

## Strategies and tips for parents and carers



# Preventing online child sexual exploitation

**i** This fact sheet includes information for parents and carers about taking action and how to get help.

### Taking action

It is important that parents and carers know how to take action to prevent challenges online.

Many parents can **understandably feel overwhelmed** when it comes to their child's online activities, but online safety skills can be learned.

While there is no 'quick fix' when it comes to protecting your child from harm online, there are some **simple behavioural and technical actions** that parents and carers can start implementing in the home to help keep their children safe.

### Behavioural actions

- **Talk with your child** about their online activities. Find out what apps, games and sites they are using and who they might be interacting with.
- Apps and games may have their own challenges, and it is important that you understand these and what precautions you can put in place. Research the features and **download and review them yourself**, or better yet, sit down with your child and ask them to show you how they work.
- **Address behavioural issues**, rather than the technology itself, and reconsider taking devices away. Children may see this as punishment and be reluctant to tell you about issues in the future if they believe they will have their devices taken away.
- **Supervision is recommended** for children when they are online. This is especially critical for young children so that they can come to you or another trusted adult if they see or hear something they are unsure of, or is upsetting.
- As your child gets older, encourage them to **apply critical thinking skills**, like questioning suspicious behaviour online. Empower them to make decisions about their use of technology, including when they are unsupervised.



**Open and honest discussions** about technology are important. To help manage your family's online safety at home, consider a Family Online Safety Contract developed by **ThinkUKnow** and the **Carly Ryan Foundation**. This can be found at [thinkuknow.org.au](http://thinkuknow.org.au)



## Technical actions

- Parental controls are one option available to help manage your child's activities. Undertake research to **determine if parental controls are suitable** for your circumstances, and what products might best suit your family.
- It is also recommended that you **research how to change app settings**, which could include turning off location and enabling privacy settings.
- Install and maintain **protection software** and keep your operating system, apps and other programs up to date.

- **Turn off chat functions** if not required on apps and games. If this is not an option, ensure your child knows to keep conversations about the game or topic, and avoid giving out any personal information.
- Report and **block inappropriate contact** on the apps, games and sites your child uses, should an issue arise.



Technical actions are not a 'one size fits all' approach, and shouldn't be considered in isolation.

A holistic approach to online safety includes both behavioural and technical actions, with a focus on open communication.



## Top tips

- Encourage **open and non-judgemental conversations** with your child about their technology use.
- Ensure your child is comfortable coming to you if an issue arises, make it clear that **nothing is so bad that they can't tell you** or another trusted adult about.
- **Identify other trusted sources of support** for your child to talk to if they are uncomfortable coming to you.
- **Encourage critical thinking** about online interactions and outline that it is okay for your child to say no to anything that makes them uncomfortable.
- Seek help and support, and **report inappropriate or suspicious behaviour** online.

## Getting help

Online child sexual exploitation, including **grooming** and **extortion**, can be reported to the **Australian Centre to Counter Child Exploitation** (accce.gov.au).

The **ThinkUKnow website** ([thinkuknow.org.au](http://thinkuknow.org.au)) has information and resources to prevent online child sexual exploitation as well as how to report and get help.

If a child is in immediate danger, call 000.

If you become aware of explicit content that has been posted online, including child sexual abuse material, report the site to the **eSafety Commissioner** ([esafety.gov.au](http://esafety.gov.au)). They have a range of powers to take action to have content removed.

**Kids Helpline** ([kidshelpline.com.au](http://kidshelpline.com.au)) is a free, confidential telephone and online counselling service for young people between 5 and 25 years old.

### Program partners

