

Tips for parent/carer education and engagement

eSafety Toolkit for Schools

Creating safer online environments

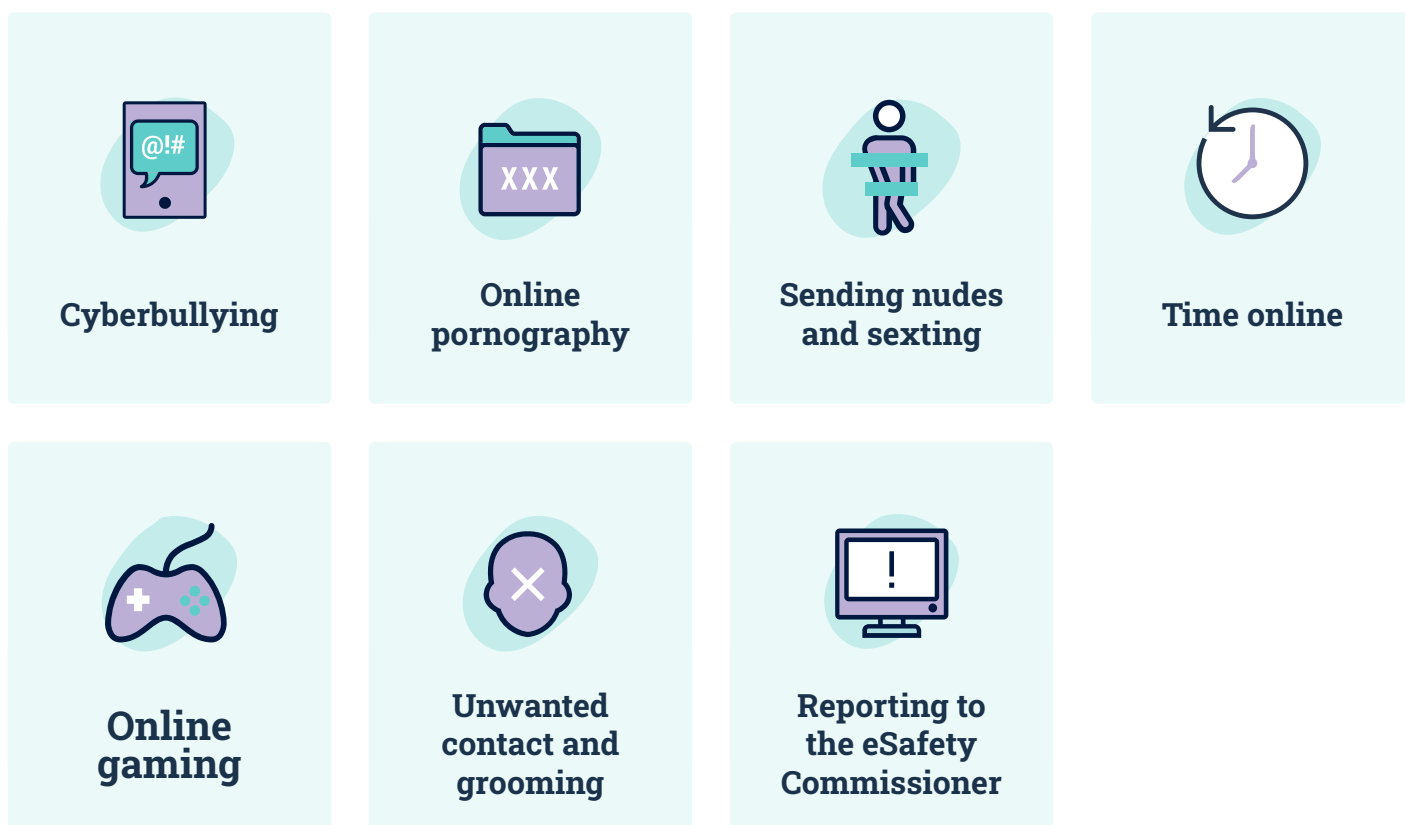


This resource provides a series of snapshots about common online safety issues, which can be shared with parents and carers. The snapshots are designed to be used in school newsletters, printed individually or shared as social media posts.

