

# Start the chat and stay safe online

A guide to help parents, carers and educators protect kids online

Keep our Mob Safe Online

Online Safety

Start the Chat

eSafety.gov.au



**We acknowledge that many individuals refer to themselves by their clan, mob and/or country. For the purposes of this document, we respectfully refer to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.**

**Kids are growing up in two worlds, the real world and an online world.** Just like we protect kids from dangers in the real world, it's important to keep them safe in their online world too.

Many parents, carers and educators are unsure how to help keep kids safe online. Carers can include grandparents, aunties, uncles, brothers, sisters or even teachers and sports coaches.

The National Online Safety Awareness campaign is designed to help anyone who is around children aged 5 to 18 to understand the importance of starting the chat about online safety with young people.

This guide will help you understand the online safety risks and how to keep our mob safe online. More resources are available on the eSafety Commissioner's website visit **eSafety.gov.au**





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# OK, let's get started

## What is online safety?

There are lots of benefits to being online and using the internet. Parents and carers can:

- ✓ access more information than ever before
- ✓ buy things from online shops or overseas
- ✓ complete day to day transactions like banking
- ✓ access government services

Kids can:

- ✓ get help with schoolwork
- ✓ find information about things
- ✓ connect to friends and family
- ✓ learn about other people and places
- ✓ access entertainment
- ✓ understand new technology

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## Just like risks in the real world, there are risks in the online world too.

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Some online safety risks include:

- 🔊 cyberbullying or trolling
- 🔊 accessing or sharing inappropriate information
- 🔊 unwanted contact from strangers
- 🔊 sharing personal information
- 🔊 spending too much time online
- 🔊 participating in anti-social behaviour

Online safety is important to consider for everyone who accesses the internet. Kids might not know about the risks, or how to protect themselves. The whole family and community play an important role in keeping kids safe online, including aunts, uncles and grandparents.

## What about social media and gaming?

Social media can be a great way to stay in touch and find new friends online. For many teenagers and youth, their online profile is an important part of their social status and a huge part of their online world.

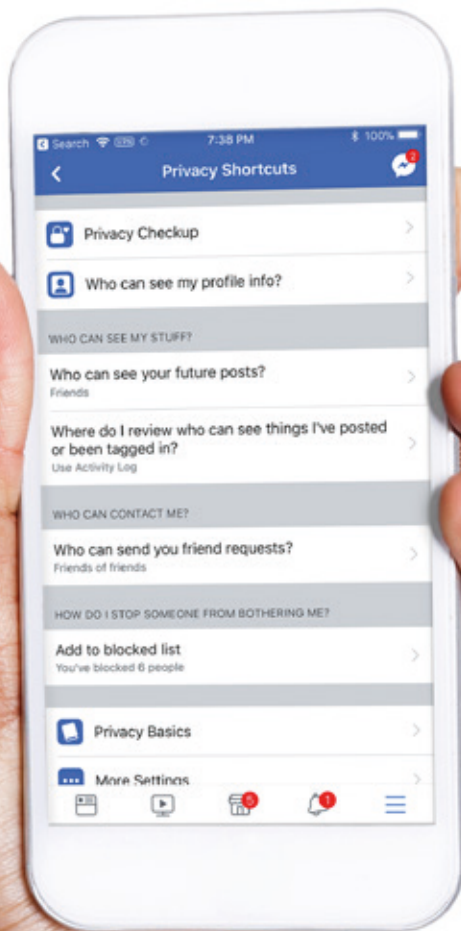
Many parents feel like they can't keep up with the different types of social media young people use. Social media includes any website or app that allows people to interact online. You can share photos, chat to people and share information about what you have been up to. Some online games let you play or talk with other people online as well.

- 📘 Facebook/Messenger
- 📞 WhatsApp
- 📺 YouTube
- 👤 Snapchat
- 📷 Instagram
- 🐦 Twitter
- 📞 Skype or FaceTime
- 🎮 Minecraft, Fortnite and other online games

Most social media services ask you to create an account. Accounts can generally be set to public or private. When an account is set to public, anyone can see what you post, anywhere in the world.



