

Part of our Online Information Series



# What you need to know about...

# VOICE ACTIVATED SEARCHING

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## What is it?

### 'Voice Activated Searching'

Voice activated search, also known as 'voice search' or 'voice-enabled search' is a search tool that allows the user to use a voice command to search the internet, a website, or an app. It is commonly associated with smart speakers or digital assistants such as Alexa, Siri and Cortana. They can be used on smart phones and also operate on separate devices like the Amazon Echo or Google Home. They are particularly beneficial for children with disabilities who struggle with using a keyboard.

**\*Ahem\* Ok Kloe, what's the number for National Online Safety?**

**...Okay. Here is the number I have found.  
0800 368 8061**

## Know the Risks

### Data Misuse

This is one of the biggest concerns about voice activated search. Many times, we do not know where our data is being stored and how it will be used. Before using a voice activated search, it is always good practice to know what happens to our data once we hand it over to digital assistants.

### Forming bad manners

There is a concern that children will get used to giving commands instead of politely requesting for something when using a voice search. They may think that such behaviour is considered normal and it could influence how they speak offline in the real world.

### Adult content

Children can ask questions that may not be appropriate for their age. Voice assistants aren't able to identify the age of a user and hence might provide them with answers that may not be suitable for their age group. Similarly, devices may play explicit versions of songs if no parental controls are applied.

### Online purchases

If you have your credit card or other online payment information linked to your voice activated search, then there is a risk that children could make unauthorised purchases, potentially racking up huge bills.

## Safety Tips

### Use it together

When using voice activated searching, it's important to do it together with your child, especially at the initial stages. This will help them to become familiar with it and to understand how it should be used properly. Teach them how useful it can be and remind them to always speak politely, even when issuing commands.

### Set parental controls

Review the parental settings on your devices. Implement filters and block any access to explicit or adult related content. Remove connected cards or implement safety measures to ensure children cannot spend freely.

### Keep security software updated

Keep software updated on your devices to help keep the voice activated search feature secure. Use two-factor authentication whenever possible and set a strong password to avoid the risk of hacking.

### Mute speaker when not in use

On smart speakers installed at home, it's good practice to mute the speakers when not in use or to just unplug the device when in standby mode. This reduces the risk of the speaker misidentifying an activation command and helps to improve your privacy and security.

## Wider Benefits

### Can improve learning

Voice activated searching can be used as an educational tool to help stimulate children's critical thinking and problem-solving skills. For instance, it can help children with their spelling, solving mathematical problems and also with reading, writing and their time-management.

### Help reduce screen time

When used correctly, voice activated search can help to reduce the amount of time children spend in front of a screen. This could be in the form of a story, conducting a quiz or playing music rather than watching TV or playing computer games.

### Learning assistant for children with SEND

Smart speakers can be a beneficial digital assistant for children with SEND since it removes the need for typing. Some children may struggle using a keyboard or having to multitask so using voice activated search can be a good tool to help children be digitally connected.

## Our Expert Parven Kaur



Parven Kaur is social media expert and digital media consultant who is passionate about improving digital literacy for parents and children. She has extensive experience in the social media arena and is the founder of Kids N Clicks; a web resource that helps parents and children thrive in a digital world.