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The snapshots are based on the [eSafety Parents Guide](#) and cover:



The [eSafety Commissioner's blogs](#) and other content on the [eSafety Parents website](#) can also be shared with the broader school community.

Before sharing any of the snapshots, schools are encouraged to consider the following:

Timing and frequency:	Plan the best time and frequency for sharing content in order to communicate with parents and carers most effectively. Time the release of messages with key dates (e.g. start of year, end of year, Safer Internet Day or parent/teacher interviews). It's important to keep your audience engaged through regular targeted and/or topical messages.
Sensitivities:	Consider if any critical incidents have occurred in line with the key messages in each snapshot. How can you share the messages with parents/carers in a way that is sensitive to the students involved in the incident — ensuring they are not identified?
Channels:	Choose the right combination of channels to share content with your target audiences (e.g. your school newsletter, website, app, social media channels and/or parent-teacher meetings).
Evaluation:	Consider how you might assess whether the communication has been effective. You can use eSafety's student voice, parent and carer, and educators and school support staff surveys annually to provide you with a good baseline.



Cyberbullying

I think my child is being bullied

Your child may not tell you if they are experiencing bullying behaviour online because of a fear it might make things worse for them or they may lose access to their devices and the internet.

Signs to watch for:

- being upset after using the internet or their mobile phone
- changes in personality, becoming more withdrawn,
- anxious, sad or angry
- appearing more lonely or distressed
- unexpected changes in friendship groups
- a decline in their school work
- changes in their sleep patterns
- avoidance of school or clubs
- a decline in their physical health
- becoming secretive about their online activities and mobile phone use

What can I do?

Talk to your child about cyberbullying before it happens. Together you can work out strategies to address any potential issues and reassure them you will be there to support them.

If your child is experiencing cyberbullying:

- **Listen, think, stay calm** — talk to them about what happened, try to remain open and non-judgemental, ask them how they feel and ensure they feel heard.
- **Collect evidence** — it is a good idea to collect evidence, such as screenshots, of the bullying behaviour, in case you need to report it later on.
- **Block and manage contact with others** — advise your child not to respond to bullying messages and help your child block or unfriend the person sending the messages.
- **Report to site or service** — many social media services, games, apps and websites allow you to report abusive content and request that it is removed.
- **Report to eSafety** — if serious cyberbullying is affecting your child and you need help to get the material removed from a social media service or other platform you can make a cyberbullying report to us.
- **Get help and support** — check in with your child regularly about how they are feeling. If you notice any changes that concern you, get help through a counselling or online support service.
- You can also watch our short 12-minute video on [cyberbullying and online drama](#).

Further tips and advice for parents/carers on cyberbullying are available on [eSafety's website](#).



Online pornography

How can I protect my child?

- **Set some 'house rules'** — discuss the issue with all siblings, and talk about where and when it is OK to use computers and devices.
- **Stay engaged** — talking regularly and openly with your child about what they are doing online will help build trust.
- **Use the available technology** — take advantage of the parental controls available on devices, and ensure the 'safe search' mode is enabled on browsers.
- **Build resilience** — talking about sexualised content can help young people process what they come across

online and reinforce the importance of consent and respectful relationships.

- **Consider raising the subject of pornography yourself** — parenting experts recommend starting the conversation early (by the time they are around 9 years old) to help protect them from the potential impacts of coming across it accidentally. Every child is different, so decide when you think it is right to raise the subject with your child
- **Take a long-term view** — reinforce that if they do see something they do not understand, they can come and ask you about it.

