

Group Chats

Target audience

Learners who are using group chats or thinking about using them.

This group chat resource contains a collection of activities to use with children aged 9-13, to explore the positives of group chats as well as the possible challenges they may face.

The resource is divided into four different topics:

- Starting conversations with young people about group chats, including the positives and negatives
- Digital wellbeing (how group chats may make people feel)
- Online bullying and gossip
- Inappropriate content

Each topic is accompanied by examples to support learning and to refer to when having discussions. There is also teacher guidance available for each topic, where you will find various questions to ask as well as important messages and advice to share with the young people.

Note to educators

In some topics, you will find that there are different examples where you can choose the content that is the most appropriate for your learners. The content aimed for older learners contains more mature themes such as pornography, online hate, sexual harassment and true crime documentaries.

 20 minutes  Whole class

Starting conversations

This activity is an opportunity to open up discussion around group chats and can help to start conversations around them in your setting.

Most of the examples below display positive uses of group chats, to show they can be used in lots of ways to help us in our everyday lives. However, one example highlights the risks of talking to people you do not already know offline. This is something young people may initially view as a positive thing, but it is important to have conversations around the potential risks involved.

Start by asking learners to write 'group chats' on a piece of paper. Then give learners 60 seconds to write as many positives of group chats as they can think of. After that, ask learners to use a different colour to write the negatives of group chats. You may choose to give them an opportunity to share these with the people around them.

Display the group chat examples [on page 3](#) to learners, and ask them:

- What positive or negative ways can they see these group chats being used?
- Are there any they had already written down?
- Are there any on here that they hadn't thought of?

You can use the further questions and teacher guidance [on page 4](#) to aid this discussion.

BFFs
5 participants

~K I found somewhere we can go this Saturday, it's not too far... what do we all think?

<https://superstarsbowling.co.uk>

~S Sounds GREAT!!! I love bowling x

~J Im down! Shall we get the bus together at 3ish?

The W Family
12 participants

~Z G'day from Australia! I can't believe we're finally here!!!

~M Glad you had a safe journey! We miss you already 😊

~Z Awwwww we miss you too!!!! Shall we have a video call later? We can show you the new house?

Cardiff gamers
142 participants

~E Haha found this hilarious playthrough [youtube/246gsw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=246gsw)

~A Anyone playing tonight?

~C Just found this group from a link on TikTok, what are you playing?

Class 7G
27 participants

~M Remember to wear your own clothes tomorrow guys!

~L Can anyone help with the french hw?

Starting conversations

childnet.com/resources/group-chats

Teacher Guidance

| Discussion question | Teacher Guidance |
|--|--|
| <p>How are the chats being used positively or negatively?</p> | <p>There can be positives like sharing information, sending messages to multiple people at once, connecting over long distances and using them to share common interests.</p> <p>However, there are potential negatives in these chats such as being overwhelmed by the number of messages or need to reply, using them before they are old enough or talking to people they do not know offline.</p> |
| <p>How can group chats help us maintain relationships and friendships? How can group chats be used to share?</p> | <p>Group chats allow us to talk to lots of our friends at the same time and bring together the friendship group. It can be a great way to arrange meeting up, to talk to friends at different schools and to keep in touch during school holidays.</p> |
| <p>How can group chats keep us connected with people from all over the world?</p> | <p>Group chats are free, quick and easy to use and can be used to keep in touch with family or friends who have moved away. Like in this case where Z and M can stay connected after a move to Australia. It can be a great way to arrange a video call, and lots of social media apps allow you to run group calls on there too.</p> |
| <p>C joined a group chat without knowing the others in it. What advice would you give people in this situation?</p> | <p>The safest choice is always to only join group chats with people you know offline. However, in some online games, players may interact in group chats with people they don't know in real life. It is important that this is done safely by not sharing personal information with those people, such as where they live, their phone number or their social media accounts, even if it is somebody they have been talking to for a long time. Conversations should also only ever be about the game they are playing. If somebody asks them for personal information, photos, videos or to go live, they should tell a trusted adult and report the messages to CEOP.</p> |

