Part of our Online Identity & Self Image Series

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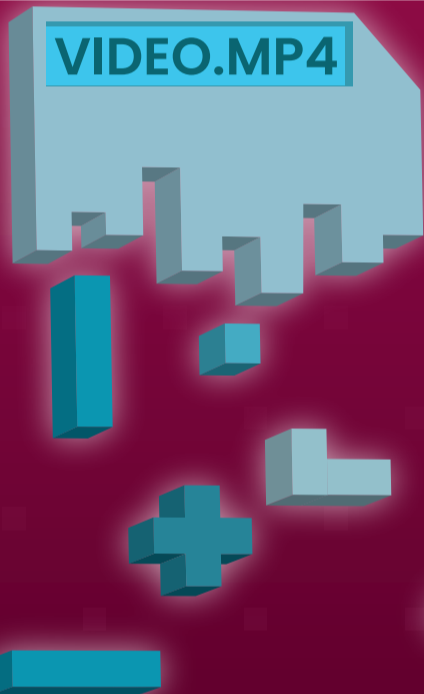www.nationalonlinesafety.com

What you need to know about...
TORRENT SITES

What are They?
? 'Torrent Sites' ?

A torrent site is a website on the internet where visitors can upload, share, and download files. Whilst some torrent sites are legal, others are not due to the sharing of copyrighted material such as books, music, and movies. A torrent site allows users to download pieces of a particular file from various other users, known as seeders, until the complete file is downloaded.

VIDEO.MP4

Know the Risks

Installing malware
One common risk of using torrent sites is the risk of malware. If your child is downloading shared files, they may also be downloading software that can disrupt the normal working of your computer system or can sit watching their activity unbeknown to them.

Vulnerable to hacking
Using torrent sites can leave you vulnerable to hack attacks which can mean that any sensitive information stored on your computer system is at risk of being exposed. It could also leave a backdoor open for an attacker to access your system and monitor what your child is doing on the device.

Legal issues
Torrent sites are renowned for containing copyrighted material. This means that if your child does upload, share or download such files, they are in fact breaking the law and, as your I.P. address is visible, you are at risk of prosecution, a heavy fine or even imprisonment.

ISP termination
Whoever has signed the agreement with the Internet Service Provider (ISP) is responsible for the actions of all users on the network, even if you had no idea that a child was accessing content illegally. You may find that your ISP terminates your Internet connection for illegal activity or behaviour that is against the agreement/contract.

Safety Tips

Install antivirus software
Having antivirus software installed on your computer system will help to protect you against malicious torrents that can harm your computer. Examples include BitDefender, Kaspersky and even enabling Windows Defender. Check all downloaded files using a virus checker to prevent any damage from occurring.

Check seeders
If a file being shared has a high number of seeders, this is an indication that the file does not contain harmful software due to its popularity. EXE and BAT files are file types known to contain viruses, avoiding these will reduce the risk of downloading a virus in error.

Check comments
Torrent sites allow for comments to be posted. If the file your child is wishing to download doesn't have any comments yet posted, be wary of downloading it. Also, check in the comments posted about the file you wish to download to see if anyone has mentioned viruses or has had any issues before.

Invitation only
Where possible, look to use 'invitation only' torrent sites. These come with less risk due to the fact that they are made up of a community of members who are sharing files with one another rather than simply anyone on the internet. Also check for "verified-uploaders", as their content has to be checked by administrators prior to being uploaded to the torrent site.

Responding to a Threat

Delete and report
If you believe that a file your child has downloaded contains a threat and hasn't yet been opened, simply delete the file and then remove it from the trash or recycle bin on your computer system. You should then return to the torrent site where you downloaded the file from and leave a comment that warns others.

Scan for malware
If your child has opened an infected file, alongside deletion and removal, run a scan of your computer system to detect any malicious software. Ensure that all other files, folders, and software are closed. Next, open up the antivirus software and run a 'Full Scan' of your computer system.

Leave a comment
If an antivirus scan detects any malicious threats, it will either remove these automatically or, it may require permission to permanently delete the file. Once deleted, return to the torrent site where the file was downloaded from and leave a comment that warns others about the dangers.

Our Expert
Emma Davis

Emma Davis is a cyber security expert and former ICT teacher. She delivers cyber awareness training to organisations nationally and has extensive knowledge and experience of managing how children access services and apps online.