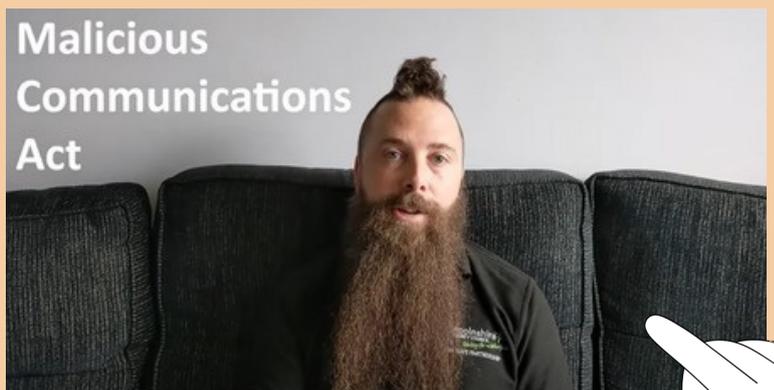
CEOP education provide lots of helpful tips for parents including on how to set boundaries.
https://www.ceopeducation.co.uk/parents/

Help and Advice

internet matters.org

Internetmatters is your one stop shop for guides on how to set up parental controls on devices and on your internet.
https://www.internetmatters.org