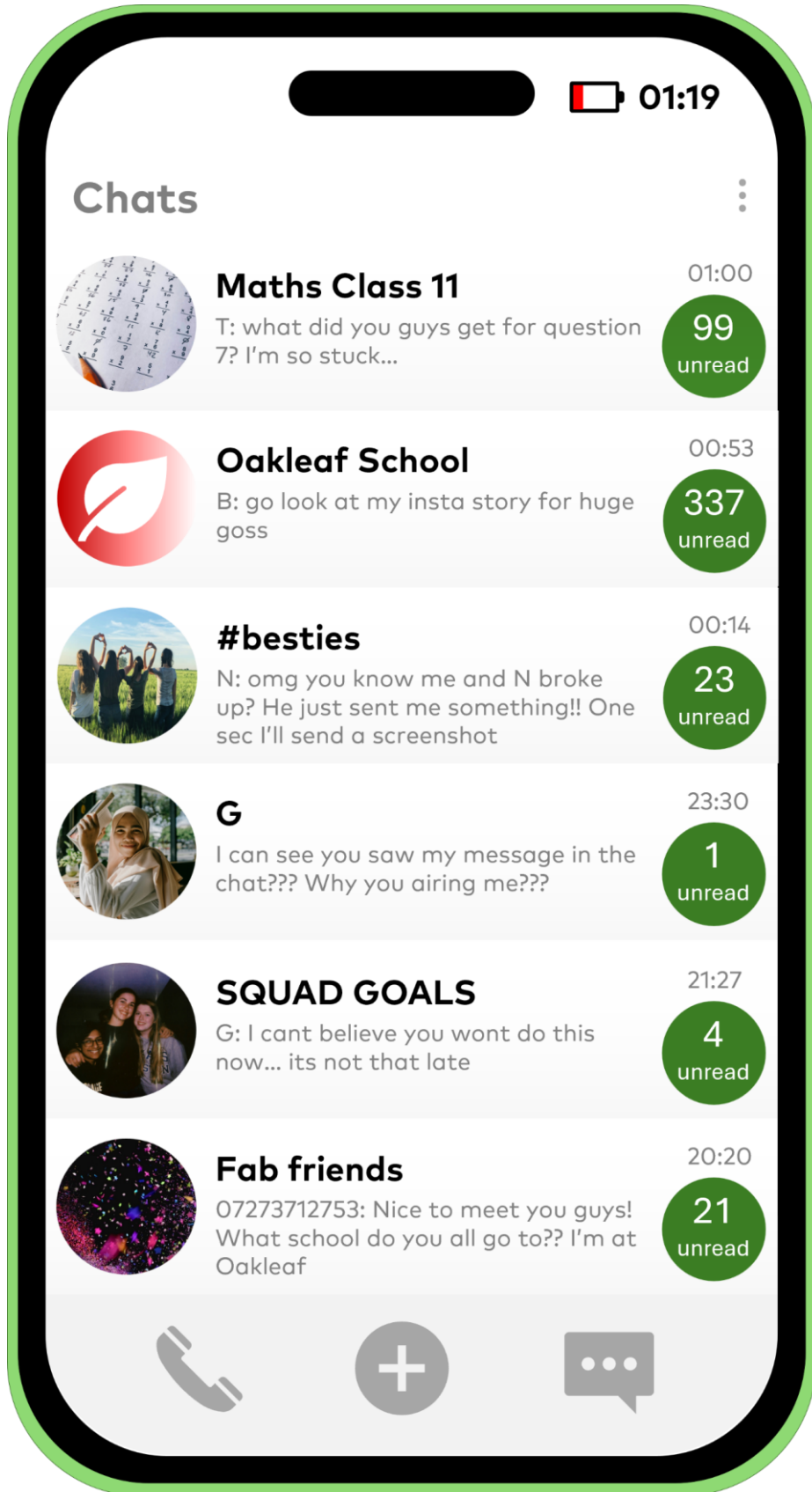
 20 minutes  Whole class/Groups

Digital wellbeing

This activity focuses on how being part of multiple group chats can impact how somebody feels. The examples and discussion questions can be used for class or smaller group discussion. Teacher guidance has been provided to help you discuss key points.

Learners can use the group chats [on page 6](#) to try and spot reasons why these group chats might negatively affect someone's wellbeing and why. You could ask whether they find these relatable and whether they have experienced anything similar.

After this, you can use the discussion questions [on page 7](#) to delve into the topic further and give advice. You may choose to give each table a question to discuss and use sticky notes to jot down answers, before rotating to the next question.



Teacher Guidance

| Discussion question | Teacher Guidance |
|---|---|
| <p>Are there any clues that show us this person has been on their phone for a long time?</p> | <p>If you look at the time on the phone and the messages on that chat, it is clearly very late and this person is staying up to look at these chats. Their battery is also running very low, which could suggest they have used their device a lot.</p> |
| <p>Why might this person struggle to come away from their phone?</p> | <p>There is a lot of temptation for this person to look at messages quickly, with people asking for help and sharing gossip and messages. There is also another individual directing others to their 'story', leaving more temptation to open other apps.</p> <p>There are also a lot of notifications and unread messages, and this young person may feel they are obligated to look at them.</p> |
| <p>How would this person feel when they look at their chats?</p> | <p>Although group chats have lots of positives and are a great way to be social, this experience may make somebody feel overwhelmed and stressed. They may also feel frustrated with themselves for being on their device and not getting jobs done in the day. Also, due to the time, they are probably also feeling tired.</p> |
| <p>Does this person experience pressure to reply immediately to messages? What pressure might they feel from G's message? What could they do?</p> | <p>G is making this person feel guilty for not replying to messages. This can feel difficult, as it might feel you are being a bad friend if you do not respond quickly to messages.</p> <p>Setting up a do not disturb or bedtime function is a great way to resist the temptation to check notifications at night. Alternatively, they could explain to their friend that they will reply another time as it is getting late. Sometimes it can be easier to have these conversations in person.</p> <p>Taking a while to respond to a message does not make you a bad friend.</p> |
| <p>What could this person do to reduce the time they spend on group chats?</p> | <p>There are a few settings this young person can use to help balance their screen time, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not disturb • Bedtime mode • Turn off notifications • App timers/screentime restrictions <p>Turn off read receipts and active status – You can turn off read receipts for individual contacts, but not for group chats. Regardless, they should not feel pressure to reply in a group chat if they are not ready to.</p> |