Setting accounts to private is the best way to protect your privacy and safety online. It means that you are in control of who can see what you post. To find out more about how you can protect your privacy on each service visit [eSafety.gov.au/eSafetyguide](https://www.esafety.gov.au/eSafetyguide)



# The big issues

## Inappropriate content

Kids can accidentally see inappropriate content online. This could include violent, offensive or sexual material that could be confusing or distressing, especially for young kids. Sometimes, if kids are using an adult's device, they may come across material that they shouldn't see. This can sometimes happen when parents or carers let children use their phones or tablets.

Older kids and teenagers may be more curious and actively seek out pornography online. For them, the risk is that exposure to graphic, violent or misleading messages about sexual practices and gender stereotypes could give them the wrong idea about sex and intimate relationships.

Other types of inappropriate content online can include violence, racism or child sexual abuse material. You can report inappropriate content you see online, visit [eSafety.gov.au/report-abuse](https://www.esafety.gov.au/report-abuse)

## What can I do?



### Start the chat

Talk with kids about what is OK to look at online and what is not. It could be similar to the rules you have about what they can watch on TV. Let them know they can talk to you if they see something they don't like online.



### Set rules

Make sure kids use the internet in common areas like the lounge room — this means they are less likely to access inappropriate content. If it appears accidentally, especially for young kids, you can stop it.



### Restrict access

Many devices have parental control settings to help reduce the risk of kids accessing content that is not appropriate for their age. If kids are sharing devices belonging to other people, especially older people, these parental controls might not be on.



## Learn by example

Jake wants to watch YouTube videos, but he doesn't have his own phone. He asks his uncle, can I use your phone? His uncle gives him his phone. Jake goes onto YouTube to search videos, but the first one that pops up is a violent video his uncle had been watching. Scared, Jake runs back to his uncle to show him what he has seen. His uncle wants to make sure this doesn't happen again and says Jake did the right thing by telling him.

# Cyberbullying and trolling

Cyberbullying is when people use technology or the internet to hurt or shame others. In the school yard, bullying is not OK, and it is no different online. Cyberbullying can impact kids even while they are in the safety of their own home, or anytime they have their phone or go online. Sometimes it can be public, where other people can see the posts, or it could be private, sent only to the victim.

Cyberbullying behaviour may include:

- abusive texts and emails
- hurtful messages, images or videos
- imitating others online
- excluding others online
- humiliating others online
- nasty online gossip and chat

Some kids may not want to tell their parents if they are being bullied. They worry they might not be able to keep their device or go online anymore.

Kids can also feel like they can't escape. Online bullying can continue outside of school hours, on weekends and at home.

Trolling is when someone abuses or harasses others online for 'fun'. People who do this are called trolls. Often they don't use their real name, so the person they target can't find out who they are.



**You can help kids block or unfriend a person if they are upsetting them. This will stop the person from being able to contact them.**

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## How can I help?



### Start the chat

As a parent or carer, you can help kids by talking with them about how to stay safe online. Help them to understand how to identify cyberbullying or trolling, in case it happens to them. There are tools, tips and advice to help you, visit [eSafety.gov.au](https://www.esafety.gov.au)



### Report it

Each social media service has ways to report content that breaks the rules. You can also take a screenshot or photo, so that even if it is deleted or removed later, you have a record. After you have reported it to the social media service you can also make a report to the eSafety Commissioner visit, [eSafety.gov.au/report-abuse](https://www.esafety.gov.au/report-abuse)



### Seek further support

Kids Helpline is a free, confidential online and phone counselling service for young people. It is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week on 1800 55 1800.



**Tips from other  
parents, carers  
and educators**

## Lyn and Chris Cavanagh

The Cavanaghs say talking to their kids about how to stay safe online is essential. Parents Lyn and Chris are well aware of the potential dangers of their children accessing the internet and online content.

They decided to start the chat about online safety with their children, to help equip them with the skills to use the internet safely.

“We started to talk to our kids about online safety when they started school. For our eldest, we talked

to her about how the internet might not always be a safe environment. We always make sure that she understands that there are responsibilities for using the internet,” says Lyn.

“We talk about things like, if a stranger or someone she knows asks for her address or phone number, she’s not to give it out.”

“People can manipulate the systems and ask for their names and addresses and personal information. So, we make sure that there’s no way

that other people can contact them online, and that if they do, the kids know to come and talk to us,” says Chris.

