

Activity: What is the internet?

This activity could be scaffolded into any play where children build or create their own technology. So, it could be introduced into your group at a number of stages and not specifically set up. However, you could create the space by allowing children to build their own technology and then share what they have created with the other children, which is when you can introduce the concept of the internet. Remember, somewhere in your pre-school is a modem or router that you can show the children and explain that is how any phones or tablets in the pre-school connect to the internet.

Readiness

Children are ready for this activity when they are beginning to wonder about the technology around them and how it works. This may be facilitated through conversations such as:

- “How do you know this is a computer? What does it do?”
- “This phone lets me talk to someone on another phone. I wonder how it does that?”

This leads to questions around why digital things connect. You can provide opportunities for children to explore different types of items that connect to demonstrate how working parts come together, for example:

- “The block connects to another block”
- “I wonder what else this can connect to?”
- “What does the connection help us to do?”
- “How could we connect things in the sandpit? What would it help us do?”

Other Playing IT Safe activities to further explore how digital things are connected include:

- Connected home corner.

Description

Part 1: Set up

Set up a collage table with examples of computers (new and old) from magazines or photos. Allow children to make computers and technology using box construction items. Encourage them to invent new types of technology that don't exist yet that they think should be available.

Part 2: Demonstration and chat

At circle or mat time, have a couple of children share their creations with the rest of the group and have them pretend to send a message from one of their devices to another.

This allows you to ask the children how they think the message gets from one type of technology to the other. You can then discuss the concept of internet and how the internet cables were coming in along the internet cables out on the street, into a box in the pre-school and then after that an invisible power called internet carrying the information to the computers.

Part 3: Extend/scaffold

You can extend this on a walk or by observing outside of the pre-school by looking at the power and internet cables running from the power lines into the houses and discuss the nature of the internet and how it can go through wires, but also through the air.

Resources required

Creative materials.

Purposefully-framed play

You may need to offer support to the children by:

- Creating a link between how different things travel, such as through wires, through water, on roads, and through the air.
- Discussing making telephone calls on mobile phones and how this uses the internet.
- Showing children physical items like a modem to explain the concept.

Prompts

- What else travels through the air and is invisible?
- What other ways can we talk to each other without wires connecting things?
- We can't always understand it all – I don't know exactly how it works, but I can still use it.

Learning statement

<Name of child> demonstrated an interest in exploring and understanding how information was transmitted between computers, phones and other digital technology. They developed a basic idea of a network and how information can be transmitted in different ways including through the internet and Wi-Fi.

<All the children> demonstrated an understanding that the way technology works can seem like magic, but is actually science and different pieces of technology help us to communicate without wires between computers, phones and other digital technology.

Alignment

Outcome 2: Children are connected with and contribute to their world

- Understand the concept that the "internet" and "world wide web" and "Wi-Fi" connects people all over the world.
- Identify when or how they have used digital networks to communicate and connect with others.