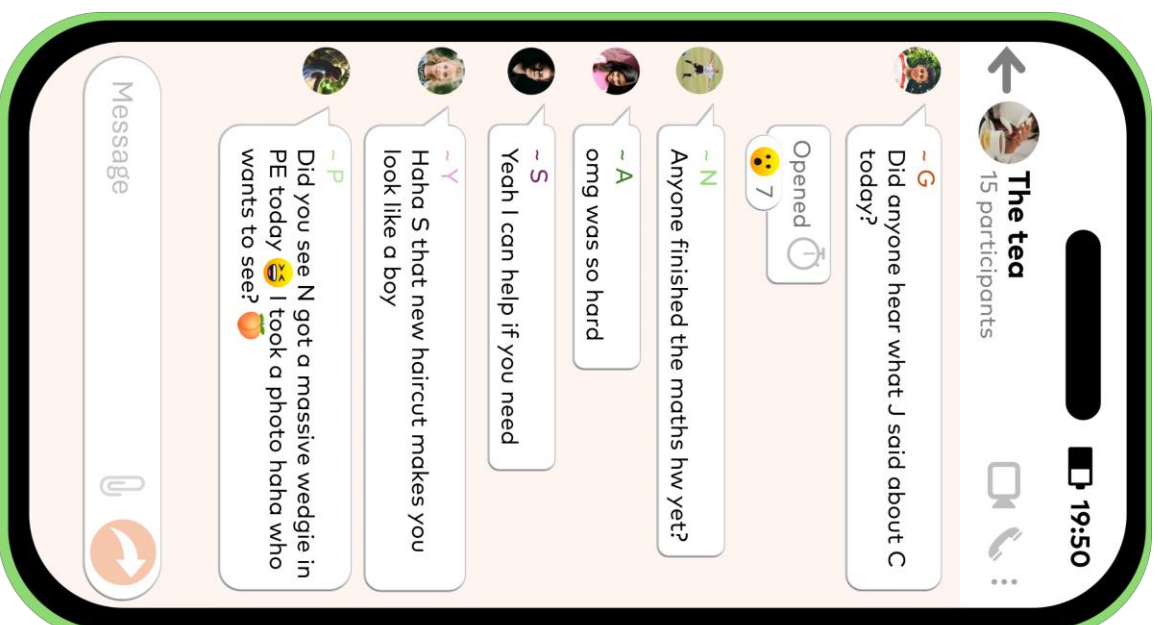
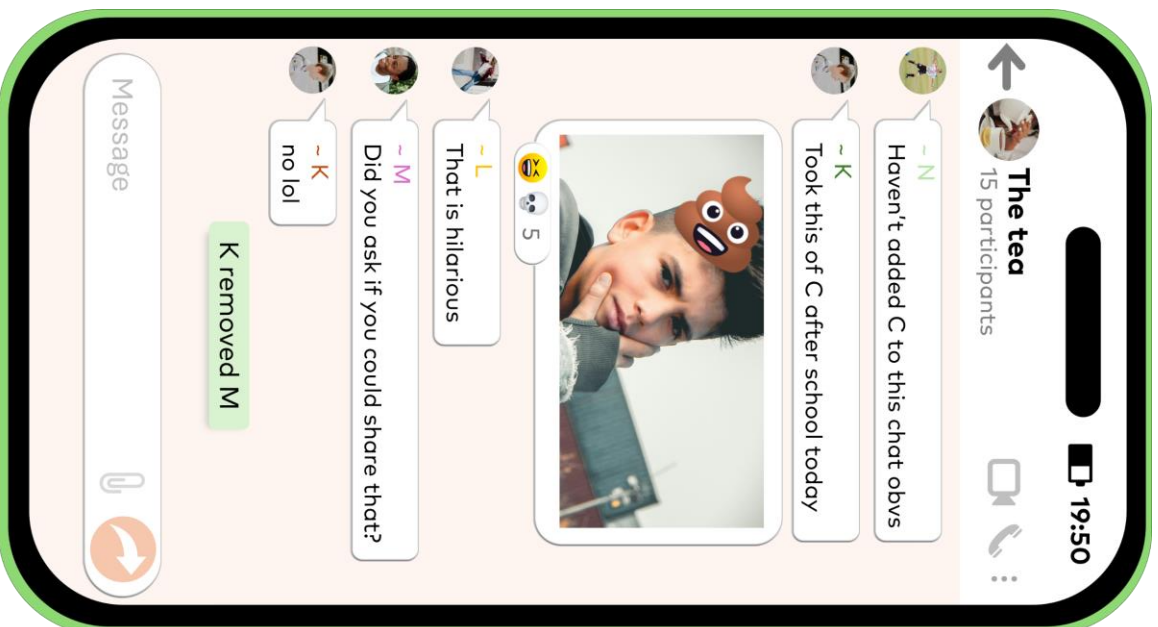
 35 minutes  Whole class/Groups

Online bullying and gossip

This activity discusses issues around online bullying and gossip in group chats. The group chat example and discussion questions can be used for class or group discussion. There is a version of the group chat to use with ages 9-11 ([Group Chat A on page 9](#)), and one to use with ages 11-13 ([Group Chat B on page 10](#)). However, you can decide which group chats you would like to explore with your learners depending on their suitability for your learners. Teacher guidance has been provided [on page 11](#) to help you discuss key points.