Lyn and Chris say the **eSafety Commissioner website** is a good resource to help.

“As parents, we really appreciate that there’s a place where we can go to get information and make sure the apps that they’re using are safe to use and child friendly,” says Lyn.



# Sexting or sending nudes

Sexting or sending nudes is sending sexual photos, messages or videos to another person. Nudes are generally sent using a mobile phone but can also include online posts or sharing using an app.

This can seem like innocent fun or flirting for young people. It may be seen as a joke, but can have serious consequences.

It is important to remind kids that once they send a nude image it is impossible to control who sees it. Sometimes nudes can be shared among friends or end up on social media or online. Accidents can also happen — for example, if nudes are saved on a phone that is borrowed, sold or stolen.

## What can I do?



### Start the chat

Talk with kids about what could happen and how they might feel if something went wrong. Having sexual images of them online could impact them later in life, like getting a job.



### Report to eSafety

If the material has been posted online, report it to eSafety and they can help to get the image removed. Remind kids that if they receive this type of content from someone else, they should tell an adult and delete it.



### Contact your local police

If you feel sexting activity could be illegal, such as between an adult and a child, contact your local police.

You're deadly!



Send me a nude?



## Learn by example

Jacinta sent a topless photo to her boyfriend as a dare from her friends. But when her boyfriend opened the picture, he was with a group of mates at football. The boys grabbed his phone and posted the picture online sharing it with their friends.

The next day at school, Jacinta walked into class and everyone was pointing and laughing. She didn't know what they were laughing at but she felt embarrassed.

Later, her friends told her that they'd seen her picture online. She was not sure what to do so she spoke to her teacher about what had happened. She didn't want to tell her parents in case she got into trouble.

Jacinta's teacher helped her to make a report to eSafety who had the image removed. The teacher also talked to her about making good decisions about what to share online. By speaking to a trusted adult early, Jacinta was able to stop the image being spread any further.

## Unwanted contact and online grooming

Kids can communicate with people they don't know or have not met in real life. Strangers can contact any account that is not set to private.

Because you can't see the person who you are chatting with online, people can pretend to be someone else. For example, someone who says they are a 10-year-old girl could actually be a 40-year-old man. This can be unsafe for a child who might trust that someone is who they say they are. Kids may also welcome the online friendship at the start.

Sometimes unwanted contact may be from someone they know, but it is still important that they raise this if they feel uncomfortable.

It is illegal for an adult to make online contact with a child under the age of 16 for a sexual purpose. This is called online grooming.

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**Sometimes groomers will try to relate to the person they are targeting by liking the same things or pretending to have a shared interest. Kids can be led into a false sense of trust with someone who may cause them harm.**

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## What can I do?



### Start the chat

Talk with kids about being careful with people they chat and message with online and not meeting 'online friends' in person. Encourage kids to tell you or another adult if they feel unsafe. Reassure them that they won't be in trouble if they tell you.



### Check settings

Help kids report and block the contact or remove unwanted people from their account or friends list. You should also check the account settings and make sure they are set to private. If a stranger has been able to contact the child, their account may not be private.



### Report it

You can report abuse to your local police. It is also a good idea to take a screen shot or photo to assist in tracking the person. If you believe a child is in immediate danger, contact your local police station or call Triple Zero (000).



**Tips from other  
parents, carers  
and educators**

## John Paul Janke

For John Paul Janke, a Canberra father to four young boys, keeping up with what his boys do online is important.

“As parents, we tend to give devices to our kids to keep them entertained. But we actually need to be aware of what the cost of that could be, and how dangerous that

could be to the safety of our children,” John Paul said.

“I try to be aware of all the things they’re using. They play a lot on their gaming consoles so I keep across what games they’re playing. I look at the various instances in those games that allow them to play with the public, versus privately.

“You’re inviting the world into your house, so you’ve got to be across the various platforms, and the things they play. You’ve got to moderate their engagement with the world.

“In our house, we talk about what platforms we use, so there are no surprises,” says John Paul.

Hey, let's play. Are you in your bedroom?

Don't tell your mum and dad.



