



Let's talk about being **SAFE** online



By Jayneen Sanders in consultation
with the eSafety Commissioner

Illustrated by Jess Racklyeft





Australian Government



Let's Talk About Being Safe Online

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This publication is intended to assist parents and carers and
is intended as a guide only. The contents of *Let's Talk About Being Safe Online*
does not constitute legal advice and should not be relied upon as such.

Enquiries, including requests for hard copies of this book (subject to availability),
are welcome at childrenyouthfamilies@eSafety.gov.au

A message to readers

Hey there!

My name is Julie Inman Grant and I'm Australia's eSafety Commissioner.

My job is to help all Australians stay safe online – especially kids like you.

The internet can be an awesome place to explore, play and connect with friends, but not everyone online is kind and safe, and sometimes things can go wrong.

That's why eSafety is here. We provide education and advice to kids, parents and schools to help everybody stay safe online. Parents and children can report unsafe content to us – such as online bullying – and we even work with tech companies to make apps and websites safer for you.

What matters most to me is that you know how to stay safe online and where to turn if something makes you feel uncomfortable or upset.

This book covers some tricky topics, so it's a good idea to explore it with a trusted adult – someone you feel safe with and can talk to.

I hope you enjoy reading this book and learn some helpful tips along the way!

Julie Inman Grant
eSafety Commissioner

A note for parents and carers

This book is designed to help you and your child (aged 7+) explore online safety together through simple, open conversations. Every child has different levels of online experience, so it's important to support them in having safe and positive interactions, wherever they're at in their journey.

As you read each section, you'll find questions and prompts to encourage your child to share their thoughts, experiences and feelings about being online. These conversations can help build trust, confidence, and a shared understanding of how to stay safe and respectful in digital spaces.

Children may be exposed to inappropriate content from a young age, such as pornography – often by accident – or receive requests for nudes. These experiences can be confusing and upsetting. It's important that your child knows they can come to you if something doesn't feel right.

Look out for the boxes labelled 'For parents and carers'. They include helpful tips and conversation prompts to encourage your child to think about online safety. You don't need to have all the answers – just being open, calm, and curious will help your child feel safe coming to you with questions or concerns.

You might like to start with some gentle questions, such as 'What do you like to do on your devices?' or 'What do you notice about how I use mine?'

As you move through the book, you'll explore a range of topics:

- ★ **Setting up apps and games safely:** Talking about privacy and safety settings and what to do if something doesn't feel right.
- ★ **Creating a Safety Network:** Encouraging your child to think about who they trust and might go to for help.
- ★ **Keeping safe in tricky situations:** Sharing experiences and discussing how to manage common tricky online situations.
- ★ **Consent and sharing:** Exploring what's okay to share, and how to respect someone's 'no'.
- ★ **Handling tricky content:** Letting your child know they can always come to you if they see something upsetting or confusing online.

You don't need to read the whole book at once – feel free to explore the sections at your own pace and come back to topics as needed.

Educating children and families about online safety plays a key role in preventing online harms including child sexual abuse, and this book is a helpful tool to support those important conversations.

Contents

Introduction	4
Using technology safely	8
Safer and unsafe situations online	12
How to keep safe in tricky situations	16
Consent and sharing safely online	20
Tricky content	26
eSafety support for parents and carers	30





We can do some amazing things online!

Every day, my friends and I use phones and devices to talk to our families and each other. We play fun games, watch cool videos together, learn new stuff, and even stay strong and healthy!



Being online
can help me:



feel close to my family,
friends and community



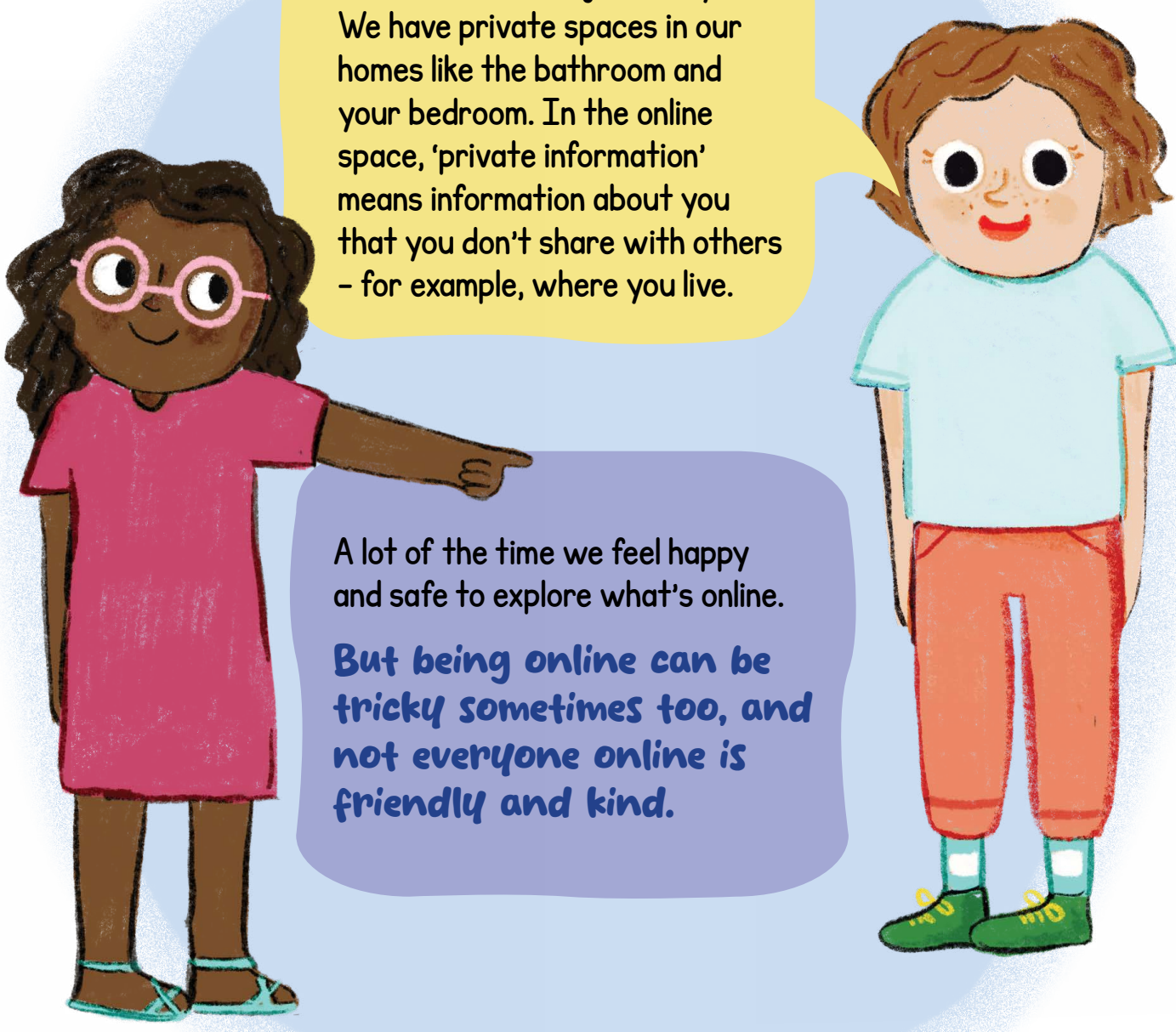
find important information



share my ideas and
what matters to me

Devices and apps should be built to protect you from messages, pictures or people online that may hurt you.

They should also be fun, perfect for your age, and keep your information private*.



***Private** means just for you. We have private spaces in our homes like the bathroom and your bedroom. In the online space, 'private information' means information about you that you don't share with others – for example, where you live.

A lot of the time we feel happy and safe to explore what's online.

But being online can be tricky sometimes too, and not everyone online is friendly and kind.

In this book, you will learn how to keep yourself safer online and know how to get help if something worries you.



For parents and carers

As a trusted adult, your job is to help your child stay safe online and support them if something feels wrong or confusing.

You can help by showing your child how to report anything that makes them feel scared or uncomfortable in an app or game – like someone being mean, or something that just doesn't feel right.

Take a few minutes together to look at the reporting tools in their favourite apps or games. Practising how to use them can help your child feel confident and safe when they're online.

Using technology safely

Okay! On the next pages we will look at things you can do to have fun online and stay safe.



Before you start

Choose a Safety Network.