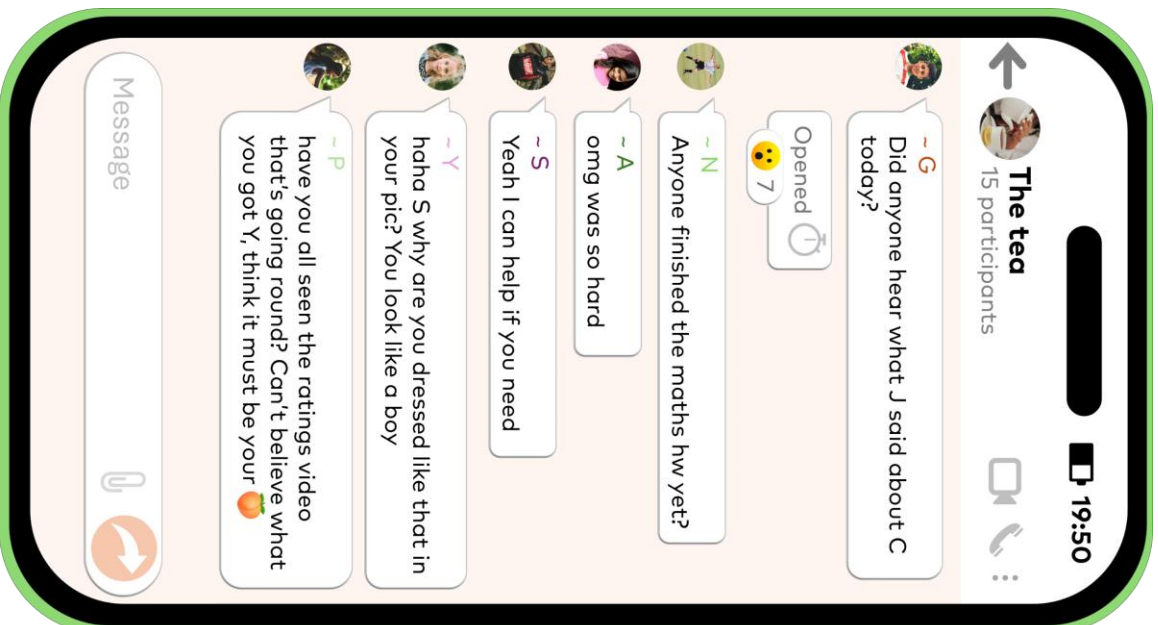
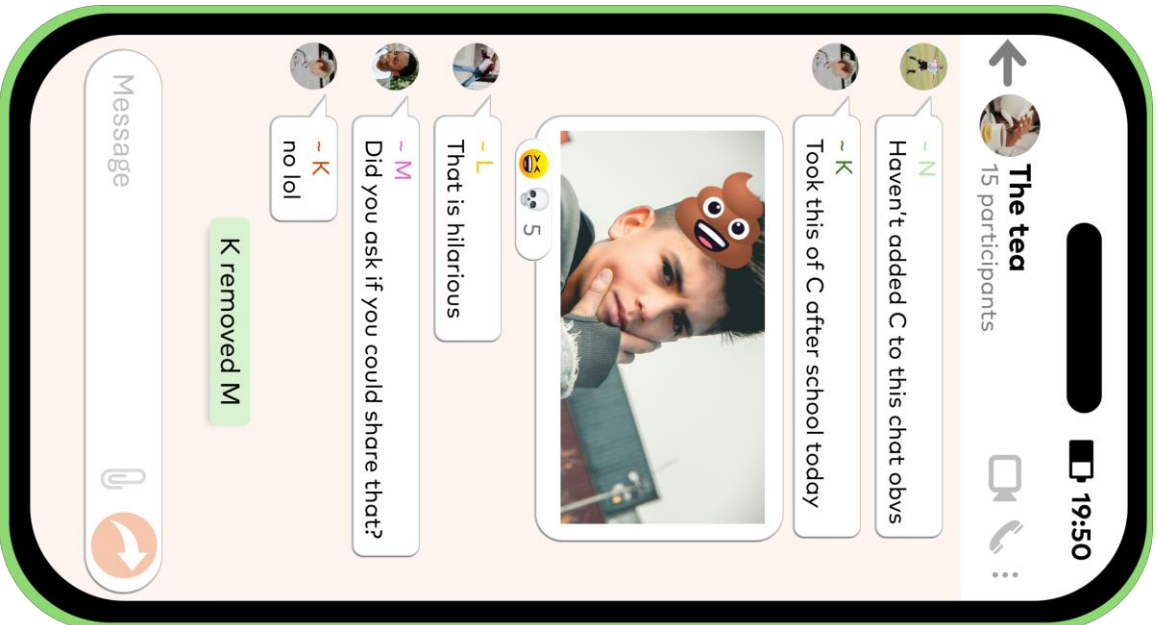
To start the discussion, you may ask learners to identify and highlight where they can spot any problems in this group chat, or where they can see examples of online bullying or gossip. You could then ask the questions to the class or ask each group to focus on a particular question and feedback.

After the discussion, you could ask learners to write some advice to the people in this group chat to help them in the future.



Group Chat A

childnet.com/resources/group-chats



Group Chat B

childnet.com/resources/group-chats

Teacher Guidance

| Discussion question | Teacher Guidance |
|--|--|
| C has been excluded from the chat – how would that make them feel? | It is okay not to have all people in every chat. However, if someone is excluded or removed from a chat for the purposes of upsetting them or being mean about them then this is not okay . |
| K shared a photo of C. Why was this not okay? | K did not ask C if he could share the photo, so he has shared this without consent. Before sharing images or videos, you must always get consent from the person in it. It also seems the image has been edited. It's important to think about why this would have been done, and the negative impact this could have on C and others. |
| M stood up for what he thought was right. Why do you think other people aren't doing what M did? Is it okay to be a bystander? What could the participants do? | Other people may not feel confident to speak out about the behaviour they are not comfortable with. Standing up for what is right is important, but that it can be done in many ways , some of which do not involve confrontation. You can also take actions like reporting , blocking, giving support to the victim or telling a trusted adult to show that you are an upstander rather than a bystander. |
| G sent a disappearing message to the chat. Is it okay to use these? | There might be positives of disappearing messages like if you want to share something private. However, it is important to remember that some people use these messages negatively and if there is anything upsetting in a disappearing message, taking a screenshot can provide evidence in the future. In some apps, you cannot take a screenshot of a disappearing message, or it can notify the other user, so taking a photo with a separate device can allow you to collect evidence in these cases. Remember it is only okay to take screenshots or pictures if it has been sent to cause upset or harm to someone. |
| What would be the impact of Y and P's messages? | Both P and Y's comments are examples of online sexual harassment. These messages are bullying which use gender stereotypes, objectification and body shaming . This is likely to have negative impacts such as making a person feel upset, humiliated or sexualized. |

 40 minutes  Whole class/Groups

Inappropriate content

This activity helps learners consider different types of inappropriate content that might be shared in a group chat, why it might be inappropriate, and how this type of content might make someone feel if they see it in a group chat.

