


NSPCC

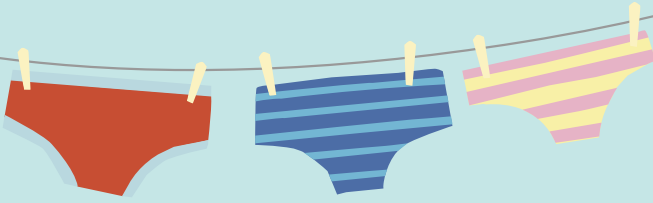
An illustration of a clothesline with various items hanging from it. From left to right: a red pair of briefs with white stars and the letter 'P', a pink pair of briefs with the letter 'A', a blue and white striped pair of briefs with the letter 'N', an orange pair of briefs with the letter 'T', and a green pair of briefs with a yellow flower and the letter 'S'. Above the clothesline, a blue bird is flying. The text 'THE TALK' is written in white on a blue background above the clothesline. Below the clothesline, the word 'GUIDE' is written in white on a blue background. Below that, the text 'FOR PARENTS AND CARERS OF CHILDREN WHO USE MAKATON' is written in white on a blue background.

THE
TALK
PANTS
GUIDE
FOR PARENTS AND CARERS
OF CHILDREN WHO USE
MAKATON

**Simple conversations using
Makaton symbols and signs to help
keep your child safe from abuse**

EVERY CHILDHOOD IS WORTH FIGHTING FOR





We all want to keep our children safe

You've probably already talked to them about things like crossing the road safely. Having a conversation to help keep them safe from sexual abuse can be just as easy.

We know it's a conversation no parent wants to have, but with Talk PANTS we believe it can feel just as natural and be just as simple as the road safety chat.

We call it talking PANTS. Each of the five PANTS rules gives a simple but valuable message that can help keep children as young as four safe.

That's why we want all parents to talk PANTS – because we know that talking regularly with children about these messages really can help them stay safe.

This parents' guide was adapted from our original version, with help from The Makaton Charity. The wording of the five PANTS rules has been adapted to make it easier for children who use Makaton to talk PANTS.

What is Makaton?

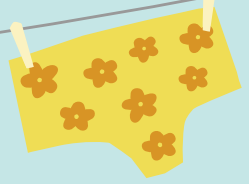
Makaton is a unique language programme that uses symbols, signs and speech to enable people to communicate. It supports the development of essential communication skills such as attention and listening, comprehension, memory, recall and organisation of language and expression.

With Makaton, signs are used, with speech, in spoken word order. This helps provide extra clues about what someone is saying. Using signs can help people who have no speech or whose speech is unclear. Using symbols can help people who have limited speech and those who cannot, or prefer not to sign.



For more information, visit [makaton.org](https://www.makaton.org)

Visit [nspcc.org.uk/pantsguides](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/pantsguides) to download printable prompt cards with Makaton symbols and signs to help your child talk PANTS.



**WHY
TALK
PANTS?**



An important conversation to have

We know you might think ‘this isn’t for my child’ – no parent ever wants to think their child will be affected by sexual abuse. But talking PANTS is simple, fun and important. Talk PANTS can help empower children to understand what abuse is and how they can speak out about it, without putting any responsibility on them. Abuse is never a child’s fault and Talk PANTS is one way we can help to keep children safe.

We also understand that talking about this topic might feel daunting, but it doesn’t have to be. PANTS has been created with the help of parents and professionals, specifically to make sure these conversations are as easy and appropriate as possible for children as young as four.

PANTS never mentions sex

We know you might feel that your child is too young to talk about sex, and that’s why PANTS never mentions it. It’s not about the birds and the bees – it gives practical and reassuring messages to help keep children safe.

We never use scary words

The last thing we want to do is upset or scare your child. Talking PANTS is about using simple, child-friendly language to give your child the confidence and knowledge to help keep them safe.



“I wholeheartedly think talking PANTS should be up there with how to cross the road.”
Parent of six-year-old girl



WHEN'S THE RIGHT TIME?

Finding the right moment

How and when you talk PANTS to your child is your choice. After all, you know them better than anyone. You'll know when they're ready and how much detail you need to go into.



Tips and techniques

* **Make language visible**

Providing symbol cards or practising particular signs could help your child know how to communicate their worries.

Talk PANTS symbol cards are available to download at [nspcc.org.uk/pantsguides](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/pantsguides)

You could use these alongside other symbol cards to help your child communicate their thoughts and feelings.

Think about keeping symbol cards in easy-to-reach places, such as in a communication pack or on the fridge. You could also encourage your child to use the Pantosaurus prompt card as a way of letting you know they want to talk about something.

* **Talk about new concepts**

You may need to explain the meaning of some words and concepts to help your child understand. Be clear about what 'private' means, help your child identify good and bad secrets, and explore different emotions.

* **Ask questions to check your child's understanding**

Sometimes a child may give the impression they have understood something when they haven't. It's important to check that they really have understood in a way that's appropriate to their level of understanding, for example using pictures to support words.

* **Actively listen**

Use ways appropriate to your child, to show that you're listening and engaged. For example you could repeat their words back to them to mirror what they've said and demonstrate you've heard and understood.

Showing your child you care about what they think and how they feel means they'll be more likely to come to you if something's troubling them.

✱ **Speak openly and honestly**

If you speak honestly and at ease, your child will be more confident and comfortable talking to you. The more open and relaxed you are, the more your child will feel able to talk about anything that's worrying them.

✱ **Ask your child to tell you about people they can trust**

Help your child to identify all the people in their life they can trust. This could be done through symbols, pictures or photographs. It shows them that even if they feel they can't tell you something, there are other people they can turn to and that they should never have to keep a worry to themselves.