Your Safety Network is 3 to 5 safe and trusted adults who you can talk to whenever you feel worried or unsafe – online or offline. These adults will listen to you and believe you. They will do their best to help you. Make sure that at least one of these adults is someone who is not in your family – they could be a teacher, coach or Kids Helpline counsellor.

Your Safety Network might change over time as well, and that's okay!



Who will be in your Safety Network?

Remember! It is always
YOUR choice who is in your
Safety Network.

Mrs King
(my teacher)

Mr Casey
(piano teacher)

Mum

Dad

Aunty Jill

Here are some important online safety skills you need before you get started.



Set up your games or apps for safety

When you set up a new app or game with one of your trusted adults, make sure you set your profile to private. This means the information you share is safe and that people you don't know will not be able to contact you online. Talk with your trusted adults about what picture is appropriate to use for your profile.

You can check the location settings on your device and apps with a trusted adult. Sometimes, sharing your location can show people where you live or where you go, so it's important to be careful.



Expect respect and be respectful

Respect means being friendly, kind and taking care with other people's feelings. It also means respecting other people's rights to keep things about themselves private. For example, no one has to post things about themselves or have their pictures or videos shared without their consent*.



***Consent** means asking if something is okay or not okay. It means one person asks for permission, and another person gives permission or they don't.

If someone wants to share a photo or video of you and you don't want them to, you have the right to say 'no' and then tell a trusted adult on your Safety Network what happened. Even if you gave permission before, you can always change your mind.



For parents and carers

Talk with your child about their Safety Network. You might even like to sit down together and draw a picture of the people they select to make it fun and easy to remember.

It's also a great idea to check the safety and privacy settings on your child's favourite games or apps together. As your child grows, their online experiences change too, so it's important to keep those settings up to date to match their age and needs.

Suggested questions:

- ★ Who is in your Safety Network? Why did you choose those people? What makes you feel safe with them?
- ★ Do you know how to check the safety and privacy settings in your apps or games?

Safer and unsafe situations online

After you have set up your device, apps and games with your trusted adult, there are some more important things for you to know.



Early Warning Signs

Sometimes your body might give you a clue that something online isn't quite right. Like feeling sick in your tummy or feeling shaky all over. These kinds of feelings are called your Early Warning Signs*.

*When you feel uncomfortable or unsafe, you might get just one of your Early Warning Signs or you might get many. Here are some of the Early Warning Signs you may get if you feel unsafe.



Talk to an adult in your Safety Network

Sometimes you might feel excited at first, or confused about what is happening. If you ever feel any of your Early Warning Signs you should get help from a trusted adult in your Safety Network as soon as you can. For example, if:



you feel unsure,
uncomfortable or
unsafe online



you receive messages
that make you feel
uncomfortable



someone you are
chatting to online
seems gross, weird or
sus, or doesn't seem to
be telling the truth



someone asks you
to send pictures or
videos of yourself



someone contacts
you online and you
don't know them

Here are some more important things you need to know about being 'safer' and 'unsafe' online.