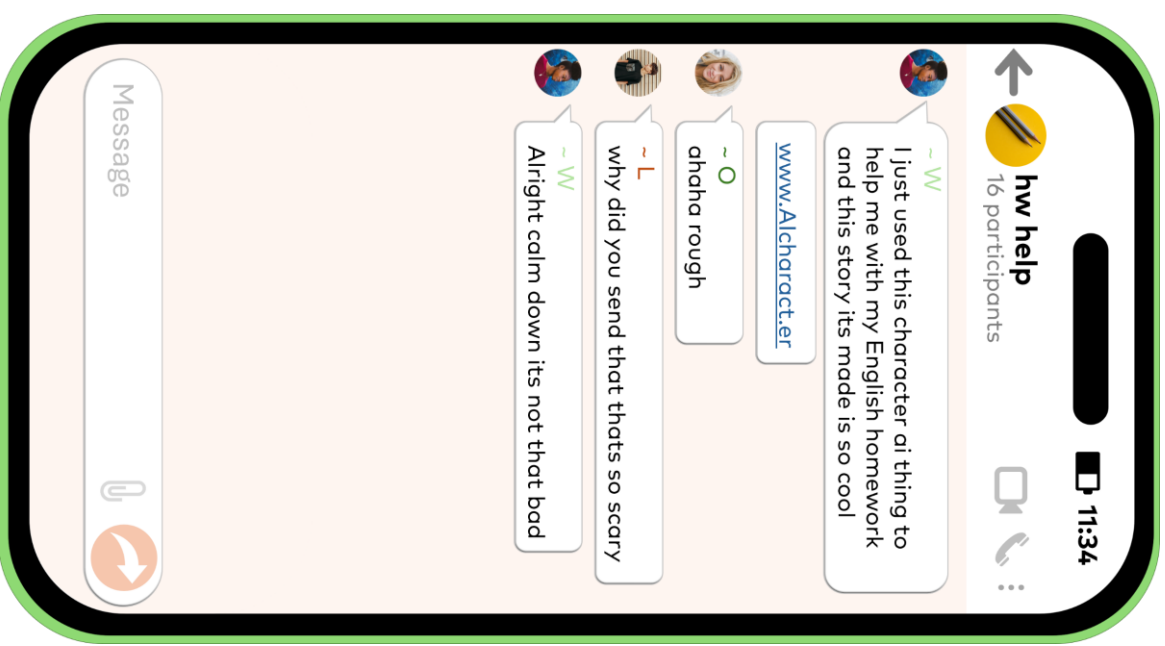
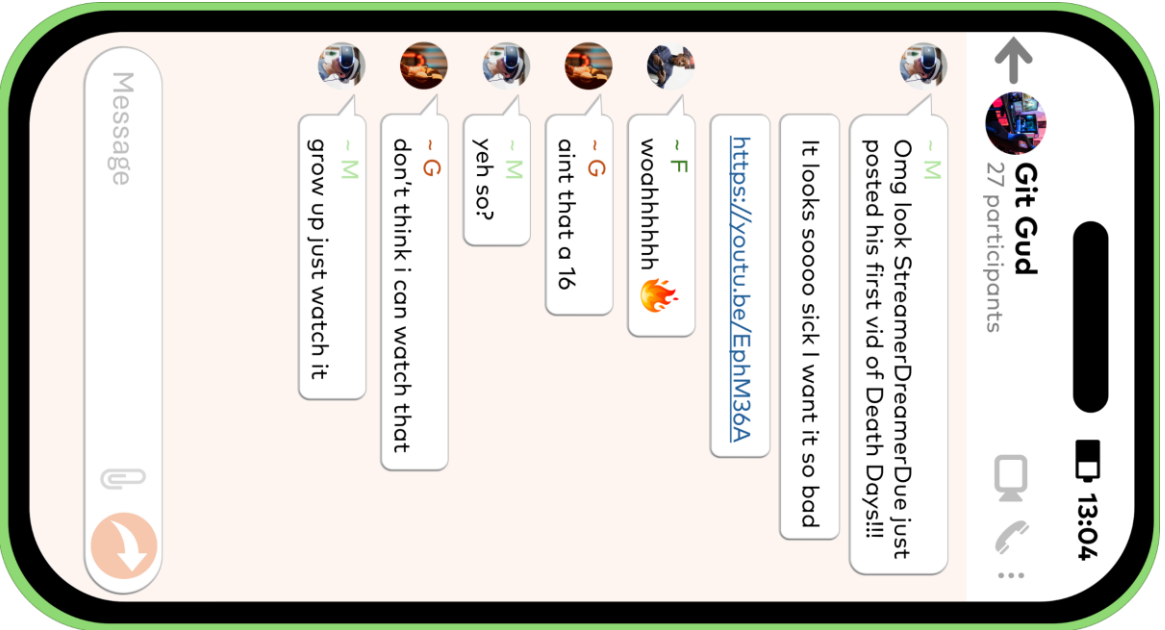
This activity includes 8 different group chats: four in group A (ages 9-11) [on pages 13 and 14](#) and four in group B (ages 11-13) [on pages 15 and 16](#). However, you can decide which group chats you would like to explore with your learners depending on their suitability for your learners. Teacher guidance is provided [on pages 17-20](#).

You can either explore each group chat all together, use the group chats in a carousel activity and ask groups to move from group chat to group chat, or give small groups all of the group chats at once.

For each group chat example, learners should discuss the following questions:

