



Online Game Briefing Note 3: Momo

What is Momo?

Momo is a sinister 'challenge' that has been around for some time. It has recently resurfaced and, once again, has come to the attention of schools and children across the country. Known as the 'suicide killer game', Momo has been heavily linked with apps such as Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube and – most worryingly – YouTube Kids.

The scary doll-like figure reportedly sends graphic, violent images and asks users to undertake dangerous challenges such as waking up at random hours, and has been associated with self-harm. The original artwork used by the hackers has been taken from a designer in Japan who has no connection whatsoever with the Momo challenge.

How is Momo viewed?

Reports of seemingly innocent videos on YouTube and YouTube Kids – such as Minecraft – have been edited by unknown sources to include violence provoking and/or inappropriate content. Even though YouTube monitor and remove videos that include inappropriate content, clips can be uploaded and viewed thousands of times before they get reported and removed. It is difficult to spot the videos that have been affected as the harmful content doesn't appear until partway through the video.

Due to an algorithm in apps such as YouTube, videos are suggested that the user may be interested in. If one video has Momo content in it, then other suggested videos will also feature Momo.

How can you tell if a child has viewed Momo?

Signs to watch out for include children who:

- Become very secretive, especially about what they are doing online;
- Are spending a lot of time on the internet and social media;
- Are switching screens on their device when approached;
- Are withdrawn and angry after using the internet or sending text messages; and/or
- Have lots of new phone numbers or email addresses on their devices.

What can parents do?

- **Tell children it is not real:** Just like any horror story, the concept of Momo can be quite frightening and distressing for young people. It is important to reiterate to children that Momo is not a real person and cannot directly harm them. Tell children to not go searching for Momo videos online, as it may only cause more distress.
- **Be present:** Do not let children use the internet or associated apps unsupervised. This will give a greater understanding of what they are doing on their devices and the opportunity to discuss, support and stop certain activities that children may be involved in.
- **Talk regularly:** It is important to discuss with children about what they are accessing, and why. This will provide an understanding of their actions, but honest and frequent conversations will encourage children to feel confident to discuss issues and concerns they may have.
- **Device settings and parental controls:** Ensure controls are set up to restrict the types of content that children are able to view, as well as being able to monitor activity. You can turn off suggested auto-play on YouTube, to stop your child from viewing content that hasn't been directly selected.
- **Peer pressure:** Challenges can be tempting for children to take part in – no matter how dangerous or scary they may seem. Talk to children about how they should not succumb to peer pressure and do anything they are not comfortable with. If they are unsure, talk to a trusted adult or use another website.
- **Real or hoax:** It is natural to feel worried about certain things you see online that may be harmful, but not everything you see online is true. Check the validity of the source and be mindful of what you share as it may only cause more worry.
- **Report and block:** People can find ways around filtering systems in order to share and promote distressing or harmful material. Ensure that you report any material you deem inappropriate.

What can I do if I have concerns or questions?

If adults are concerned or have any questions on how to approach the subject with their children, they can contact NSPCC via telephone on 0808 800 5000 or visit the NSPCC website via <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/>

Children who are worried about their activity on apps or online games can contact Childline 24 hours a day via telephone on 0800 1111 or via their website <https://www.childline.org.uk/>

If you are worried or concerned about a child, please contact **Family Connect** on **01952 385385**.
If you believe a criminal offence has been committed, please contact **West Mercia Police** on **101**.
In an emergency, always ring 999.