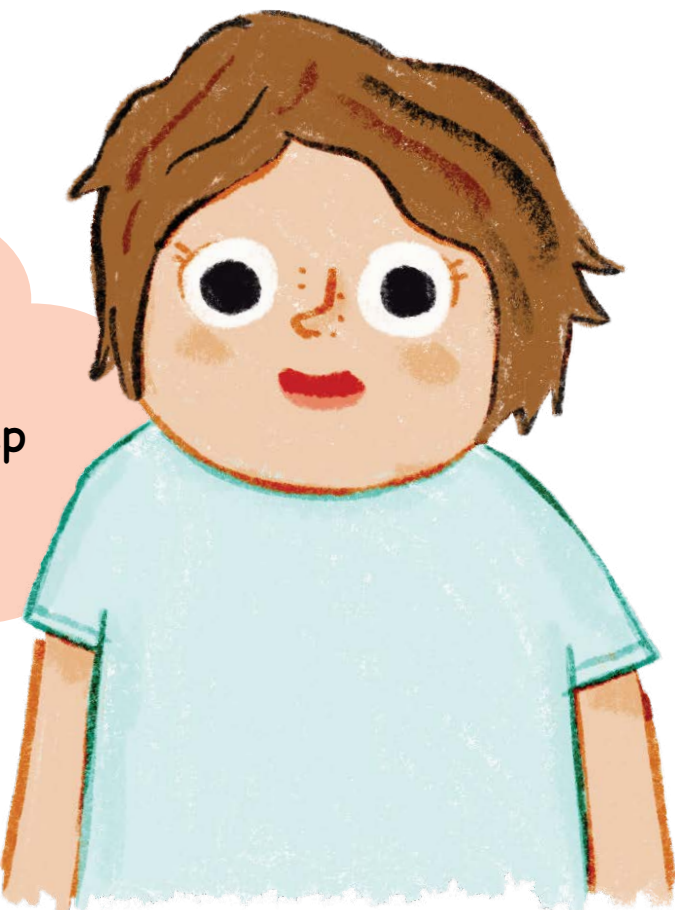
Safer online

- ★ Play games, watch videos or have video calls without headphones on in shared spaces such as the kitchen or lounge room.
- ★ Talk to your trusted adults about who you chat, game or message with.
- ★ Only play games that are designed for kids your age. These are made especially for you.
- ★ Tell a trusted adult if you see a video or photo, or hear a message that makes you feel uncomfortable or unsafe, or if anyone invites you to a place online you haven't been before.



Unsafe online

- ⚠ Someone asking you to keep a secret about things that happen online, or asking you to keep a chat or 'gift' a secret.
- ⚠ Staying in a game chat where other players are saying rude, mean or inappropriate things to you or others.
- ⚠ Going into a private chat or sharing your personal information with someone you first met online.
- ⚠ Someone sending private pictures or asking you to do the same.
- ⚠ Being made to feel scared, embarrassed or pressured to do things online that don't feel okay.
- ⚠ Watching things online that make you feel confused, sad, worried or scared.



What should you do if
someone asks you to keep
a secret online?



For parents and carers

Talk with your child about Early Warning Signs – these are feelings in their body that can tell them something might be wrong. These signs are important, and your child should know they can always ask their Safety Network for help if they feel unsure, uncomfortable or unsafe.

Help your child understand the difference between secrets and surprises, especially in online spaces. You might use a fun example, like planning a surprise move or sneak attack on another team in a game with friends. Surprises like these are short-term and meant to be fun. But secrets are different. They can feel uncomfortable, worrying, or even scary. Sometimes, people online may ask a child to keep a secret to make them feel special or to hide something unsafe.

Let your child know that if anyone asks them to keep a secret, it's important they tell you or another trusted adult right away – especially if it happens online. Reassure them that they'll never be in trouble for speaking up.

Suggested questions:

- ★ Can you give me some examples of what might be a secret and what might be a surprise? You could provide an example to get the conversation started: a surprise might be planning to buy a fun birthday gift, but a secret might be when an adult tells you not to tell your parents about something.

How to keep safe in tricky situations



Let's help Lee manage a tricky online safety situation!