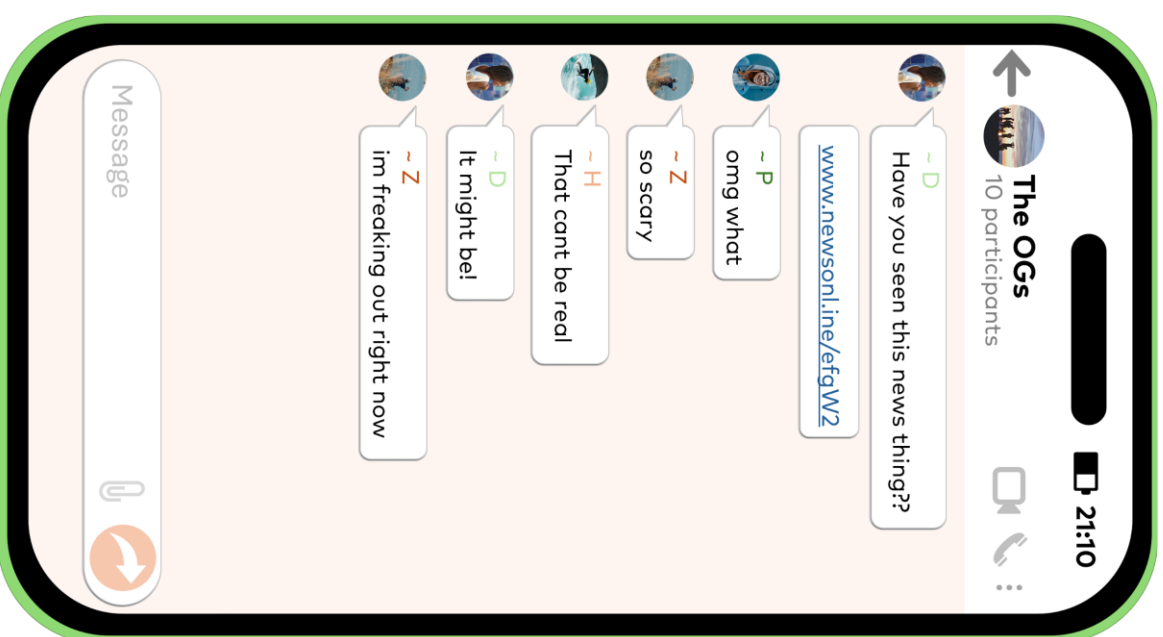
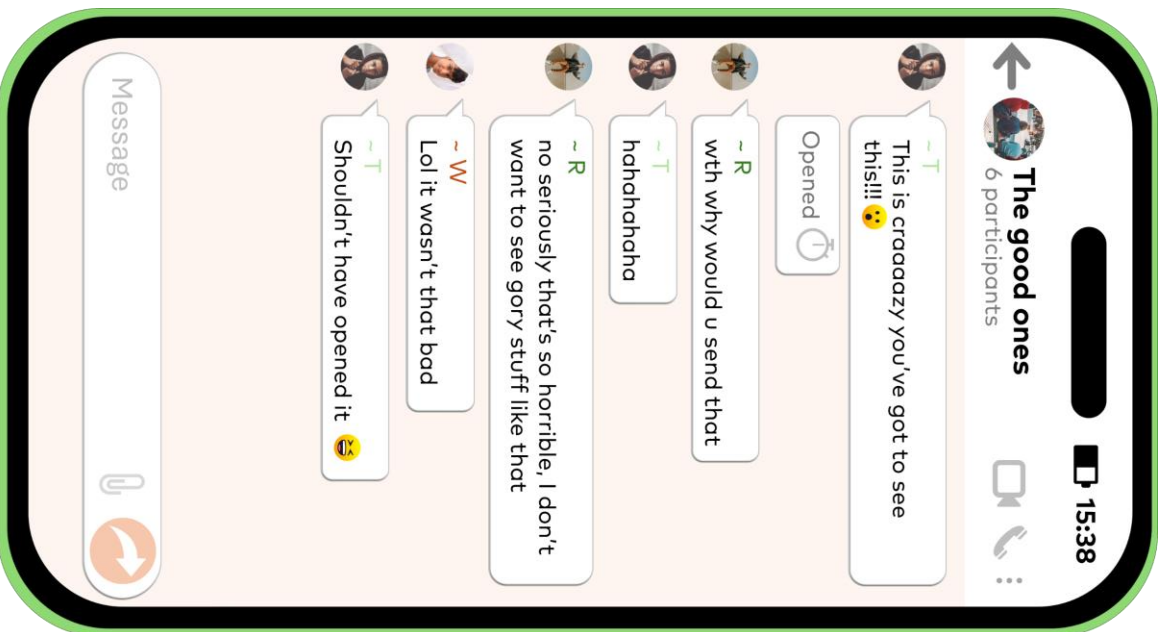
1. Why might this kind of content be inappropriate to share in a group chat?
2. How might this type of content make someone feel if it's shared in a group chat?
3. What advice would you give the people in this group chat?

Once they have worked through each group chat, learners should mind map what types of positive content could be shared in a group chat instead and how each idea might make someone feel/have a positive impact on someone.



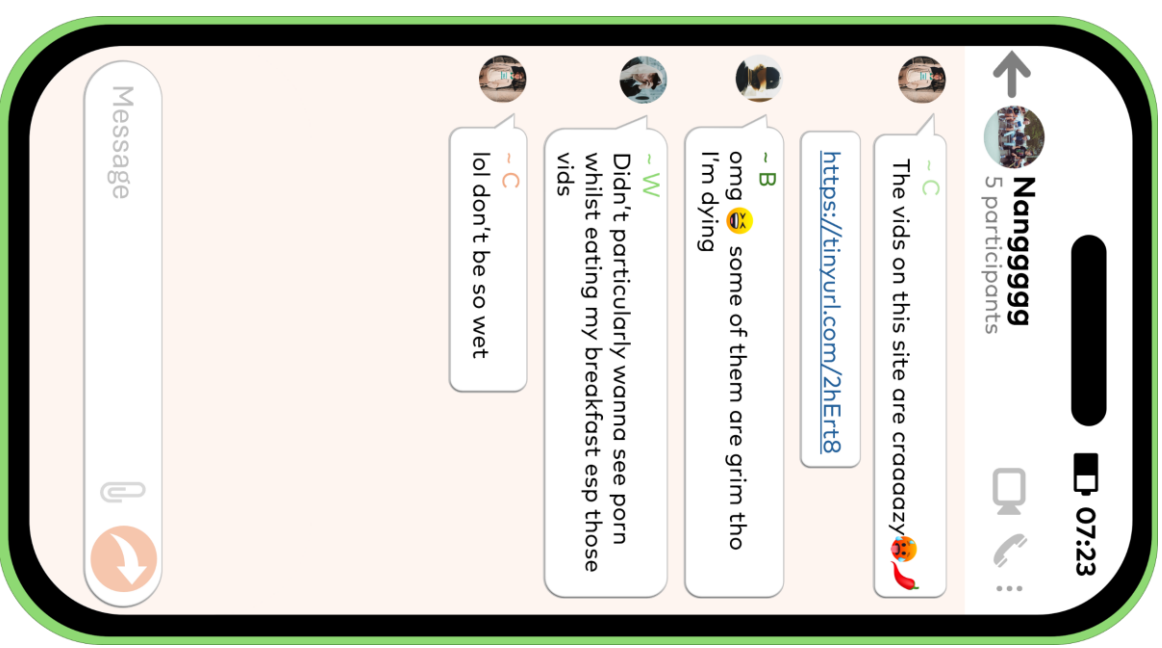
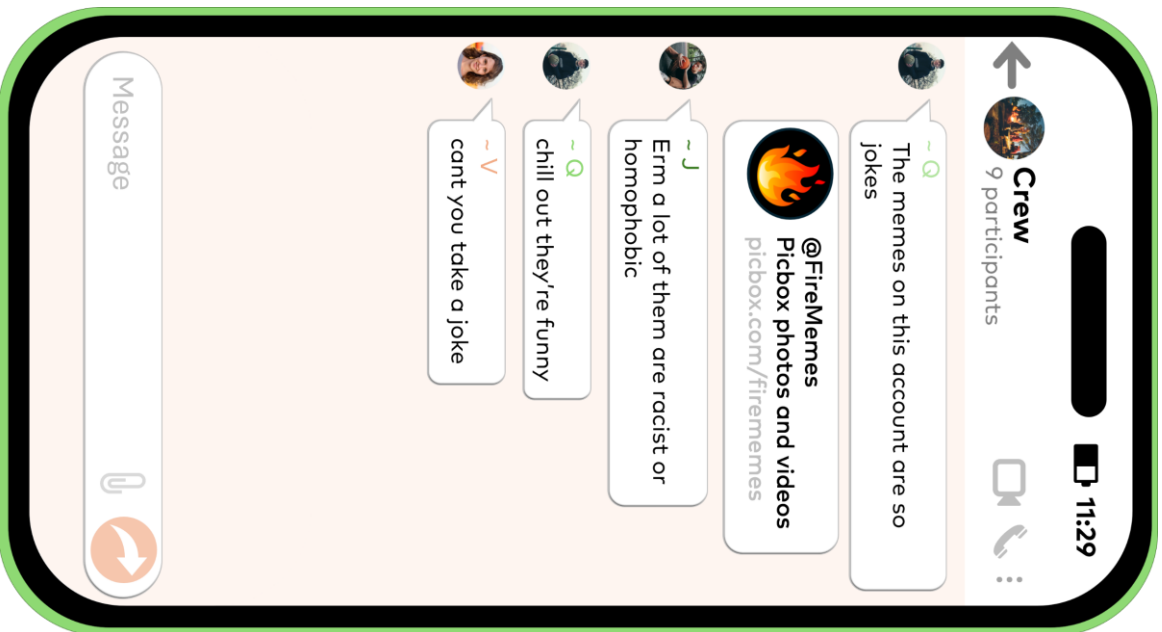
Group A

