

## Cyberbullying

### Young children

Cyberbullying occurs when the internet, email or mobile phones are used to deliberately and repeatedly engage in hostile behaviour to harm someone.

Cyberbullying is less common between young children with the likelihood of a child being involved in cyberbullying increasing with age. Cyberbullying can have negative academic, social and psychological outcomes for children, so providing support for children who are involved in cyberbullying is critical.

For young children, general internet safety tips are a good starting point to help them to develop appropriate online etiquette and to learn appropriate responses to bullying behaviours. The following tips can help you to manage cyberbullying with your child.

- At this age children's internet use should still be closely monitored. To help with this try to keep the computer in a shared or visible place in the home.
- Keep your child connected online and offline to friends and family that they trust. This helps to protect them from potentially negative outcomes.
- Help your child understand that what they say and do online is important. Encourage your child to use the same manners, communicate with others in the same way and report others who aren't being nice, just as they would in the offline world.
- Advise your child not to respond to any negative messages and to report any negative messages they receive to you or another trusted adult.
- If your child has passwords for their online activities advise your child never to share their password with friends—friendships may be shortlived at this age and former friends can mis-use passwords to cyberbully.
- If your child has been involved in cyberbullying and seems distressed or shows changes in behaviour or mood it may be advisable to seek professional support, including through the Cybersmart Online Helpline at [www.cybersmart.gov.au/report.aspx](http://www.cybersmart.gov.au/report.aspx). The Cybersmart Online Helpline provides free, confidential online counselling for children and young people. Your child's schools may also be able to provide support and guidance.
- If there is a threat to your child's safety the police can help. In life threatening and time critical situation call Triple Zero (000).

### More information

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## Digital reputation

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All internet users will have a digital or online reputation. Essentially, this digital reputation is the opinion that others hold about the user. Digital reputations are informed by content that is posted online and how people communicate online. People can be judged on how they behaved as a child well into the future.

For young children, the concept of a digital reputation is probably too complex for them to grasp. General internet safety tips are a good start in helping children to develop appropriate online etiquette and to learn appropriate ways of responding online. These are available under the Parenting online topic.

As a starting point, it can be useful to help young children understand that they should behave the same way online as they do offline. Help them to understand that other people can see what they are doing online. So they should take care with what they say and do.

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## Excessive internet use

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Young children are unlikely to have issues with spending too much time on the internet due to limited access and ability. If children are using computers or interacting online it is valuable for parents to start to educate them about appropriate usage levels.

The following tips can help your child to manage the time spent online and maintain a healthy balance.

- Consider establishing rules about when children can play online games or use the internet and how long they can play each day. You might consider agreeing with your child a set balance of online activities and offline activities such as outside play or drawing.
- Establishing rules with children when they are young can help manage their online activities as they get older and their online activity increases.
- Try to locate the computer in a shared or visible place in the home so you are aware of how much time your child spends online.
- If you have concerns about your child's online behaviour explore your concerns with them. If necessary seek professional support, including support through the Cybersmart Online Helpline at [www.cybersmart.gov.au/report.aspx](http://www.cybersmart.gov.au/report.aspx). The Cybersmart Online Helpline provides free, confidential online counselling for children and young people.
- If of school age, your child's school may also be able to provide guidance and support.

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## Identity theft

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Identity theft is a specific type of fraud, which involves stealing money or gaining other benefits by pretending to be someone else. Identity theft can be devastating—both financially and emotionally. It can occur in many ways—from somebody using credit card details illegally to make purchases, to having a person's entire identity assumed by another to open bank accounts, take out loans and conduct illegal business under that name.

Young children's online use is likely to put them at little risk of identity theft. However, the following general guidelines provide guidance to help teach children to protect their personal information and yours.