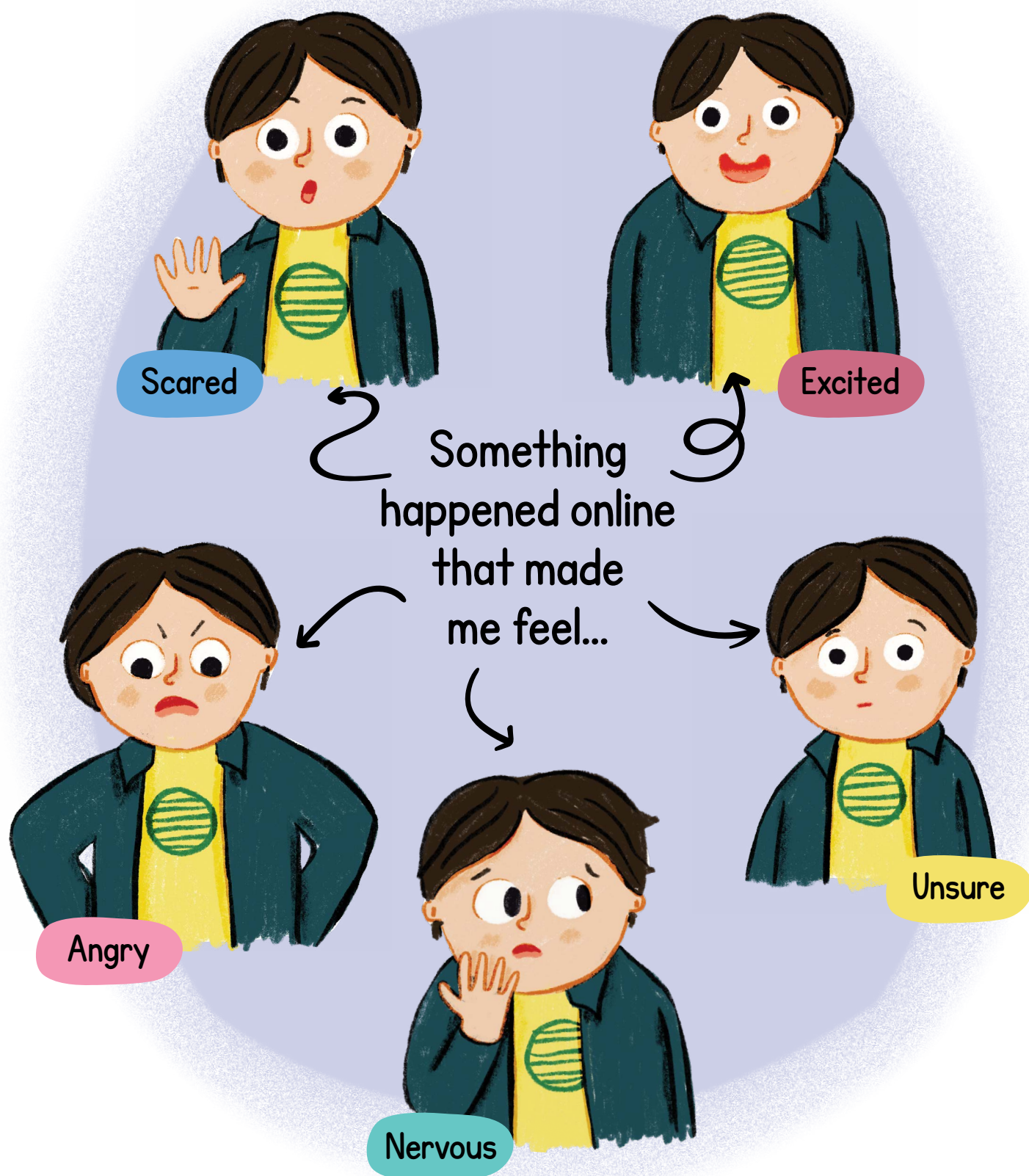
Lee has made some new friends in a game.

He feels good because they all enjoy playing the game together and they sometimes cheer him up if he's having a bad day. Then one of his new friends asks him to chat privately so he can share a special thing from the game. This friend asks him to keep the private chat a secret.

How might Lee feel?
What can Lee do?



When someone online asks you to keep a secret, tell a trusted adult in your Safety Network as soon as you can. You can say...





Sometimes, when you are online, something worrying might happen, but you might feel afraid that you will get into trouble if you tell your parent or carer. For example, you may have been using your device at a time when you weren't supposed to be; and you are **worried** your device will be taken away.

Even if you think you may get into trouble, the safest thing to do is to go to a trusted adult straight away. They will help you manage the tricky situation.

If an adult in your Safety Network can't or won't help you, it's important to keep talking to one of the other trusted adults in your Safety Network for help.



Some things that can help you deal with the tricky situation are:

Ignore the person or block their account

Tell the person to stop contacting you

Shut down the device and go offline

Ask your Safety Network for help



Kids deserve to be safe. It's never your fault when bad things happen online.