childnet.com/resources/group-chats



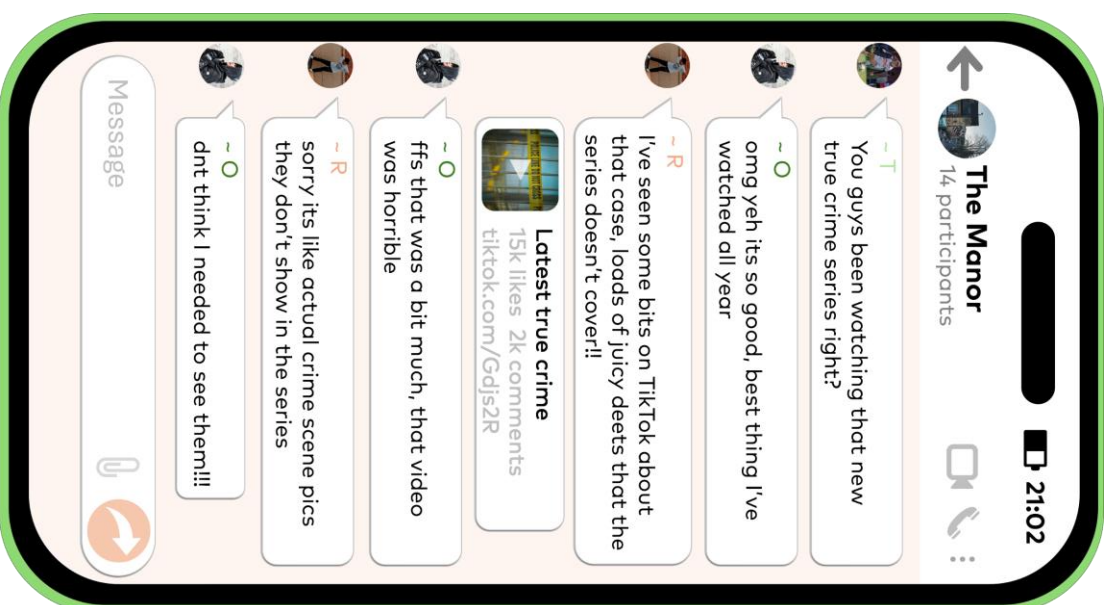
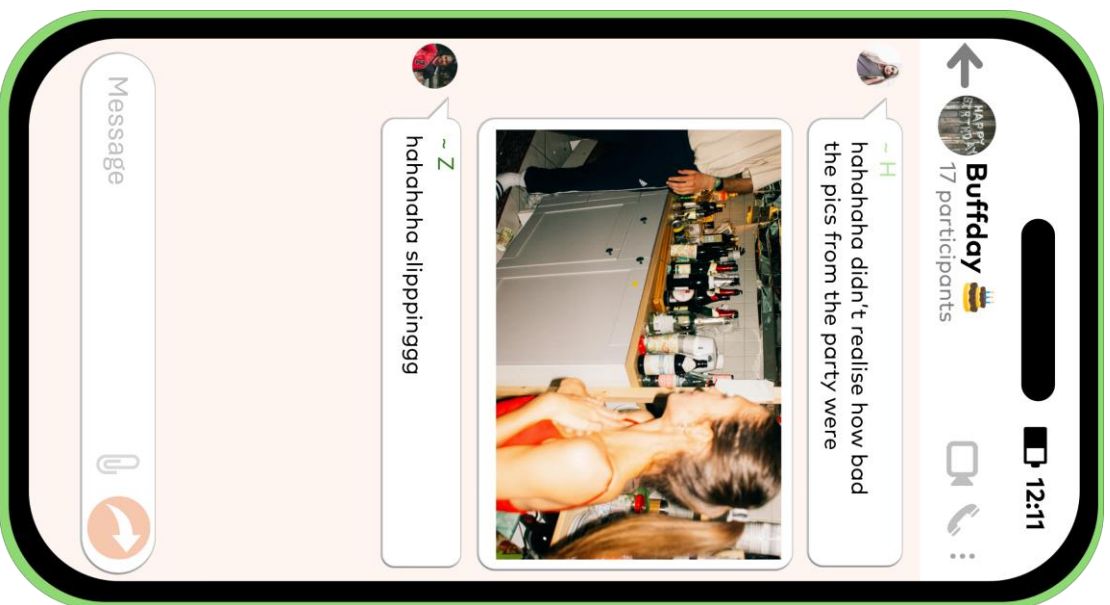
Group A