- At this age children's internet use should still be closely monitored. To help with this try to keep the computer in a shared or visible place in the home.
- Be aware of how your child uses the internet and explore it with them. Explore their favourite sites and help them bookmark a list of 'Favourites'. Encourage your child to tell you about new websites and games that they like and explore them together. Check whether personal information is required to sign up to new websites or games and help your child sign up if you feel it is appropriate.
- Talk to your child about personal information and why it is special. This sort of information can be used to identify or locate where they live, go to school or activities in which they are involved. It can also include family information such as mum and dad's names, birthdays and address.
- Set rules—make sure your child knows what information they can share or post online and which websites they can visit. Telling a trusted adult before posting any personal information online, including for competition entry, is a useful rule.
- Consider creating a family 'fun' email account that can be used for competition entries and other activities. This account will be separate to all other personal accounts so it can easily be deleted if it is misused.
- Consider using filters, labels and safe zones to help manage your child's online access.
- Install and update anti-virus and other e-security software to restrict unauthorised access to data on the home computer and protect that data from corruption. Ensure that security features including a firewall are turned on, set to automatic scan and updated regularly to protect against the latest risks.

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## Legal downloading

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Downloading is unlikely to be an issue for younger children who may not have the opportunity, or knowledge to download media like music or videos. If children are online the following general tips are a good starting point to help them be safe and responsible. It is useful to consider the following tips.

- Consider using filters, labels and safe zones to help manage your child's online access.
- Install and update anti-virus and other e-security software to restrict unauthorised access to data on the home computer and protect that data from corruption. Ensure that security features including a firewall are turned on, set to automatic scan and updated regularly to protect against the latest risks.

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## Mobile phone costs

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While few very young children will have access to their own mobile phone, some may and others may have access to their parents' or siblings phones from time to time. The following tips can help guide young children in the safe use of mobile phone.

- Become familiar with all features of a phone before allowing a young child to use it. It's useful to establish rules for use with young children, for example, 'you can only use the mobile to call Mum or Dad if the bus is late or you are feeling scared or worried'.
- Find out how access to 'adult' content and other services, such as premium SMS services or internet access, can be managed. This information is usually available on the carrier's website.
- Help your child to understand that their phone is like a wallet and every text message, phone call or download service costs money.
- Remind your child that they shouldn't let anyone borrow their phone.
- Talk with your child about their experiences with their mobile phone. Let them know it's okay to tell you if they come across something that worries or frightens them, including nasty messages from others.
- Teach your child that there are ways they can deal with material that worries or frightens them—they should not respond if they receive something inappropriate, and they should immediately hang up and tell a trusted adult if they feel uncomfortable.

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## Offensive or illegal content

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Young children may come across offensive or illegal online content by accident or with the encouragement of others, including older siblings. The following tips can help you to guide young children in their online activities.

- At this age children's internet use should be closely monitored. To help with this try to keep the computer in a shared or visible place in the home.
- Be aware of how your child uses the internet and explore it with them. Bookmark a list of 'Favourites' you are comfortable with your child visiting and teach them how to access this list.
- Teach your child that not everything on the computer is safe to click on. It can be useful to make a rule for young children to check with an adult before clicking on new or unknown things.
- Teach your child that there are ways they can deal with material that worries or frightens them—they should not respond if they receive something inappropriate, and should immediately tell a trusted adult if they feel uncomfortable.
- Teach your child how to close a web page or turn off a monitor and call a trusted adult if they are worried about what they see.
- If your child is exposed to inappropriate content and appears distressed talk with them about it. If necessary seek professional support, including through the Cybersmart Online Helpline at [www.cybersmart.gov.au/report.aspx](http://www.cybersmart.gov.au/report.aspx). The Cybersmart Online Helpline provides free, confidential online counselling for children and young people. If of school age, your child's school may also be able to provide assistance or guidance.
- Consider using filters, labels and safe zones to help manage your child's online access.
- Report content that you think may be prohibited to the ACMA's Online Hotline at [www.acma.gov.au/hotline](http://www.acma.gov.au/hotline).

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## Online purchasing

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Young children, in particular, are unlikely to be make purchases online without the advice and guidance of their parents. It's important for parents to have a good understanding about how to purchase online safely and to share this information with their children when appropriate. The following tips can help to guide online purchasing.