What can I do if my child has found pornography online

- **Stay calm** — thank them for being brave enough to let you know and reassure them that you will sort it out together.
- **Listen, assess, pause** — ask them how they found it, where it happened, who (if anyone) showed it to them and how they felt when they saw it. Resist the urge to give them a lecture.
- **Reassure your child they are not in trouble** — try not to remove your child's device or online access completely, as they will see it as punishment.

- **Be sensitive to how they feel** — it is important to talk with your child about how the content made them feel. Encourage your child to talk to you about any questions they have.
- **Talk about the importance of consent and respect in relationships** — talk about the importance of always having permission to touch, hug, or kiss another person.

Further tips and advice about how to talk to your child about online pornography, depending on their age, are available on [eSafety's website](https://www.esafety.gov.au/education).



Sending nudes and sexting

How can I minimise the risks to my child?

- **Talk early, talk often** — have an age-appropriate chat with them about sending nudes. Consider asking questions using real-life examples like, 'Do you think it was right for him (or her) to share that photo after they broke up?'
- **Promote self-confidence and that it is OK to say 'no'** — let them know that they don't have to give in to peer pressure or send intimate images just because others do.
- **Teach them about consent and respectful relationships** — help them understand the impact of sharing intimate images of others and that they are breaking someone's trust when they do this.
- **Talk about the risks** — what can go wrong and the legal issues. Remind them that once an image is shared, it is almost impossible to get it back or control how it is shared.

What can I do when things go wrong?

- **Stay calm and open** — reassure them that they are not alone and you will work through this together.
- **Listen, and act fast** — there can be legal issues when intimate images of children are shared. You can report image-based abuse to eSafety. We can help to get intimate images removed and, in some cases, take action against the person who shared it. See more detailed advice on what to do and how to make a report on our website. You can also report the image to the site or service it was posted on.
- **Get help and support** — look after your child's wellbeing and encourage them to speak with a professional counselling or support service.
- You can also watch our short 7-minute video on [online sexual harassment and image-based abuse](#).

Further tips and advice for parents/carers on sending nudes and sexting, are available on [eSafety's website](#).



Time online

How much is too much?

There is no magic figure. The right amount of screen time can depend on a range of factors like your child's age and maturity, the kind of content they are consuming, their learning needs and your family routine.

It can be easy to focus only on the clock, but the quality and nature of what they are doing online, and your involvement, are just as important.

Help your child manage their online time

- **Stay engaged and encourage balance** — keep an eye on the games, apps and devices your child uses by sharing screen time with them. Help them stay aware of their important offline activities, like hobbies and sports.
- **Create a plan** — involve your child in creating a family plan that balances time spent sitting in front of screens, with a variety of offline activities.
- **Use the available technologies** — parental controls and tools to monitor online time allow you to measure and set time limits on device use or internet access. Be honest and open with your children about why you want to use these technologies.
- For more advice and resources to help support your child to look after their mental wellbeing on social media and apps, or understand parental controls, watch our short 4-minute video on [digital technologies and mental health](#) or our 6-minute video on [parental controls](#).

Signs to watch for:

- less interest in social activities like meeting friends or playing sport
- not doing so well at school
- tiredness, sleep disturbance, headaches, eye strain
- changes in eating patterns
- reduced personal hygiene
- obsession with particular websites or games
- extreme anger when being asked to take a break from online activity
- appearing anxious or irritable when away from the computer
- becoming withdrawn from friends and family

Further tips and advice for parents/carers on managing time online are available on [eSafety's website](#).



Online gaming

What are the benefits and risks?

Many games can improve your child's coordination problem-solving and multi-tasking skills, as well as help build social skills through online interactivity with other players. But it is important to understand what might go wrong.