## Learn by example

Billy and Josie play a game called Fortnite on their devices. It connects players online. While they are playing, a message pops up, saying 'hey Cuz, can I play?' They think it's probably someone they know from school, so they accept and the user enters their game. Now that user can talk to them through the microphone and he keeps asking where they live and what school they go to. He sounds much older than them, they don't know who he is or why he is asking them these questions. They start to feel a bit uncertain about letting him into their game.

Billy and Josie call out for Auntie, to help — they don't know how to remove the user from their game. Auntie isn't sure either, but she visits [eSafety.gov.au](https://www.esafety.gov.au) and looks up the game and finds a way to contact the game's hotline. They help Auntie remove the user and check the privacy settings so strangers can't contact Billy and Josie anymore.

## Spending too much time online

There is no right or wrong amount of screen time. But it is important that children learn and play in the real world, as well as online. Think about their screen use and whether it is impacting on their overall health and wellbeing.

Is online time getting in the way of sleep and exercise? Is it stopping time with family and friends? Is being online affecting school work? If it is then you should try to balance their time online and offline.

## How can I help?



### Start the chat

Talk with kids about how much time they spend online and help them understand why a break is good.



### Set limits

Have rules about when playing or being online is OK. It might be less for younger kids, or more on weekends. You can access parental controls on devices to help monitor this.



### Get involved

Spend time online with kids. Ask them to show you the game they are playing or help them to look up information for school projects.





**There is no right or wrong amount of screen time. But it is important that children learn and play in the real world, as well as online.**



**Tips from other  
parents, carers  
and educators**

## Starting the Chat with teens, key to online safety

Many different mentoring programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are playing their part in helping to set positive role models for teenagers as they navigate life, including online.

The Stars Foundation, provides a mentoring program for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander girls. Participants work closely with their mentor to develop a holistic plan to make proactive choices for their future.

Darwin program coordinator, Kylie Duggan,

says helping the students understand online risks is a key part of the mentoring role.

“As a mentor for the young girls, my biggest worry is the girls not thinking before they post, or not realising the impact it could have on their lives forever. Images on the internet last forever, videos last forever. And if you don’t think before you act it can be very costly,” says Kylie.

Seeing the need to protect their participants’ online safety as well as their physical safety, the

program mentors talk with the girls about ways to stay safe online.

“We help the girls stay safe online by constantly checking in with them, daily. We give them advice about the appropriate steps to take and how to remove things if possible. Letting others know that it’s not appropriate to post those things and prompting our students about the way to do the right things online is an important part of our program.”



# Help and resources

Support is available to help you keep our mob safe online.

## eSafety Commissioner

Information and resources are available to help parents and kids stay safe online. It includes videos, games, support, and research-based information, and everything is free of charge. For more information, please visit [eSafety.gov.au](https://esafety.gov.au)

## School support

Many schools have ways to help support kids online. They can help manage issues like cyberbullying, sexting and other online concerns. You can talk to a child's school or teacher for help.

## Kids Helpline

Kids Helpline provides free, confidential online counselling for children and young people. You can talk to Kids Helpline about experiences online. Visit [kidshelpline.com.au](https://kidshelpline.com.au) or phone 1800 55 1800.

## eHeadspace

eHeadspace is a confidential, free and secure service for people aged 12 to 25 and their family. You can chat, email or speak on the phone with a qualified youth mental health professional. For more information visit [eheadspace.org.au](https://eheadspace.org.au)

## Parentline

Each state or territory has a Parentline that offers counselling, information and a referral service. Opening hours vary by state.

**Parentline** (Queensland and Northern Territory) 1300 30 1300

**Parentline** (Victoria) 13 22 89

**Parentline** (New South Wales) 1300 1300 52

**Parent Helpline** (South Australia) 1300 364 100

**Parentline** (Australian Capital Territory) 02 6287 3833

**Parent Line** (Tasmania) 1300 808 178

**Parenting WA Line** (Western Australia) 08 6279 1200 or 1800 654 432

## Lifeline

Lifeline provides free 24-hour crisis counselling and information about support services. Visit [Lifeline.org.au](https://lifeline.org.au) or phone 13 11 14.

## Police

If you have serious concerns about a child's safety contact your local police, or ring Triple 000 in an emergency.

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For tools, tips and advice  
visit [eSafety.gov.au](https://www.esafety.gov.au)