- When making online purchases, only use trusted sites. Check that the website has secure online payment facilities. Look for a https:// in the address field and a locked padlock symbol at the bottom of the screen to identify secure sites. This indicates data is being encrypted. If using online auction sites, check the reputation of the seller prior to purchase.
- If in doubt about the legitimacy of a website or email requesting financial details or payment, call the organisation it claims to represent to check. When calling, do not use phone numbers provided on the suspect website or in suspect emails. Use a known phone number or one obtained from a trusted source such as the White or Yellow Pages or a government website.
- Ask around—word of mouth from trusted friends and family is a good way to identify reliable 'e-stores' or online purchasing websites.
- Check a website's terms of use and privacy policy to ensure the information you provide online will be used for legitimate purposes only.
- When you are making a purchase, know the cost and check the delivery options, charges and warranty conditions. Also check for any additional costs to cover postage and handling. Most reputable sites will provide a clear indication of the total cost before the final payment stage.
- Understand the service. Some products involve ongoing contracts rather than a one-off payment, so check the terms of use and know if you are signing up for just a one-off or ongoing service. Find out how to stop the service and, in some cases, how much it costs to break the contract if you do decide to stop.
- Know when it's coming. Some sellers save money by sending goods the cheapest and slowest way possible. If you're purchasing a product from overseas, that can mean months of waiting.
- Know what you're getting. Auction sites usually let you contact the seller directly, so if you have any doubts about an item, ask questions. It's better to find out the details early on rather than when you've already bought it. It's also a good idea to check out reviews of the item and check its details, since you can't see or hold the item before you buy it.

# cyber(smart:)

- Be wary of offers that seem too good to be true— they usually are. If concerned that you may have been the target of a scam (for example, if you paid for an item but didn't receive it), contact your local consumer affairs agency or visit the Scamwatch website at [www.Scamwatch.gov.au](http://www.Scamwatch.gov.au). If they provided personal or financial information, contact local police and your financial institution directly.
- Check bank statements regularly after making an online purchase to ensure no anomalies appear. If they do contact your financial institution immediately.
- Consider installing and keeping updated anti-virus and other e-security software to restrict access to data on the home computer and protect that data from corruption.
- Consider installing and keeping 'turned on' a firewall to block all traffic between your network and the internet that is not explicitly allowed, preventing unauthorised access to your data.

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## Protecting your information

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Personal information is any information or combination of information that enables the identification of an individual.

Personal information is disclosed to, and used responsibly by, many legitimate online businesses to conduct business and online social interactions. However, if not managed carefully, it is possible for personal information to be accessed and misused for marketing, identity theft or for cyberbullying or cyberstalking.

The following guidelines are a useful starting point to teach young children to interact safely and responsibly online.

- At this age children's internet use should still be closely monitored. To help with this try to keep the computer in a shared or visible place in the home.
- Be aware of how your child uses the internet and explore it with them. Explore their favourite sites and help them bookmark a list of 'Favourites'. Check whether personal information is required to sign up any of their favourite websites or games and help your child sign up and use privacy settings safely if you feel it is appropriate.
- Talk to your child about personal information and why it is special. This sort of information can be used to identify or locate where they live, go to school or activities in which they are involved.
- Set rules—make sure your child knows what information they can share or post online and which websites they can visit. Telling a trusted adult before posting any personal information online, including for competition entry is a useful rule.
- Consider creating a family 'fun' email account that can be used for competition entries and other activities. This account will be separate to all other personal accounts so it can easily be deleted if it is misused.

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## Safer social networking

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Social networking describes a variety of online services like Facebook, YouTube, MySpace, Twitter, online games such as World of Warcraft and Moshi Monsters and virtual worlds such as Club Penguin. These services let people communicate with others online. This can enable young people to stay in touch with friends and family and join in fun fantasy worlds and games. However, children may forget who they are communicating with online and disclose too much about themselves. They may also behave in ways that they wouldn't offline.

