

## Guide 2:

# Using social media safely

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Social media is an important and popular way to stay in touch with family and friends. It is a way for you to get support and stay connected to people you trust and who are on your side. However, it can also be mis-used by your current or former partner to abuse, humiliate and control you.

### Safety tips

To keep using social media safely, you need to remember the following tips:

- **Check the privacy settings** for all your online accounts, including your children's accounts. Sometimes software updates can change your privacy settings, making your information more public than you would like, so you will need to check them regularly.
- **Be very careful who you friend, and who you accept as a friend online**, and what information you share with them.
- **Set your own rules** about what you post. Do not post personal details or information that could identify you or reveal your location – this information could put you at risk or be used against you or your family, especially in court proceedings.
- **Turn off location services** on all your accounts.
- **Do not check-in or tag yourself** or your children. Ask your friends and family not to tag you or check you in either. You can adjust your settings to prevent other people checking you in or tagging you without your approval.



### Have you been abused online?

Being harassed or abused online can be very upsetting, whether you know the person or not. Some people may do this simply for amusement. Other people may disagree strongly with your views so they will attack you to try to silence, humiliate or punish you.

**While everyone has the right to an opinion, no one has the right to attack, harass or threaten someone else.**

If you are experiencing this kind of online abuse:

- **Try not to respond** to online abuse. It is unlikely that the person being abusive will listen to you and they may escalate the tactics they are using to try and control you.
- **Record and keep evidence** of the abuse with screenshots or take a photo with your phone, if it is safe to do so. Keep all evidence in a safe, private place or consider sending it to a friend for safe keeping.

- **Report the abuse** to the social media service it was posted on. Social media services are required to remove cyber-bullying material. Most social media services will have a Help or Report section on their site.
- **Block the person posting** the abuse if possible. That way you will no longer see their posts and they will not be able to contact you.
- **Talk to a trusted friend** about what you are experiencing. It is a good to share your concerns with those who care about you. You do not have to cope with this on your own or keep it a secret.

### Have you experienced abuse through technology from your current or former partner?

**Remember! You know your situation best. Only follow the steps that you feel confident will keep you safe.**

If a current or former partner is abusing you through technology:

- **Turn location services off** in the settings of all devices you use and check the privacy settings on all your social media accounts. Do the same with your children's devices and accounts.
- **Limit social media posts** until you feel safer. If you think that not posting will make the person abusing you suspicious, then continue posting as you would normally but without location information or anything that might be a trigger for them.
- **Do not post photos or videos** that show your location or the location of your children. Abusers may identify patterns in your daily routine and use them to follow you.
- **Talk to your children** about the importance of not posting location information online. Include them in discussions

about how to stay safe so they can go online safely too.

- **Contact police** straightaway if there are direct threats being made to you or your children.
- **Record and keep evidence** of the abuse with screenshots or take a photo with your phone. Keep the evidence in a safe, private place and consider sending it to a friend for safe keeping.

### Get help

Remember! Abuse through technology is not OK and not your fault. Help is available.

If you are feeling unsafe, contact police and emergency services at **Triple Zero (000)** straight away.

If you do not speak English, call **Triple Zero (000)** from a fixed line and ask for 'Police', 'Fire', or 'Ambulance'. Once connected you need to stay on the line and an interpreter will be organised.

If this is not an emergency, you should call or visit your local police station.

For further help, contact **1800RESPECT** from a safe phone or device as soon as possible: **1800 737 732**

[1800respect.org.au](https://1800respect.org.au)

**1800RESPECT** offers 24-hour, free and confidential safety planning, counselling and support for all types of abuse, including family abuse and sexual abuse. They can also connect you to other services in your area. Go to [1800respect.org.au/languages/](https://1800respect.org.au/languages/) for more information, advice and videos in other languages.