



Top tips for BlackBerry



This guide provides specific tips to help you support your child to use their BlackBerry safely and responsibly. You can contact your mobile provider for further advice and information about parental controls they may offer. For general advice about safe smartphone use read our **Smartphone parents' guide**¹.

The Basics

What do young people do with their BlackBerrys?

In addition to making calls, BlackBerry users can text, listen to music, go on Facebook, email, browse the internet, take pictures, play games and watch TV and videos. The most popular thing that young people use their BlackBerrys for is to communicate using BlackBerry Messenger (BBM).

What is BBM?

BBM is an instant messenger service for communicating BlackBerry-to-BlackBerry. It is a fast way of sharing information and chatting with friends. Users can send text-based instant messages, pictures, audio recordings, music files and emoticons to their BBM contacts, or can "broadcast" to multiple contacts at once.

6 safety tips for the BlackBerry

1. Communicate safely

Encourage your child to think about what they say, send or post from their BlackBerry. Once it is sent they are no longer in control, as messages can be saved, images can be copied or a screenshot can be taken with a "screenmuncher" app (which are very popular among young people, for example, to share things they find funny). This conversation, image or screenshot can then be passed on to other people.

Young people should be aware that their BBM profile picture, like other information posted online, can be copied then saved or shared.

Information can spread very quickly using BBM; there is a function called "broadcast" where you send a message to all of your contacts. This can be really fun for young people, but they also need to be aware of the potential difficulties they may face if something embarrassing or upsetting is shared widely. Ensure that your child thinks about their own responsibility not to pass on information that might be hurtful or illegal.

What do young people think?

"You've got to realise that if you're telling something to someone, you have no control over what they're saying to another person"

"I guess people need to realise that texting someone is actually more serious than saying it verbally, 'cause with verbally you leave no evidence but with texting it's there"

"It's happened to quite a few people in my school ... Someone sent a picture through BBM then someone broadcasted it round to everyone and now everyone's got the images"

2. Protect personal information

Many users have a lot of personal information stored on their smartphone, including photos, and they may also have automatic logins set up for email, social networking and bank accounts.

It is always a good idea to set a Password, so if someone does steal or find your phone then they can't access any personal information you may have stored on it. **See the BlackBerry advice on how to set a password**².

To communicate BlackBerry-to-BlackBerry (eg. via BBM) each phone has a unique 8 digit PIN, which is the BlackBerry equivalent of a phone number. Sharing your PIN with people allows them to contact you. Speak to your child about whether they share their PIN on their Facebook profile – this is not recommended, even if their profile is private/set to "friends" only. Speak to your child about the importance of not giving anyone any personal information, such as their phone number, school or address, or meeting up with anyone they don't know in real life. Encourage your child to tell you if anything makes them uncomfortable or upset.

¹ www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-and-resources/a-parents-guide/smartphones

² <http://tinyurl.com/bqf9rl>

3. Know how to block

On BBM, the user can decide who can and cannot communicate with them. Make sure your child knows how to block someone to prevent them from contacting them via BBM:

In the Contacts List View in BBM, scroll to the BBM contact, click menu and select 'Delete Contact'. You can also select to 'Ignore future invitations' so they cannot contact you again to invite you as a BBM Contact.

With BBM, it is a good idea to change the default setting to "store conversation history" so that your child has a record of everything that has been said to them should they need to refer to it or show a trusted adult if something has made them uncomfortable or upset.

4. Empower your child to be in control

Young people can often feel they need to be regularly communicating via their phone to keep up with their friendships, but it is helpful for them to understand that they are in control of when they reply.

When a young person receives a BBM message they can then feel under pressure to reply quickly, because the person who sent the message is updated when the message has been sent (message marked with a tick), then when it has been delivered (i.e. phone is switched on: message marked "D") and when the message has been read (marked with an "R").

It is worth talking to your child about these social pressures they face. To help your child feel in control of when they reply, there is also a way of making it appear to the sender that the message has not been read yet. You can simply change the default setting to "Store conversation history" and then go into the chat history to read the new message, rather than reading the BBM message itself. This way, your child can be in control of when they reply to people and they won't offend anyone if they don't reply immediately.

Young people may accept BBM invites from people they don't know in real life, often because of pressure to appear popular. Help your child understand that they don't have to accept everyone who adds them. When responding to a BBM friend invite, you can choose Accept, Decline, or Remove. By choosing Remove, the other person won't know that you've rejected them.

5. Think about apps

Familiarise yourself with the **BlackBerry App World**³ so you know what apps are like and what apps are out there.

Some apps are free and some cost money and others may contain content that you deem to be inappropriate. It is a good idea to be involved with downloading apps, particularly with younger children. To be able to download an app you need a BlackBerry ID. Parents could set up the BlackBerry ID on the device for their children. Then if the child would like to download an app, the parent is in control and can decide whether to allow the download by entering the BlackBerry ID username and password.

BlackBerry apps will soon have an age rating system, but in the meantime it is best to read about an app in the App World to decide if it is appropriate for your child. If it is free, perhaps you could try it out for yourself first to check whether you feel it is appropriate for your child.

It is also helpful to talk to your child about costs of in-app purchases (see the FAQ about costs in our **How to Stay Safe Guide**⁴) and if appropriate, have a family agreement about spending limits.

Some apps help to:

Filter inappropriate internet content. You can also contact your mobile service provider to see if they have any options for filtering out inappropriate content.

Protect your phone if it is lost or stolen. For example, BlackBerry Protect is a free app which carries out weekly backups, and can track the phone from anywhere. If you have lost your phone, then you can block and wipe it. You can also set off an alarm to find the phone (which is very handy if it is lost in the house!).

If you need to report an inappropriate app (it may be a scam app, or contain illegal or inappropriate content) you can report it here: <https://www.blackberry.com/technicalsupport/index.do?ft=generic>

6. Understand costs

A lot of young people see BlackBerry Messenger as "free" – however, while it is free messaging, it does use internet data, so there may be charges if you go over your contract allowance for internet data. Internet data allowances are not used up if you use wifi to access the internet on your BlackBerry, so if you have wireless internet it is a good idea for your child to log in and use this when they are at home. Though remember that any web filtering you have set up with your mobile operator won't apply here; contact your home internet provider to see if they can help.

You can also ask your mobile operator to set limits on spending so that your child does not spend over their contract allowance.

Further Information

Check out the websites of your mobile provider to see what support they provide.

Find out about apps in the BlackBerry App World:
<http://appworld.blackberry.com/webstore>

To find out more about social networking sites like Facebook, see Childnet's social networking guide for parents:
www.childnet.com/downloads/blog_safety.pdf

Childnet's Chatdanger site, www.chatdanger.com, offers guidance about chatting on the internet.

For more advice for parents about helping children stay safe online, see Know IT All for parents:
www.childnet.com/kia

³ <http://uk.blackberry.com/services/appworld>

⁴ www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-and-resources/a-parents-guide/smartphones/how-to-stay-safe

