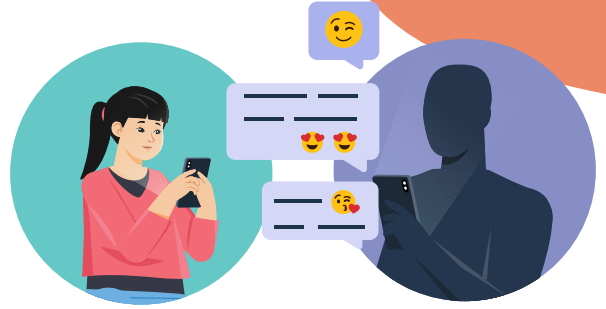


Parents and carers

What is sexual grooming?



‘Sexual grooming’ is a term used when abusers build up trust with teenagers or younger children so they are more likely to respond to requests that can lead to sexual harm. Abusers usually want to persuade children into talking about sex, sending sexual images or videos, or getting sexual in a live chat or video call.

Grooming often starts with friendship and praise. Abusers rely on children feeling special, understood, or valued because of the attention they’re paying to them.

Some children may be more trusting or literal, especially if they’re very young or neurodivergent.

- They may take words at face value.
- They may not recognise manipulation.
- They may follow rules but not understand hidden dangers.
- They may mask confusion instead of asking for help.

Know what your child is doing online

Regular check-ins with your child about what they are doing online and who they may be interacting with can help with early detection when something is wrong.

You are often best placed to notice behavioural changes in your child, like discomfort, secrecy, or shutdowns. You can play a major role in the early detection of sexual grooming by looking out for changes in your child and being aware of the warning signs that something may not be right.

No child is ever at fault. A sexual abuser who targets anyone under 18 is the one who’s responsible for putting them in a situation where they can be harmed. You can help keep your child safe by regularly reassuring them that they can always come to you if something online makes them feel unsure, uncomfortable or unsafe.

Getting help and reporting

You can help children understand that help seeking is about keeping them safe and supported. Police, eSafety and support services are focused on protecting teenagers and younger children and preventing further harm.

If there is immediate danger, **call triple zero (000)**.

Where appropriate, reports of online child sexual abuse material, sexual grooming can be made to the Australian Centre to Counter Child Exploitation (ACCCE) at accce.gov.au/report. This includes AI modified or generated images and videos.

eSafety can investigate cyberbullying of children, image-based abuse (sharing, or threatening to share, intimate images without the consent of the person shown) and illegal and restricted content. You can find more information about reporting at esafety.gov.au/report.

You can also find a list of support services at esafety.gov.au/report/counselling-support.

For more information about online child sexual grooming, scan the QR code.