For parents and carers

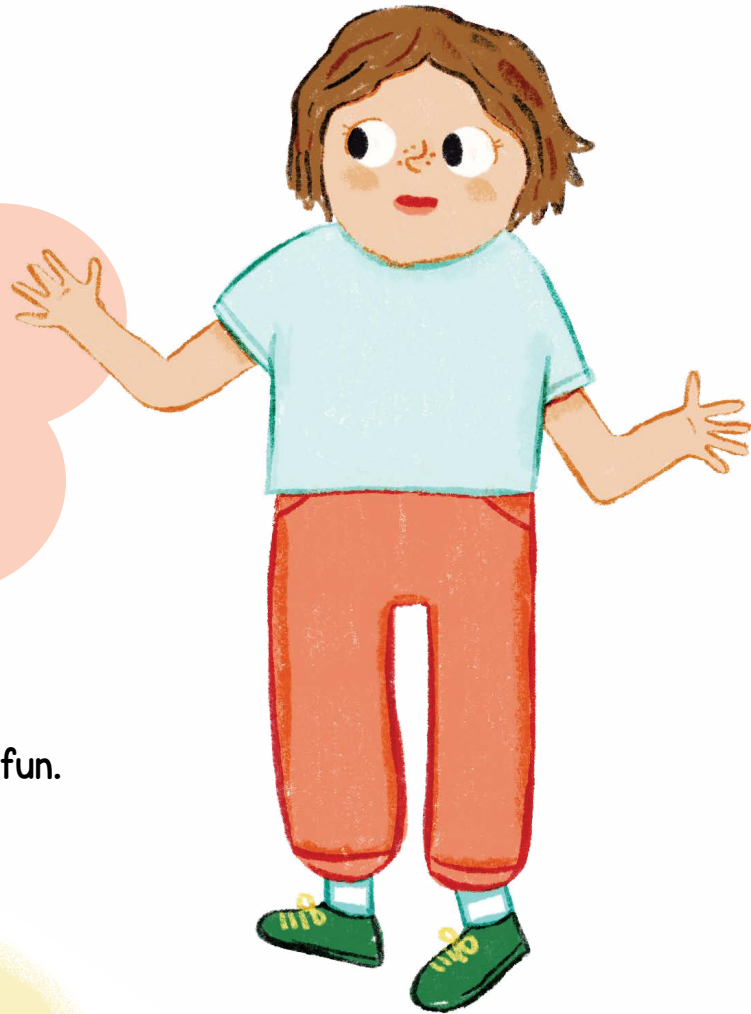
Children may respond to tricky or upsetting situations online in different ways, depending on their personality, cultural background, or family's rules. Let your child know they can always come to you with questions or worries, and that you'll respond without judgement. Reassure them that they won't be in trouble, and that adults in their Safety Network can help report and block unsafe people.

Suggested questions:

- ★ Has something ever happened online that made you feel unsure, uncomfortable or unsafe?
- ★ If that ever happens, how would you like me to help you?

Consent and sharing safely online

Remember! Even if you're chatting online in your living room or bedroom, the online world is **not private**, and things can be shared more than you expect!



Sometimes when you're playing games or chatting online, sharing with a friend can be fun.



Before you share or post things online, it's always a good idea to think about the 'Grandma or Teacher test'! This means asking yourself, 'Would I be happy if my grandma or teacher saw this text, photo or video?' If the answer is 'no', then don't share!

Talk with your trusted adults about what is okay to share about yourself online. For example, you might agree that you can share posts and videos of yourself privately with your family – but you can't post these online.

Personal information* like your address and school should always be kept private.



***Personal information** like your birthday, phone number, where you live and where you go to school is private. This means being careful when sharing photos that show where you live or your school uniform. When you are gaming or having a video chat, you can add or blur your background to prevent anyone seeing your location.

Asking before taking photos and videos of others

People should ask for your consent before sharing anything about you. Even family members! This can include people sharing personal information or pictures of you online.

You have the right to say 'yes' or 'no' to people sharing photos or videos of you online.

When someone takes a picture without asking, it can feel like they have invaded your personal space. So, it's okay to say 'no!'



Keeping safe around photos and videos

No one should ever ask you for private photos or share their private photos with you. They also shouldn't pressure you to do things you don't want to in a video call or chat, or ask you to do anything that makes you feel uncomfortable and unsafe.

Your body is private - it belongs to you.

Your private parts are the parts of your body under your swimsuit.

Other parts of your body might be private as well. For example, for some people their head or their legs might be a private part of their body. These might feel private because of your culture, or maybe you prefer these parts of your body to be private.





What if something gets shared about you?

Sometimes, when we share things online, these things can be shared more widely than you might expect. For example, if you post a picture in a private chat with your best friend, they might share it with their family and friends, or they could even repost it on a website without asking for your consent.

Also, your picture could be changed around to look really different from the one you shared with them.





Do you think it is okay for people to share things without your consent?

If something does happen without your consent, the most important thing is to get help from your trusted adult.