childnet.com/resources/group-chats



Group B

childnet.com/resources/group-chats



Group B

childnet.com/resources/group-chats

Teacher Guidance

General Guidance

Remember that, legally, most apps and services that include group chats are meant for people aged 13 years and older. It is advised that children and young people wait until they are 13 before creating an account on one of these apps and services. However, even if they are the correct age, this does not necessarily prevent others from sharing content that might be inappropriate for them to look at. It's important that children and young people know what to do if they see inappropriate content in a group chat that makes them feel worried, upset or scared.

7 – 11 Group Chat 1

Because the game is rated 16+, the content shown in the game might not be suitable for someone under that age to view. Although some young people may play games rated older than their age, some may not want to see footage like this. It is advised that children and young people wait until they are the same age as the game's rating before playing that game to ensure that the content is suitable for them. Being pressured to view a stream like this might make someone feel uncomfortable, as footage in the game might be violent or scary. If a young person is being pressured to view content like this, they could explain that it is not nice to make someone feel bad about not wanting to watch it. If they continue to feel pressured by someone, or that person starts saying mean things to them, they should tell a trusted adult.

7 – 11 Group Chat 2

If given enough prompts, some character and story AI services can create characters and stories that might be quite scary to some young people. Although one person might find the character and story cool, it does not mean that everyone in the group chat will like it. The person sending the link did not make it clear what kind of content would be seen when clicking on the link. Before clicking on links that you're not sure of, you might want to ask for some more

information about what you'll see. If you find content that a friend has sent scary, you could explain that you would have appreciated a warning or summary of what to expect when clicking on the link. You should also tell a trusted adult if something someone has sent you makes you feel scared.

7 – 11 Group Chat 3

In this group chat, someone has sent a disappearing image of something gory and unpleasant. Although the person sending it has sent it as 'a joke', it does not mean that everyone will find the image funny. Gory or violent content can make someone feel very uncomfortable. Disappearing content should not be used to make someone feel bad by tricking them into looking at something they didn't want to see. If you receive an uncomfortable disappearing image like this, you could explain that it's not nice to trick someone into viewing horrible content like this, and that they've made you feel bad. You should also tell a trusted adult about what has happened.

7 – 11 Group Chat 4

In this group chat, someone has shared a scary news story. Although it is good to keep informed about what's going on in the world, some news can be upsetting or worrying, and not everyone in your group chat may want to read news stories like this. Also, the story might not even be true (e.g. fake news), and the person sending it might not have checked to see if it is real first. Sharing concerning online content like this without checking it first can scare people and cause unnecessary panic. If you read something online that you're not sure of, and it has made you feel scared or worried, you should ask a trusted adult to look at it for you .

11 – 13 Group Chat 1

Content that targets people because of who they are, such as their race or their sexuality (e.g. online hate) should never be shared, as it could really hurt someone's feelings. Even if you find it funny, it's important to think about the impact that content like this could have

on others. If you are sent content like this, you might want to explain to your friend why it is not okay to send. You can often anonymously report content like this, and you can also tell a trusted adult about it.

11-13 Group Chat 2

Sharing pornography in a group chat like this is inappropriate, especially if you haven't made it clear what kind of content people will see when clicking on the link. Pornography is meant for people aged 18 years and older. Although some people may choose to watch pornography, many choose not to, so it is important that pornography is not shared in a group chat like this. Sharing unwanted sexual content like this without consent is a form of online sexual harassment. You should also never make someone feel bad for not wanting to look at pornography, or pressure them to look at it. If someone sends you content like this, you may want to explain that you don't feel comfortable being sent it and why it is inappropriate. You can also talk to a trusted adult about what has happened and what you have seen .

11 – 13 Group Chat 3

It is important that pictures or videos of others are never taken or shared or more widely without the consent of everyone in them. It is also not nice to take or share this kind of content with the aim of making someone feel embarrassed. It is important to remember that alcohol should not be consumed by someone until they're 18. Although group chats might feel private, it is possible that things could be shared more widely outside of the group chat. If someone in that image is under 18 and is drinking alcohol, this could get them in trouble. If an image of you is taken and shared without your consent, you should request that they delete the image and not share it more widely. You might also be able to report the post. If the person refuses to delete the image, you might decide to talk to a trusted adult about what has happened.

11-13 Group Chat 4

The person who sent this video link may have thought they were doing a good thing for their friends, because they know that their friends liked the original documentary. However, they did not consider if everyone would be happy to see the graphic content in the video, and did not give a warning about what content they might expect to see if they watch the video. If you are sent a video like this that makes you feel uncomfortable, you could tell your friend that you would have appreciated a warning about the sensitive nature of the content. You may also want to talk to a trusted adult about content like this if it has made you feel uncomfortable. In some apps, you may also be able to report an inappropriate video like this too, especially if you think it goes against the platform's guidelines.

Childnet's mission is to work in partnership with others around the world to help make the internet a great and safe place for children. We work directly with children and young people from the ages of 3 to 18 on a weekly basis, as well as parents, carers, teachers and professionals, finding out about their real experiences online, and the positive things they are doing as well as sharing safety advice.

Explore more resources at childnet.com/resources