✱ **Pass the message to others**

Let any other adults who regularly care for your child know that you've spoken about the PANTS rules. This will help the other adults to reinforce the same messages.

✱ **Talk little and often**

Conversations about staying safe should not be a one-off. It's much better to have conversations little and often. This will help you to reinforce the key points, and to adapt the message as your child gets older.

You might find it helpful to talk about the PANTS rules alongside parts of your daily routine, such as when getting ready for bath time, when getting dressed, or perhaps when getting ready to go swimming.

Now it's time to talk PANTS

So, you know about our tips and techniques, and you've worked out when to start the conversation with your child.

Now you're ready to teach your child the five PANTS* rules. We'll take you through the five rules so you know what to say about each one.

You can start off by having a simple talk with your child about helping to keep them safe, and then go into more detail when you're both ready.

- 1 PRIVATE PARTS ARE PRIVATE
- 2 YOUR BODY IS YOURS
- 3 IT'S OKAY TO SAY NO
- 4 TALK ABOUT BAD SECRETS
- 5 ADULTS CAN HELP



*This parents' guide was adapted from our original version, with help from The Makaton Charity. The wording of the five PANTS rules has been adapted to make it easier for children who use Makaton to talk PANTS. In the original Talk PANTS resources, the rules are phrased: **P**rivates are private, **A**lways remember your body belongs to you, **N**o means no, **T**alk about secrets that upset you, **S**peak up, someone can help.

TALKING



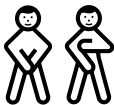
1

Private parts are private

Be clear with your child that your underwear covers up your private parts, and about what 'private' means.

Explain to them that no one should ask to see or touch their private parts, or ask them to look at or touch anyone else's.

Sometimes doctors, nurses or family members might have to. Explain that this is OK, but that those people should always explain why, and should ask them if it's OK first.



Private parts are **private**

Private

2

Your body is yours

Let your child know their body belongs to them, and no one else. No one has the right to make your child do anything with their body that makes them feel uncomfortable.

If someone asks to see or tries to touch them underneath their underwear, they can tell a trusted adult.

You may need to explore what feeling uncomfortable means, and help your child identify trusted adults.



Your **body** is **yours**

You can find the children's guide and symbol flashcards at [nspcc.org/pantsguides](https://www.nspcc.org/pantsguides)

3

It's okay to say no

Your child has the right to say 'no' to unwanted touch – even to a family member or someone they know or love.

They're in control of their body and no one should ever make them do things that make them feel uncomfortable.



It's **ok** to **say** **no**

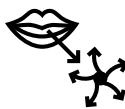
4

Talk about bad secrets

Explain the differences between 'good' and 'bad' secrets. Bad secrets make you feel sad, worried or frightened, whereas good secrets can be things like surprise parties or presents for other people which make you feel excited.

Any secret should always be shared in the end.

Explain to your child that they should always talk about things that make them worried – and that sharing it won't get them into trouble.



Talk about



bad



secrets

Your child might prefer to use the word 'communicate' instead of 'talk' and you can find both options in the prompt card pack.

5

Adults can help

Tell your child it's always good to talk to an adult they trust, about anything that makes them sad, anxious or frightened, so they can help.

Reassure them that whatever the problem, it's not their fault and they will never get into trouble for speaking out.

A trusted adult doesn't have to be a family member. It can be a teacher or a friend's parent. It can even be Childline.



Adults



can



help



By starting to talk PANTS with your child, you're taking really important steps to help keep them safe.

But remember this isn't a one-off conversation. It's better to have these chats little and often and adapt them as your child gets older. This will help to reinforce the messages and make sure they remember them. Just pick the moments that feel natural for you.



Get the PANTS guide that's right for you

We have a range of other PANTS guides for parents, carers and children, including guides in a number of different languages. We also have resources for people with various disabilities, such as:

- * guide for parents with a learning disability
- * guide for parents of children with autism
- * a film for deaf children.

You can find these at nspcc.org.uk/pantsguides

For more information about Makaton, visit makaton.org

Your child may naturally have some questions

But don't worry – we can help you answer them. You can find loads more information and support about talking PANTS at nspcc.org.uk/pants

Talk to us

If you ever need to talk, we're here. Call our Helpline on **0808 800 5000** or email us at help@nspcc.org.uk

If a child you know is worried about anything, they can always talk to Childline. It's the UK's free 24-hour helpline and online service for children.

As well as talking to a counsellor, they can find information and support about a range of issues on the website.

childline.org.uk
0800 1111

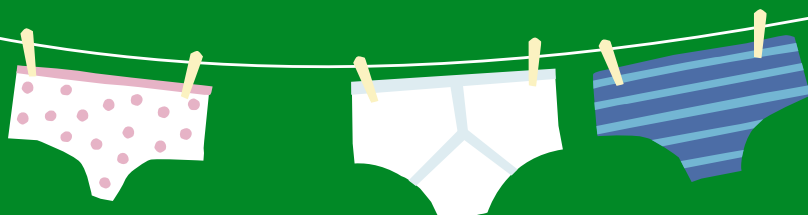
NSPCC

Together, we can stop child abuse and neglect – by working with people and communities to prevent it, transforming the online world to make it safer for children, and making sure every child has a place to turn for support when they need it.

Everyone has a part to play in keeping children safe. Every pound you raise, every petition you sign, every minute of your time, will make a difference.

Together, we can change children's lives.

[nspcc.org.uk](https://www.nspcc.org.uk)



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