



# ONLINE SAFETY SUPPORTING SAFE & RESPONSIBLE USE

## PARENTS AND CARERS GUIDE

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This information is for parents and carers so they can help their children become safe and responsible users of digital technology.

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Children and young people benefit from safe and positive use of digital technology. It is used by children and young people for learning, connecting with family and friends, self-expression, play and creating.

Children and young people need support and education to become responsible users of digital technology. They benefit when supported by trusted adults and friends to develop skills and knowledge about the digital world. Children and young people also need opportunities to put their developing skills and knowledge into practice.

### **Developing online skills and knowledge supports children and young people to:**

- have more positive online experiences
- develop digital skills for learning and future employment
- build positive online social connections
- learn to be an active and responsible member of an online community
- avoid online risks
- learn how to manage online interactions
- know how to get help if things go wrong.

Here are some tips for you to support your child to become a safe and responsible user of digital technology. Start teaching early, according to your child's age and stage of development.

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### **Build children's digital skills**

Having good digital skills and knowledge will help your child to be safer online.

Digital skills include knowing how to:

#### **Use technology to keep safe**

For example:

- use filters and privacy functions
- know how to report and block harmful content and people
- download and use age-appropriate programs, games and apps
- use child friendly search engines and filters
- protect against viruses.

## Safely navigate the online world

For example:

- search for information and find what you are looking for
- evaluate and think critically about what you find (for example, what's real and fake)
- understand how information can be collected, stored and used.

## Interact safely with others

For example:

- understand different social connections (for example, trusted friend, someone you know online, online community member, stranger)
- safely manage online relationships
- be part of an online group or community
- manage your online reputation
- avoid, disengage or address cyberbullying when seen
- be creative and share quality content.

Good sources of information for parents and carers about being online include:

- eSafety  
[www.esafety.gov.au](http://www.esafety.gov.au)
- Raising Children Network  
[www.raisingchildren.net.au](http://www.raisingchildren.net.au)
- NSW Department of Education Digital Citizenship - parents  
[www.digitalcitizenship.nsw.edu.au](http://www.digitalcitizenship.nsw.edu.au)
- Libraries and councils may provide free adult sessions on learning to use digital technology.

## Importantly, build your own digital skills and knowledge.

When you understand more about the digital world, you are in a better position to support and guide your child.

## Develop shared attitudes about online behaviour

Parents and carers play a big role in helping their child become good online citizens. Being a good online citizen means your child uses digital technology in responsible ways.

## Talk with your child about:

- how to show respect to others online
- if someone is disrespectful to them, what can they do
- what information about others is OK to share online
- online behaviours that may be illegal.

## Like all things, balance is important.

### Support your child to:

- be involved in offline activities (for example, sport, clubs and community events)
- have screen free time during the day, and especially before bed
- be physically active
- stay connected with family and friends offline, as well as online.

## Make a family agreement about digital technology use

Plan how everyone in the family will use digital technology in safe and balanced ways.

### As a family, talk about:

- your expectations about how digital technology and devices are used
- your family values (for example, looking out for each other, helping, being kind)
- online benefits, risks and dangers
- opportunities for learning, creating and fun.

### You may want to make family rules about:

- how to talk to friends, family and others online
- who to talk to online and who not to
- sharing personal information
- when and where to use digital technology
- using privacy settings
- online shopping
- time limits
- what sites, apps and games are OK to use
- what to do if something goes wrong or they have worries
- how online behaviour will be monitored.

Examples of family agreements can be found at eSafety.

Ensure your child has support so they can get it right. Problems will happen. Problems can be used as opportunities for learning.

Talk with your child about fair consequences for misuse of digital technology. If there is a problem, find out why things went wrong. Remind them of the reasons why the behaviour is not OK. Work out a solution together and given them opportunities to get it right.

Most schools have school rules about digital technology use. Having similar rules between home and school can make it easier for your child to follow them. Make contact with your school and ask for a copy of their rules.

### **Parental controls**

Many families use parental controls on home devices. This may mean using filters, blockers and monitoring technology. Talk with your child about how and when you will use parental controls. Explain they are being used to keep people safe online.

It's important to remember that parental controls do not make being online 100% safe. Always use additional strategies with your child.

### **Role model your family digital technology agreement**

Get the best results from your family agreement by getting everyone in the family involved. Put your family agreement in a place which can be easily seen. This acts as a reminder for everyone.

One way children and young people learn is by watching others. Lead by example and role model the behaviours you want to see in your child.

For example:

- Before sharing an image of your child on social media, check in with them to make sure it's OK to share.
- When attending school events and taking photos of your child with their friends, check in prior to sharing on social media with your child and their friends. This includes checking in with the parents / carers of your child's friends.

These are ways you can demonstrate use of your family digital technology agreement. You are also teaching your child to be careful in sharing personal information and how to be respectful online.



## **Be interested and involved**

Be interested and involved in your child's online and offline life. This makes it easier for your child to talk with you about what they are seeing and doing. This includes anything that might be worrying them.

If they feel that you are engaged and interested in them, they are much more likely to come to you when things go wrong.

Together with your child, you can:

### **Share online experiences:**

- ask questions, be curious and go online together
- practice online skills. For example:
  - share photos together
  - comment on each other's posts
  - play online games together
- find and explore together age appropriate sites, games and apps that match their interests.

### **Build and practice positive relationships:**

- encourage online sharing and communication with known friends, trusted adults and family members
- encourage them to talk to trusted adults, family members and friends about what they are doing and seeing online
- talk often about healthy and respectful relationships that occur online and offline.

### **Talk together:**

- talk about your family values and what these look like online and offline
- talk to your child in a balanced way about being online. This involves talking about the good, not so good and bad things. Find out what they like about being online, don't like and are worried about?

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## Resources

### **Bullying. No Way!**

Online advice for families about preventing and responding to bullying.  
[www.bullyingnoway.gov.au](http://www.bullyingnoway.gov.au)

### **eSafety Commissioner**

Online advice for families about online safety.  
[www.esafety.gov.au](http://www.esafety.gov.au)

### **Kids Helpline**

Phone and online counselling service for people aged 5 - 25.  
1800 55 1800 Anytime. Any reason.  
[www.kidshelpline.com.au](http://www.kidshelpline.com.au)  
Online information for families.

### **Headspace**

Phone and online support and counselling service for people aged 12 - 25.  
1800 650 890 mental health and wellbeing support.  
[www.headspace.org.au](http://www.headspace.org.au)  
Online and phone information for families.

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## Other parent and carer guides

Online safety: talking with your child about online risks.

Online safety: what to do when your child has an online problem.

[www.education.sa.gov.au](http://www.education.sa.gov.au)