For parents and carers

Every family has its own way of sharing memories and messages. Some use group chats where only family members can see what's posted. But it's important to remember that even in private chats, photos or videos can be saved and shared beyond the original group. For example, a photo sent in a family chat could be forwarded to others and reach people you didn't intend to share it with.

This is a great chance to talk with your child about what's appropriate to share and what's not. Some things, like a bath-time photo, might feel harmless in the moment but could be uncomfortable or inappropriate to share, even with close family.

Suggested questions:

- ★ Has anyone ever posted something about you online? How did it make you feel? (If unsure, try prompting with words like excited, embarrassed or confused).
- ★ Do you think it's okay for someone to share things about you without asking first?

Tricky content



Don't forget! The internet can be a fun place, but not everything online is safe for kids.

When you are online you might see photos or videos that make you feel anxious, unsafe or uncomfortable.

Sometimes, friends, siblings or even adults can share things that kids shouldn't see. This might be done accidentally or on purpose.



Maybe someone sent you pictures of people's private parts on purpose. Or maybe an unsafe ad popped up on your screen by accident.

Remember, if you see pictures or videos that aren't safe for kids, you don't have to deal with it on your own. As soon as you can, go to one of your trusted adults and talk to them about what you saw. Even if you feel embarrassed, remember, **it's NOT your fault and you DIDN'T do anything wrong.**



For parents and carers

When children see things online that are not meant for them it can be upsetting and harmful for them. It's best to answer your child's questions about tricky content calmly and honestly so they continue to ask for your help in the future.

Suggested questions:

- ★ Have you ever seen something online that was upsetting, or not for kids?
- ★ How would you like me to help you if that happens?



Remember! You don't have to look at or do anything that upsets you or makes you feel unsure, uncomfortable or unsafe. Even if someone tries to show you something you don't want to see, you do not have to look at it.

Remember! Your trusted adults are there for you. You can talk to them about anything, and they will listen to you and help you. You don't have to carry all your worries by yourself.





Remember! If a mistake has been made or something unsafe has happened, please tell your trusted adult. Speaking up is brave and the best thing to do.



Remember! Your online adventures should be fun and feel comfortable. If something happens online that worries you, you should talk to your trusted adult.

**Have fun
online and
explore safely!**



eSafety support for parents and carers

About eSafety

eSafety helps Australians to prevent and deal with online harm. We can act to remove serious online abuse (such as cyberbullying of children) and illegal and restricted online content, and provide support. Trusted adults, including parents and carers, can help make a report to eSafety if a child or young person is experiencing serious online harm. Report serious online harm at www.eSafety.gov.au/report

You can make it easier for children and young people to ask for help if they have a negative experience by talking with them about how online platforms and eSafety can assist. eSafety provides a range of resources for parents and carers to help you understand online safety issues and talk with your children about them. The issues and advice pages in our website section for parents and carers covers a range of useful topics, including parental controls for devices, gaming, cyberbullying and grooming.

You can also find advice for starting online safety conversations, including about challenging topics such as child sexual abuse online. Here are some useful website links to get you started.

Useful links

- **Explore key issues and advice for parents and carers:** www.eSafety.gov.au/parents/issues-and-advice
- **Learn about protecting children from sexual abuse online:** www.eSafety.gov.au/parents/issues-and-advice/protecting-children-from-sexual-abuse-online
- **Talking about child sexual abuse online with 0 to 12 year olds:** www.esafety.gov.au/parents/issues-and-advice/protecting-children-from-sexual-abuse-online/talking-with-0-to-12
- **Report inappropriate behaviour towards children online at the Australian Centre to Counter Child Exploitation:** www.accce.gov.au
- **Learn more about preventing offline child sexual abuse and support services:** www.childsafety.gov.au





Let's Talk About Being Safe Online

is a child-friendly guide that helps kids aged 7 and up explore the digital world with confidence and care. As children chat, play, and discover new things online, they may also face risks, including serious harms like child sexual abuse. This empowering book teaches essential skills to help children stay safe, such as understanding consent, sharing responsibly, protecting personal information, and recognising unsafe situations.

With clear language and engaging illustrations, this book encourages important conversations between children and trusted adults. It helps build a strong foundation of safety, respect and awareness.

Jayneen Sanders is an experienced author, teacher, and mother of three. She is a passionate advocate for teaching respectful relationships, gender equality, and personal body safety.



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