Generally young children will have little direct involvement in social networking as they will not meet the recommended age guidelines. There are some social networking sites targeted at children that claim to moderate communication to provide greater protection for children. Your child may ask to use one of these websites at some stage, and the following tips may be useful.

- If your child is using social networking services, including gaming sites and virtual worlds that allow them to communicate directly with other people check the age guidelines and privacy policies of the sites. Check how moderation occurs—do they administrators check all messages before they are published? Are you comfortable that your child is safe interacting on the website?
- Set rules—make sure your child knows what information they can share or post online and which websites they can visit. Ask them to tell you before they post any personal information online, including their full name, mum or dad's name, their address or school.
- Help your child to create screen names or IDs that do not communicate their gender, age, name or location.
- Establish rules around the types of content or information they should report to an adult. For example, one rule may be 'tell Mum or Dad if somebody asks you where you go to school or where you live' and 'tell mum and dad if anybody talks about rude things'.
- Advise your child to check with you before clicking on links sent by others on social networking websites. These may lead to adult content.
- Help your child understand that what they say and do online is important. Encourage your child to use the same manners, communicate with others in the same way and report others who aren't being nice, just as they would in the offline world.
- Advise your child not to respond to any negative messages and to report any negative messages they receive to you or another trusted adult.

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## Unwanted sexual contact

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Some adults befriend children online for sexual purposes. This is called grooming. It is illegal and should be reported to police. In many cases police can prosecute adults seeking children for sexual purposes even if they haven't made face to face contact with a child.

Young children generally won't be using websites that enable direct interaction with others without supervision. The following general tips will help manage who can contact your child online and their responses to inappropriate contact.

- At this age children's internet use should be closely monitored. To help with this try to keep the computer in a shared or visible place in the home.
- Be aware of how your child uses the internet and explore it with them. Bookmark a list of 'Favourites' you are comfortable with your child visiting and teach them how to access this list.
- If your child is at an age where you have begun educating them about strangers and protecting their body it may be useful to expand those lessons to cover online. The appropriate age for this education will vary and is a decision for you and your family.
- If you are educating your child about their body and keeping it safe it may be useful to make a rule about what is and isn't okay to discuss on the computer and what should be reported to you or a trusted adult. For example, one rule might be 'if anyone asks you about your underwear or private parts when you are on the computer get Mum to check that what they are saying is okay'.
- Another good rule is for your child to report anything that makes them feel uncomfortable or funny in their tummy.
- If your child shows changes in behaviour or mood that are concerning including increased or decreased sexualised behaviours, clinginess or withdrawal explore your concerns with them and if necessary seek professional support, including through the Cybersmart Online Helpline at [www.cybersmart.gov.au/report.aspx](http://www.cybersmart.gov.au/report.aspx). The Cybersmart Online Helpline provides free, confidential online counselling for children and young people.
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## Violent content

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Young children may come across violent content accidentally when online. This could be quite frightening for some children or may impact on their behaviour and perception of what is appropriate.

Young children may also come across violent content in games that have ratings recommending use by older children, teens or adults. The following tips can help you and your child manage the content they access.

- At this age children's internet use should be closely monitored. To help with this try to keep the computer in a shared or visible place in the home.
- Be aware of how your child uses the internet and explore it with them. Bookmark a list of 'Favourites' you are comfortable with your child visiting and teach them how to access this list.
- Check age guidelines on the games and websites your child likes and consider whether they are old enough to understand the content, and whether they understand the difference between fantasy and reality. It is also important to consider whether content is suitable for your child and meets your family's content standards.
- Teach your child that there are ways they can deal with material that worries or frightens them—they should not respond if they receive something inappropriate, and they should immediately tell a trusted adult if they feel uncomfortable.
- If your child is exposed to inappropriate content and appears distressed talk with them about it. If necessary seek professional support, including support through the Cybersmart Online Helpline at [www.cybersmart.gov.au/report.aspx](http://www.cybersmart.gov.au/report.aspx). The Cybersmart Online Helpline provides free, confidential online counselling for children and young people. Your child's school may also be able to provide assistance or guidance.
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