Risks of online gaming include:

- spending too much time gaming, which can have negative impacts on your child's health, ability to study, and social and emotional wellbeing
- bullying and grooming through online or in-game chat
- games with gambling-like elements can normalise gambling for young people
- costs of in-game spending

How to create a safer gaming environment for your child

- Prepare — locate the computer or games console in an open area of your home and use available parental controls and safety features for devices, browsers and apps.
- Build good habits — help your child protect their personal information by using a screen name that does not reveal their real name. Teach them not to click on links provided by strangers, like 'cheat' programs to help with game play, which can contain viruses or malware.
- Agree on strategies to help them switch off — like a timer that signals game time is nearly over, with consequences for not switching off.
- Stay involved — talk regularly with your child about their gaming interests and who they play with online. Play alongside your child to get a better sense of how they are handling their personal information and who they are communicating with.
- Be aware of what they are playing — games vary in their level of violent or sexual content, and may contain themes, language and images that are unsuitable for your child.
- Empower your child — wherever possible, help them make wise decisions for themselves, rather than tell them what to do. Try to provide them with strategies for dealing with negative online experiences that will build their confidence and resilience .
- For more advice about the different parental controls available and which settings are best suited to their family, watch our 6-minute video on parental controls.

Further tips and advice for parents/carers on gaming are available on [eSafety's website](https://www.esafety.gov.au).



Unwanted contact and grooming

How to deal with unwanted contact

Unwanted contact is any type of online communication that your child finds unpleasant or confronting, or that leads them into a situation where they might do something they regret. This can happen even if they initially welcomed the contact. It can come from strangers, online 'friends' your child has not met face-to-face, or from someone they actually know.

How to deal with unwanted contact

- **Make their accounts private** — suggest that your child makes their social media accounts private or revises their privacy settings regularly.
- **Delete contacts they don't talk to** — ask them to go through all the people who follow them or are friends with them on social media and check that they actually know them.
- **Report and block** — if they receive any unwanted contact from someone they know or a stranger, encourage them to report and block this person on the online service or platform. They can also report to eSafety after reporting to the platform if they continue to receive unwanted contact.
- **Delete requests from strangers** — encourage your child to delete friend or follow requests from people they don't know.

How can I protect my child?

- Stay involved in your child's digital world — keep up-to-date with the sites, apps and online chat services they are using, and explore them together
- Build an open trusting relationship — keep communication open and calm so they know they can come to you when someone is asking them to do something that does not feel right.
- Help your child to protect their privacy — encourage your child to use their privacy settings on social media sites to restrict their online information to known friends only.
- Teach your child to be alert to signs of inappropriate contact — help your child recognise signs that an online 'friend' may be trying to develop an inappropriate relationship, such as asking lots of questions about personal information soon after meeting online, asking which room their computer is in, asking them for favours and doing things in return (abusers often use promises and gifts to gain trust).
- Establish safety guidelines for meeting online 'friends' face-to-face — explain that it is safest to keep online 'friends' online, but that if they do want to meet someone face-to-face they should let you know first. Let them know they should be accompanied by you or another trusted adult.
- What to do if something goes wrong — talk to them without being judgemental or angry and make them feel like they can come to you with anything, without fear of being punished or criticised. Find out what happened and act to protect your child.
- Call the police immediately on Triple Zero (000) if their physical safety is at risk. Report abuse or online grooming to your local police or Crimestoppers.
- Get help and support for your child from a professional counselling service.

Further tips and advice for parents/carers on grooming are available [eSafety's website](https://www.esafety.gov.au).



Reporting to the eSafety commissioner

Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is online behaviour that is seriously threatening, intimidating, harassing or humiliating. We can take action to get serious cyberbullying material removed, and provide advice, support and assistance.



Adult cyber abuse

Adult cyber abuse is online communication to or about a person who is 18 years or over, which is intended to cause them serious harm. We can help get the serious adult cyber abuse material removed, and provide advice, support and assistance.



Image-based abuse

We can help to get the intimate images or video removed and, in some cases, take action against the person who shared it. We can also help with sextortion, or where someone is blackmailing you over your intimate images.



Illegal and harmful content

We investigate complaints from Australian residents and law enforcement agencies about offensive and illegal online content.



Report content to eSafety at [eSafety's website](https://www.esafety.gov.au).