MGL

ONLINE SAFETY NEWSLETTER

TONE MATTERS – HOW MESSAGES CAN BE MISUNDERSTOOD ONLINE

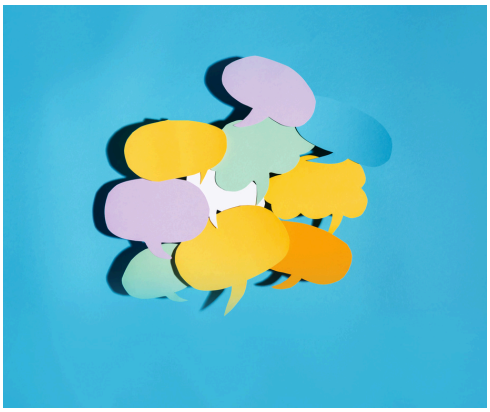
ISSUE 32

TONE

One of the great difficulties when messaging or posting online is the idea of tone. It is hard for children to understand how to convey tone over a simple message, and this can often lead to misunderstandings and disagreements. A message a child sends that they intend to be positive can be misread as negative when certain emojis are used (or not used!), punctuation such as full stops or exclamation marks are used, and so on.

Helping children understand how to communicate their tone through messages can be tricky. as they may find it hard to grasp.





MISUNDERSTANDINGS

Messages can be misunderstood based on very simple grammatical choices. For example, the message **"I really didn't like that"** perhaps sent in response to a funny video, can easily be misinterpreted by the other person, as the message may be meant in a joking way.

To improve this, **emojis** are a good start to helping to convey tone and emotion, adding a crying laughing emoji to the end immediately tells the other person that they are laughing, for example. However, remind children that they don't always prevent messages from being misunderstood, an emoji can also be misinterpreted. The main thing children should do is **think before they send**.

HELPING CHILDREN WITH TONE

If your child is struggling with tone and misunderstandings are frequent, try the following:

- Ask your child how the same message could sound friendly, angry or sarcastic.
- Show them how punctuation can change the way a message feels.
- Encourage them to reread messages before sending them.
- If a message is unclear or upsetting, encourage them to ask rather than immediately assuming what the sender meant.

